

SOCIOLOGY 1550
SOCIOLOGY OF MEDICINE
Spring 2010

Prof. Ann Dill

Ann_Dill@brown.edu

OH: Thursday, 11-1 and by appointment, 401 Maxcy

This course explores the social context of health, illness and the health care system in American society. We will examine issues related to the experience of illness, the healing professions, health policy, relations between providers and patients, and social inequality and health. The major objective of the course is for students to develop critical sociological perspectives on the relationships among the structure of society, the delivery of health care, and the pursuit of health.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Weekly Readings

Required readings for each week are listed below. You are encouraged to read the materials before the lectures for the week.

2. Attendance and participation in discussions

Lectures will parallel and supplement the readings; they will not merely review them. Your attendance in class is essential. Classes will be devoted to lectures with opportunity as well for questions and discussion, sometimes structured, sometimes unstructured, of the week's material. To encourage participation in discussions, you will be asked to submit questions about weekly readings *at least twice* during the semester. You are encouraged to attend and participate in class for several reasons: 1) you will learn more about the application of the course to your life; 2) you will be able to clarify and expand on points from lectures and readings; and 3) this will determine part of your grade (see below).

3. Research Papers

There will be two short research papers. The first, of roughly 5-7 pages, will involve an exercise related to health and health behavior. It will require you to compare the biomedical model of "disease" with the lived experience of "illness." For the second paper, roughly 8-10 pages, you will work in small groups to assess the impact of reform in the health care delivery system. Groups will present their findings during the last week of class and will together assemble a report of their research. All group members will receive the same grade for this work.

4. Exams

There will be a mid-term and a final exam, both including standardized and short-answer questions. The final exam will also include a take-home essay section to be completed in advance of the exam date. The final will emphasize material covered in the second half of the course (from week 7 on), but may refer as well to earlier material.

The first research paper assignment will count for 20% of the final grade. The group project will count for 25%. The mid-term exam counts for 20% and the final exam for 25% of the final grade. Attendance and participation count for 10% of the final grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Readings:

The main text is Rose Weitz's book, The Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care, Fifth Edition (referred to as "Weitz" below), which is available at the Brown Bookstore. We will also discuss The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, by Anne Fadiman. Other readings are on-line through the Library or will be posted on MyCourses. Additional readings may be assigned during the course at the instructor's discretion.

Week 1 Introduction and overview of the course

Jan. 28

Weitz, Chapters 1: "Introduction"

Week 2 The Experience of Illness: Social Meanings

Feb. 2, 4

Weitz, Chapters 5: "The Social Meanings of Illness"

Fox N, Ward K, and O'Rourke A. 2005. "Pro-anorexia, weight-loss drugs and the internet: an 'anti-recovery' explanatory model of anorexia." Sociology of Health & Illness, 27(7): 944-971 (on-line through *Josiah*).

Weeks 3 & 4 The Social Distribution of Illness

Feb. 9, 11, 16, 18

Weitz, Chapters 2, "The Social Sources of Illness," 3, "The Social Distribution of Illness in the United States," & 4, "Illness and Death in Developing Nations"

Oppenheimer, G.M. 2001. "Paradigm lost: Race, ethnicity, and the search for a new population taxonomy." American Journal of Public Health, 91(7): 1049-1055 (on-line through *Josiah*).

Week 5 Disability and Chronic Illness

Feb. 25 (Tuesday = Long Weekend)

Weitz, Chapter 6: "The Experience of Disability, Chronic Pain, and Chronic Illness"

First Research Paper due Thursday, Feb. 25

Week 6 Mental health and Mental Illness

March 2, 4

Weitz, Chapter 7: "The Sociology of Mental Illness."

Additional readings to be posted

Week 7 The American Health Care System

March 9, 11

Weitz, Chapter 8: "Health Care in the United States."

Mid-term Exam, Thursday, March 11

Assignment to groups for research project.

Week 8 Health Care in Comparative Perspective

March 16, 18

Weitz, Chapter 9: "Health Care in Other Countries."

Dill, A. and Coury, J. 2009. "Forging a New Commons: Self-Help/Mutual Aid Associations in Post-Socialist Countries." *Advances in Medical Sociology*. (to be posted on MyCourses)

Week 9 Health Care Settings and Technologies

March 23, 25

Weitz, Chapter 10: “Health Care Settings and Technologies.”

Phelan, J.C. 2005. “Geneticization of Deviant Behavior and Consequences for Stigma: The Case of Mental Illness.” Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 46(4): 307-322 (on-line through *Josiah*).

(Week of March 30: Spring Break)

Week 10 Bioethics as seen by Sociology

April 6, 8

Weitz, Chapter 13: “Issues in Bioethics.”

Dill, A.E.P. 1995. “The ethics of discharge planning for older adults – An Ethnographic Analysis.” Social Science & Medicine, 41(9): 1289-1299 (on-line through *Josiah*).

Week 11 The Profession of Medicine

April 13, 15

Weitz, Chapter 11: “The Profession of Medicine.”

Tervalon, M and Murray-Garcia, J. “Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education.” Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 9(2): 117-125 (on-line through *Josiah*).

Week 12 “Other” Health Care Providers

April 20, 22

Weitz, Chapter 12: “Other Mainstream and Alternative Health Care Providers”

Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

Week 13 Project Discussion and Course Review

April 27, 29

Discussion of health reform project findings; papers due 4/29

Review for Final Exam; discuss take-home essay section.

Final exam: Thursday, May 20, 2 p.m.

Summary of Assignment due dates:

First Research Paper: Feb. 25

Mid-term exam: March 11

Group Research Paper: April 29

Final exam: Thursday, May 20, 2 p.m.

Participation: Submit discussion questions about weekly readings at least twice during the semester.