

## COURSE SYLLABUS: SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS (SC07801) – Fall 2005

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**MEETING TIME AND PLACE: Tuesday & Thursday: 4:30 - 5:45 PM, O'Neill 247.**

### **(A). Texts/ Reading Materials**

- **Weitz, Rose.** (2004). *Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care: Critical Approach (Third Edition)*. Belmont, GA: Wadsworth.
- **Abraham K. Laurie.** (1994). *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- **Conrad, Peter.** (2000). *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*. Worth Publishers.

### **(B). COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course introduces students to the sociology of health and illness, applying sociological principles and perspectives to a variety of topics including the experience of illness, the social and cultural factors affecting health and disease, and the institutional structures of medicine. Throughout the course we will explore the ways in which the definitions, meanings and experiences of health and illness are shaped by cultural, political, and economic factors. We will critically examine the philosophy, organization, operation of the American health care system (comparing it with health care systems of other countries) – and how this shapes the definition and treatment of illness. We will also examine how individuals and communities may resist dominant definitions of illness and treatment.

### **(C). COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION POLICIES**

The central requirements are **preparation** (doing all the assigned readings), **attendance**, and **active participation**. Attendance is recorded each day of class, and students can expect to be called on to answer questions during course discussions. There will be two term papers (reduced credit for late papers at 20% per day), short in-class writing assignments, a mid-term examination, and a final examination.

#### **A. Writing Exercises:**

You will write two papers in this course. The papers are designed to give you an opportunity to do and reflect on sociology. They will be assessed on their structure; relevant application of sociological concepts learned in the course; use of course

materials; and depth of analysis and insight. All papers are due at the beginning of class, on the specified date.

(i) Paper 1 accounts for 20% of your final grade, and is due on **Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, at the beginning of class**. The purpose of this project is to apply the various concepts, issues and questions raised in the course to your personal experience of illness, or that of someone you know. The paper can be done by two students together, analyzing an illness experience you or someone you know has had.

First, you should research incidence and prevalence of morbidity and mortality from this disease. Who is most affected by it (look at patterns by geography, age, race, sex, social class, behavior patterns, or any other sociological variable)? What do these patterns indicate about the disease; - that is, why is it more prevalent in some groups of people than others, or why is the death rate higher in some groups of people than others?

Exact information on morbidity and mortality rates is sometimes hard to find, but give it your best try. There are two major kinds of sources that you can utilize: (1) Data collected by agencies such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and (2) Medline for articles about the disease. Go to the BC library home page (s), and under the '**Resources,**' look for the "**online Databases**" link, and then **Medline**, which indexes articles from medical journals.

Second, write about your experience (or that of someone you know well) with this illness and how it illustrates theories or ideas that we have read about or discussed in class. For example: the Health Belief Model; Parsons' sick role; illness as deviance; stigma; effects of illness and disability on the self; medical vs. holistic vs. sociological models of illness and disability; social construction of illness; illness behavior; alternative medicine; medicalization, etc.

(ii) The second paper (8 - 10 pages) also carries 20%, of the final grade, and will be about any topic of your interest within the field of Sociology of Health and Illness. All the topics will be cleared by me. Your paper should have a minimum of 10 scholarly works cited.

**Procedure:**

- Choose a topic of your interest
- Write a brief description of the topic (not more than one page). This is due **Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, at the beginning of class**
- **The paper is due on the last day of class (Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup>).**

**On both papers 1 and 2, a good paper will:**

- (a) Cover all goals identified in the question
- (b) Identify specific applications of at least three concepts/theories from the course books. This means that you should clearly identify and explain the concepts you are referring to.
- (c) Be well-written, well-organized, and thoughtful.

**B) Examinations:**

(i) A Mid-term examination will be taken during one of the normal class periods. It will be drawn from readings and lecture materials up to that point, on the class syllabus. Therefore, you will be expected to answer questions from both readings and lecture material to that point in the class. The mid-term examination will combine multiple choice, short answer, and easy questions. It counts for 25% of the final grade.

(ii) **The Final Exam:** The final exam accounts for 35% of the final grade.

**Note:** On all papers and examinations, grading is based on the scale:

93-100 percent = A	67 – 69 percent = D+
90 – 92 percent = A-	63 -66 percent = D
87 – 89 percent = B+	60 – 62 percent = D-
83 – 86 percent = B-	0 – 59 percent = F
80 – 82 percent = C+	
77 – 79 percent = C	
73 – 76 percent = C-	

**Extra Credit:** (Points Added to your Course Average)

a) Class participation (0-5 points.). Full credit comes from frequently making comments in class that demonstrate that you have read the material and from adding to the class discussions in a meaningful way

(b) Good Attendance: (1-2 points.) 80-89% = 1point; ≥ 90% = 2 points.)

**(D). ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Boston College is highly committed to the upholding of academic integrity by all its members. Below is a reprint of the University’s academic integrity policy and procedures, available online at:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>

“The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the University and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others' work as one's own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but also undermines the educational process

## **Standards**

Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not restricted to the following:

**Cheating** is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- the use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
- fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, results, sources for papers or reports, or in clinical practice, as in reporting experiments, measurements, statistical analyses, tests, or other studies never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data;
- falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
- copying from another student's work;
- actions that destroy or alter the work of another student;
- unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
- the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
- submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
- dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

**Plagiarism** is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.

### **Other breaches of academic integrity include:**

- the misrepresentation of one's own or another's identity for academic purposes;
- the misrepresentation of material facts or circumstances in relation to examinations, papers, or other evaluative activities;
- the sale of papers, essays, or research for fraudulent use;
- the alteration or falsification of official University records;
- the unauthorized use of University academic facilities or equipment, including computer accounts and files;
- the unauthorized recording, sale, purchase, or use of academic lectures, academic computer software, or other instructional materials;

- the expropriation or abuse of ideas and preliminary data obtained during the process of editorial or peer review of work submitted to journals, or in proposals for funding by agency panels or by internal University committees;
- the expropriation and/or inappropriate dissemination of personally-identifying human subject data;
- the unauthorized removal, mutilation, or deliberate concealment of materials in University libraries, media, or academic resource centers.

**Collusion** is defined as assistance or an attempt to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty. Collusion is distinct from collaborative learning, which may be a valuable component of students' scholarly development. Acceptable levels of collaboration vary in different courses, and students are expected to consult with their instructor if they are uncertain whether their cooperative activities are acceptable.”

## **E. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you are a student with a disability, please let me know early in the semester, so I can direct you where to find the assistance you might need.

Boston College has a Disability Services Office to “assist students with disabilities at Boston College in achieving their educational, career, and personal goals through the full range of institutional and community resources. The office ensures that students with disabilities receive support services and accommodations that allow them equal access to all Boston College programs and the opportunity to realize potential and develop effective self-advocacy skills.

Cf., <http://www.bc.edu/offices/odsd/services/disabilityservices/>

## **F. SCHEDULE TO READINGS BY THE DUE DATE**

### **Week 1**

#### **I: INTRODUCTION**

Sept 6 & 8: Introduction and overview of the course and the field  
Weitz, Pp 1 - 9; Conrad Pp 1 - 6

### **Weeks 2 - 5**

#### **II: SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY: Social Causes of Disease**

Sept 13<sup>th</sup> – Weitz Chapter 2

Sept 15<sup>th</sup> – Abraham Pp 1 – 59

Sept 20<sup>th</sup> - Conrad Pp 50-51, 68-75; Abraham Pp 60 - 110

#### **Social Sources of Health and Illness: Gender**

Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> - Weitz Chapter 3, Pp 51 - 58; Conrad Pp 94-108; 162-174; Abraham Pp 111-145

#### **Social Sources of Health and Illness: Social Class and Race**

Sept 27<sup>th</sup> – Abraham Pp 146 to end; Weitz Chapter 3 Pp 58 - 82

Sept 29<sup>th</sup> – Video: “Health Care: Your Money or Your Life.”

**Health and Illness in Developing Countries**

Oct 4th - Weitz Chapter 4

Oct 6th – **Article hand out:**

Hunt C 1989 "Migrant labor and Sexually Transmitted Disease: AIDS in Africa" Journal of Health and Social Behavior; 30: 4, 353-373

**Weeks 6 & 7**

**III: THE EXPERIENCE OF ILLNESS: Sociological and Medical Models of Illness**

Oct 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> - Weitz Chapter 5; **Article hand out:**

Brown, Phil – “*Naming and Framing: The Social Construction of Diagnosis and Illness.*”

Oct 18<sup>th</sup> – Weitz Chapter 6;

Oct 20<sup>th</sup> – **Mid-Term Exam**

**Week 8**

**IV: THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

**The US Health Care System**

Oct 25<sup>th</sup> – Weitz Chapter 8

**Health Care Systems in Other Countries**

Oct 27<sup>th</sup> - Weitz Chapter 9

**Week 9**

**V: THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY**

Nov 1<sup>st</sup> – Weitz Chapter 10;

Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> - Conrad Pp 153-161; 175-204

**Week 10**

**Health Professionals: Rise and fall of Medical Dominance**

Nov. 8 & 10<sup>th</sup> Weitz Pp 321 - 337

**Weeks 11 & 12**

**Medical Care Professionals: Interaction between Doctors and Patients**

Nov 15<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> – Weitz Pp 339 – 375;

Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> - Conrad Pp 317 – 331; 347 – 366

Nov 24<sup>th</sup> **HAPPY TURKEY DAY!!**

**Weeks 13 & 14**

**VI: ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE**

Nov 29<sup>th</sup> – Dec 1<sup>st</sup> - Conrad Pp 465 - 481

Dec 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> – Weitz Pp 361 – 394; Conrad Pp 465 – 564

**FINAL EXAM: Saturday, Dec 17<sup>th</sup>, 9:00AM**