

**SOCI 4352 Health, Medicine and Society**  
**Summer term, 2021-2022**  
**10:30 – 12:15, Mondays and Thursdays**

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**Summary:**

During the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has made us especially aware of the importance of health and medicine in our lives. This course examines the social context of health, illness and medicine in contemporary societies. We first address the social organization of health and health care; we ask questions such as: What is health and illness? What kinds of patient-doctor relationships are conducive to good health? What roles do physicians play in producing health in our society? How should health care systems be organized? We then assess the social determinants of health and illness and address the following questions: Who gets ill and why? What kind of society tends to produce good health? Does social inequality harm individual health? How does social connectedness influence health? Finally, we zoom in on a set of topics related to health and health care and dissect them from sociological perspectives; they include: health behavior and public policy, the interaction between social environment and genetics, and network interventions to promote health. We will also take the COVID-19 pandemic as an example to examine how major epidemics affect society, and how societies respond effectively. This class will be a mixture of lectures and classroom discussions. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in classroom discussions and exchanges.

過去一年中，COVID-19 使我們特別意識到健康和醫學在我們生活中的重要性。本科探討在當代社會中，社會因素是如何影響健康、疾病和醫療。我們首先討論社會如何組織健康與醫療；我們問的問題是：什麼是健康和疾病？什麼樣的醫患關係有利於健康？醫生在促進健康中扮演什麼角色？醫療體系應該如何組織？然後，我們評估健康和疾病的社會決定因素，並討論以下問題：為什麼有的人更容易患病？什麼樣的社會有利於健康？社會不平等是否損害個人健康？人與人之間的連接如何影響健康？最後，我們聚焦於一系列與健康和醫療相關的話題，並從社會學角度對其進行剖析；它們包括：健康行為和公共政策，社會環境和基因之間的相互作用，以及如何干預社會網絡以促進健康。我們還將以新冠肺炎大流行為例，探討重大疫情如何影響社會，以及社會如何有效應對。這門課將由講座和課堂討論組成。強烈鼓勵學生參與課堂討論和交流。

**Note:** Not recommended for students who have taken SOCI3237 Medical Sociology

**Mode of teaching:** This course will be taught online through Zoom:  
<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/94369728667?pwd=U1V2MzJYQlJhc1o2d3Jma2ovNEZIUT09>

**Learning Objectives:**

1. To learn to critically assess biomedicine from sociological perspectives

2. To understand how social factors influence health and shape health inequalities
3. To gain insight into the constituent components of the healthcare system and the social and political factors related to the quality, cost and accessibility of healthcare.
4. To learn to critically compare medicine to other social systems.
5. To gain understanding of sociological theories from empirical examples in health and medicine.
6. To learn to draw links between their daily experience and observation, and conceptual issues.

**Course requirements:**

- 1) **In-class questions (5%):** During some class sessions, you will be asked to answer one question. All of these in-class questions will account for 5% of the total grade.
- 2) **Short papers (30%):** You are required to write two short papers (3-5 pages) for this course. Paper 1 will be a sick role memoir, describing a time when you or someone close to you experienced an illness (15%) and will be due in class on Jun. 2. Paper 2 will be a response paper to the section on social determinants of health (15%) and will be due in class on Jun. 16. I will hand out detailed guidelines for the short papers well before they are due.
- 3) **Tutorials and research project (20%):** You are expected to develop a project on a topic related to health, health care and the society during the tutorials. You can choose from a list of topics; you may also come up with your own topic but you need to talk with me to get my approval. The end product of the project is a presentation of your research project. Group projects are strongly encouraged. More details about the tutorials and research project will be disseminated. The grading is based on tutorial participation (5%) and presentation (15%).
- 4) **Final quiz (45%):** The final quiz will consist of short-answer and essay questions. It will be based on topics and concepts covered in the class and in required readings. The final quiz will be open-book. It will last two hours and is scheduled on the last class session.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Descriptors</b>
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirement.

**Readings**

All books required for this course are on reserve at the University Library. Journal papers can be downloaded from the databases for electronic journals through the University Library. Some reading materials may be distributed in class.

**Blackboard**

We will maintain a course website on Blackboard. Course syllabus and class PPTs are available on the website. Periodically announcements are made on the website. You should check it on a regular basis.

### **Academic Honesty**

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

Students are required to submit the two short papers to the university's plagiarism detection system (Veriguide) before submitting the papers to me. Students should attach the signed "Academic Honesty Declaration Statement" with their papers.

### **Course schedule and readings (subject to minor changes throughout the term):**

Class 1: Introduction; the role of medicine in the improvement in population health (May 16)  
Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 1: Medical Sociology." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge

Recommended readings:

McKinlay, John and Sonja M. McKinlay. 2019. "Medical Measures and the Decline of Mortality." Pp. 10-23 in *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Peter Conrad and Valerie Leiter. Sage Publications. [on reserve in UL]

Cutler, David. Pp 1-9 and pp 47-60 in *Your Money or Your Life*, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2004. [Online access available]

### **Part 1: The social organization of health and health care**

Class 2: The social construction of illness (May 19)

Parsons, Talcott. "Social Structure and Dynamic Process: The Case of Modern Medical Practice." In *The Social System*, 288–322. Psychology Press, 1991. [Online access available]

Martin, Emily. *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987: pp27-67 [Online access available]

Recommended readings:

Conrad, Peter. "The Shifting Engines of Medicalization." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 3–14.

Class 3: The patient-doctor relationship (May 23)

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 9: Doctor-patient Interaction." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge

Mishler, Elliot George. 2019. "Reading 28: The Struggle between the Voice of Medicine and the Voice of the Lifeworld." In *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Peter Conrad and Valerie Leiter. Sage Publications. [on reserve UL]

Recommended readings:

Lutfe, Karen, and Jeremy Freese. 2005. "Toward Some Fundamentals of Fundamental Causality: Socioeconomic Status and Health in the Routine Clinic Visit for Diabetes." *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (5): 1326–72

Class 4: The medical profession (May 26)

Halpern, Sydney and Renee R. Anspach. 1993. "The Study of Medical Institutions." *Work and Occupations* 20:279-295.

Starr, Paul. 2008. "The growth of medical authority." Pp. 557-565 in *Perspectives in Medical Sociology*, edited by P. Brown. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press

Recommended readings:

Freidson, Eliot. 1970. *Professional dominance : the social structure of medical care*. Chicago: Aldine: pp45-57

Reverby, Susan. 2008. "A caring dilemma: Womanhood and nursing in historical perspective." Pp. 574-590 in *Perspectives in Medical Sociology*, edited by P. Brown. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Class 5: Health care systems (May 30)

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 16: Global Health Care." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge

Blumenthal, David, and William Hsiao. "Lessons from the East — China's Rapidly Evolving Health Care System." *New England Journal of Medicine* 372, no. 14 (April 2, 2015): 1281–85.

Recommended readings:

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 15: Health Care Reforms and Health Care Policy in the US." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge

**Part 2. The social determinants of health**

Class 6: Socioeconomic status and health over the life course (Jun. 2)

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 3: The Social Demography of Health: Social Class." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge

Link, Bruce G., and Jo Phelan. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35 (1995): 80–94.

Recommended readings:

Willson, Andrea E., Kim M. Shuey, and Jr. Elder Glen H. "Cumulative Advantage Processes as Mechanisms of Inequality in Life Course Health." *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 6 (May 1, 2007): 1886–1924.

Chung, Roger Yat-Nork, Gary Ka-Ki Chung, Michael Marmot, Jessica Allen, Dicken Chan, Peter Goldblatt, Hung Wong, et al. "COVID-19 Related Health Inequality Exists Even in a City Where Disease Incidence Is Relatively Low: A Telephone Survey in Hong Kong." *J Epidemiology and Community Health* 75, no. 7 (July 1, 2021): 616–23. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2020-215392>.

Class 7: Relative social status and health (Jun. 6)

Thoits, Peggy A. "Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51, no. 1\_suppl (March 1, 2010): S41–53.

Marmot, Michael. "Relatively Speaking." In *Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity*, 82–104. New York: Times Books, 2004. [on reserve in UL]

Recommended readings:

Link, Bruce G., Richard M. Carpiano, and Margaret M. Weden. "Can Honorific Awards Give Us Clues about the Connection between Socioeconomic Status and Mortality?" *American Sociological Review* 78, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 192–212. doi:10.1177/0003122413477419.

Class 8: Contextual social inequality and health (Jun. 9)

Wilkinson, Richard, and Kate Pickett. 2009. "Physical health and life expectancy." & "How inequality gets under the skin." in *The spirit level : why more equal societies almost always do better*. London; New York Allen Lane.[on reserve in UL]

Recommended readings:

Wong, Irene O. L., Benjamin J. Cowling, Su-Vui Lo, and Gabriel M. Leung. 2009. "A multilevel analysis of the effects of neighbourhood income inequality on individual self-rated health in Hong Kong." *Social Science & Medicine* 68:124-132.

Class 9: Social capital, social networks and health (Jun. 13)

Umberson, Debra, and Jennifer Karas Montez. 2010. "Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51:S54-S66.

Recommended readings:

Durkheim, Emile. 1951. "Anomic Suicide." Pp. 241-76 in *Suicide: a Study in Sociology*: The Free Press. [Online access available]

Christakis, Nicholas A., and James H. Fowler. "The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network over 32 Years." *New England Journal of Medicine* 357, no. 4 (2007): 370–79.

### **Part 3. Topics on health and health care**

Class 10: Health behavior, social context and public policy (Jun. 16)

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 6: Health Behavior and Lifestyles." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge

Recommended readings:

Mello, Michelle M., David M. Studdert, and Troyen A. Brennan. 2006. "Obesity -- The New Frontier of Public Health Law." *New England Journal of Medicine* 354:2601-2610.

Schafer, Markus H., and Soyoung Kwon. "Cohorts and Emerging Health Disparities: Biomorph Trajectories in China, 1989 to 2006." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, October 5, 2012.

Class 11: Genes, social environment and health (Jun. 20)

Liu, Hexuan, and Guang Guo. "Opportunities and Challenges of Big Data for the Social Sciences: The Case of Genomic Data." *Social Science Research*, Special issue on Big Data in the Social Sciences, 59 (September 1, 2016): 13–22.

Recommended readings:

Curry, Andrew. "Parents' Emotional Trauma May Change Their Children's Biology." *Science | AAAS*, 2019. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/07/parents-emotional-trauma-may-change-their-children-s-biology-studies-mice-show-how>.

Laland, Kevin N., John Odling-Smee, and Sean Myles. "How Culture Shaped the Human Genome: Bringing Genetics and the Human Sciences Together." *Nature Reviews Genetics* 11, no. 2 (February 2010): 137–48.

Class 12: Network interventions (Jun. 23)

Valente TW. Network Interventions. *Science* 2012; 337: 49–53.

Centola D. The Spread of Behavior in an Online Social Network Experiment. *Science* 2010; 329: 1194–1197.

Recommended readings:

Kim DA, Hwang AR, Stafford D, Hughes DA, O'Malley AJ, Fowler JH, and Christakis NA, "Social Network Targeting to Maximise Population Behaviour Change: A Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial," *The Lancet* 2015; 386: 145-153.

Christakis NA and Fowler JH. Social Network Sensors for Early Detection of Contagious Outbreaks. *PLoS One* 2010; 5: e12948.

Class 13: The COVID-19 pandemic (Jun. 27)

Christakis NA. *Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live*. New York: Little Brown, 2020. Chapters 1-5.

Class 14: **Final Quiz (Jun. 30)**