

**Sociology of HIV/AIDS: Global and U.S. Experiences of Epidemic  
SC 077—Spring 2007**

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 11:00

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Hours: Monday 1:30-2:30 and by appt.

**Course Description:** Epidemics are both biological and social phenomenon. HIV/AIDS illustrates this perhaps better than any other disease. In this course, we examine global and U.S. experiences of the epidemic from a sociological perspective. We explore the social forces that impact and determine the course and experience of the epidemic *as we also* explore the impact that the epidemic has had on communities and cultures worldwide. The course surveys 1) the history and epidemiology of the epidemic; 2) the social construction of the disease; 3) the impact upon and response from particularly affected communities and social groups; 4) social issues in treatment and prevention; and 5) the politics of governmental, non-governmental and grassroots responses to the disease.

**Course Overview:**

*CORE theme: Perennial Questions*

As we focus on the AIDS epidemic, the course addresses perennial questions of health and society. Some questions we address in the course: What responsibility do governmental institutions bear in protecting citizens from disease and infection? What responsibility to individuals bear in protecting themselves? What institutions bear the responsibility for providing treatment of epidemic disease? How and why are some diseases constructed as moral failures? Does it make sense to talk of victims and perpetrators when it comes to infectious disease? How can a disease—a clearly biological phenomenon—be “socially constructed”? What can social science contribute to understanding, prevention, and treatment of disease?

*CORE theme: Historical Perspective*

The course surveys the history of HIV/AIDS, from its discovery in the U.S. to its identification and expansion as a global phenomenon. The course also situates the HIV/AIDS epidemic in context and comparison with other epidemics. Knowledge about and perspectives on HIV/AIDS have changed significantly in the last 25 years of the disease. This history sheds light on the social construction of this and all disease.

*CORE theme: Crafting a Personal Philosophy*

Many of our readings and materials in the course take a critical stance. The materials selected for the course critique existing frameworks for understanding and fighting HIV/AIDS and also suggest visions for more socially just approaches to the disease. Students in the course are encouraged to engage with the critical stance of the material and, further, to develop their own critical approach. Students are encouraged to articulate elements of their personal philosophy during discussion and in the writing and presentation component of the course (see below).

*CORE theme: Cultural Diversity*

An early AIDS activist refrain went, “AIDS does not discriminate.” This has proved to be only part of the story. HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacts several social groups, particularly gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, African-Americans, sex workers (prostitutes), IV drug users. Globally HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacts several regions, including regions of sub-Saharan Africa, South America, Asia (especially India and Thailand) and Russia. HIV/AIDS affects a diversity of the population. The course investigates the impact of culture on disease transmission, prevention and treatment and considers the role that cultural diversity plays in the diversity of U.S. and global experiences of the epidemic.

*CORE theme: Methodology*

In this course, students are introduced to a variety of methods for appreciating social aspects of disease from philosophy, cultural criticism, political science, medical sociology, medical anthropology, ethnography and public health.

**Required Texts**

- Berger, Michele Tracy. 2004. *Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Stigmatized Women With HIV/AIDS*
- Irwin, Alexander, Joyce Millen and Dorothy Fallows. 2003. *Global AIDS: Myths and Facts*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Farmer, Paul. 1999. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kane, Stephanie. 1998. *AIDS Alibis: Sex, Drugs and Crime in the Americas*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- *SC 077 Coursepack 2007*, for sale at BC Bookstore.

These texts, including the Coursepack, are available on 2 hour reserve at the O'Neill library. All are available for purchase at the BC Bookstore. Many on-line booksellers will stock these texts; you may be able to find them for a considerable discount used on-line.

**Reading Schedule**

You are expected to complete all the readings according to the schedule outlined below. Many classes will include a discussion of the readings and I will expect that you have done them. I may employ several strategies to encourage class discussion including having students prepare discussion questions, having students lead discussions, calling upon students or using pop quizzes on the readings.

*Week 1—January 15*

- Course Overview
- Basics of HIV/AIDS & HIV transmission
  - Irwin, "HIV/AIDS Basics"
  - Internet Resource: <http://www.gmhc.org/health/basics.html>
  - Browse, especially Ask Dr. K section: <http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/>

*Week 2—January 22*

- Basics of Disease Progression & Treatment
  - Internet Resource: <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/hivinf.htm> (can skip transmission section)
- Social Construction of Disease & HIV/AIDS
  - Farmer, Chapter 6
  - Oppenheimer in *Coursepack*
  - Triechler in *Coursepack*

*Week 3—January 29*

- Early History of HIV/AIDS
  - Frontline, *Age of AIDS*, In-class video presentation
- Structural Causes
  - Farmer, Introduction
  - Farmer, Chapter 2
  - Irwin, "Myth 2"
- **Conduct Medication Project this Week**

*Week 4—February 5*

- **Paper 1 on Medication Project Due Feb. 5**
- The Transnational Epidemic & Globalization
  - Irwin, “Myth 1”
  - Kane, Chapter 8
  - Internet Resource: [http://data.unaids.org/pub/EpiReport/2006/2006\\_EpiUpdate\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/EpiReport/2006/2006_EpiUpdate_en.pdf), pages 1-10, browse rest
- Blame & The Politics of Causality
  - Farmer, Chapter 4
  - Nelkin and Gilman in *Coursepack*
  - Sacks in *Coursepack*

*Week 5—February 12*

- Marginalization & The Politics of Inaction/Reaction
  - Padig & Oppenheimer in *Coursepack*
- Fear & The Politics of Sexuality
  - Miller in *Coursepack*
  - Denizet-Lewis in *Coursepack*

*Week 6—February 19*

- Blame, Marginalization, Fear & the Politics of Prevention
  - Siplon in *Coursepack*
  - Van Wagenen in *Coursepack*
  - Frontline, *Age of AIDS*, In class-video presentation
- Living with HIV/AIDS 1: Stigma
  - Berger, Chapter 1

*Week 7—February 26*

- **Paper 2 on Issue or Part 1 on Service due Feb. 26**
- Living with HIV/AIDS 1: Stigma (cont.)
  - Berger, Chapter 2
- Impact of Epidemic/Distinctly Affected Groups: *Women*

*Week 8—March 12*

- Living with HIV/AIDS 2: Reorganization & Living with Treatment
  - Green and Sobro in *Coursepack*
  - Berger, Chapter 6
  - *Undetectable*, In-class video presentation
- Impact of Epidemic/Distinctly Affected Groups: *Men who Have Sex With Men*

*Week 9—March 19*

- **Exam 1 (Take home) Due March 19**
- Prevention in Global Context
  - Kane, Chapter 1
  - Kane, Chapter 3
- Prevention Vs. Treatment
  - Irwin, “Myth 4”
  - Frontline, *Age of AIDS*, In-class video-presentation

*Week 10—March 26*

- Treatment in Global Contexts
  - Farmer, Chapter 1
  - Irwin, “Myth 5”
  - Irwin, “Myth 7”
- Impact of Epidemic/Distinctly Affected Groups: *African-Americans*

*Week 11—April 2 (No class April 6)*

- Impact of the Epidemic/Distinctly Affected Groups: IV Drug Users
  - Kane, Chapter 6
  - Kane, Chapter 7
  - *Straight Up Life*, In-class video presentation

*Week 12—April 9 (No class April 9)*

- Impact of the Epidemic/Distinctly Affected Groups: Sex Workers
  - Kane, Chapter 2
  - Kane, Chapter 4

*Week 13—April 16 (No class April 16)*

- Fighting Back
  - Farmer, Chapter 10
  - Irwin, “Myth 8”
  - Irwin, “Myth 9”
  - Irwin, “Myth 10”
  - Berger, Chapter 7

*Week 14—April 23*

- ***Paper 3 due April 23***
- Group Presentations

*Week 15—April 30*

- ***IF YOU CHOSE SERVICE OPTION FOR PAPER 2, Part 2 due May 2***
- Group Presentations

### **Course Requirements**

*In depth guidelines for each will be distributed over the course of the semester.*

#### *Outline*

Feb 5	Paper 1 on Medication Project (Approx 2 pages): 10%
Feb. 26	Paper 2 on Controversial Issue or Part 1 of Service (Approx 5-7 pages): 20%
Mar. 19	Exam 1 (Take Home): 25%
Apr. 23	Paper 3 on Research for Group Presentation (Approx 8-10 pages): 20%
Apr.23-May 2	Group Presentation: 10%
May 2	IF YOU CHOSE SERVICE OPTION FOR PAPER 2, Part 2 due
May 9 (12:30)	Exam 2: 15%

#### *Medication Project & Paper*

In this project, you will investigate and describe the basics of a commonly prescribed medication regimen for HIV, describe the regimen, conduct an exercise where you simulate adherence (or lack of) to “the drug” (using Tic Tacs or another substitute) and write a narrative about the experience. Websites are acceptable sources for this project.

#### *Paper 1 on Controversial Issue or Service*

In this paper, you will choose one of two options. Either you will (1) research a controversial issue in HIV/AIDS and write a 6 page paper OR (2) you will write part 1 of a paper on your semester-long experience volunteering for an AIDS service organization. (If you choose service option, part 2 is due at the end of semester, on or before May 2.)

#### *Exam 1*

Covers the first 8 weeks. Take-home, open book format.

### *Paper 2*

In this paper, you will choose a research topic that directly connects with material in the course, ideally connecting with one of the course topics covered. You will research and develop an 8-10 page paper on one aspect of the topic. You will combine your research with the work of members of your group to develop a group presentation.

### *Group Presentation*

15 minute presentation to the class synthesizing the research contributions of each member of your group.

### *Exam 2*

Covers material from Week 9 through Week 13. In class format, on May 9 at 12:30 p.m. Please be sure that you or your parents plan your travel so that you will be able to take the final exam on campus on the scheduled. If you cannot be on campus on May 9 to take the final, you will receive a 0 for the final exam.

### **Academic Integrity**

You must clearly cite the readings and course materials as you make use of ideas from them. (Failure to credit an author's words, phrases or *ideas* constitutes plagiarism. See university academic integrity policy at <http://www.bc.edu/integrity>.) If you turn in a paper and do not cite your source(s), you will have committed plagiarism and I will forward your case to your dean. A committee will review your case and determine an appropriate sanction. Be aware that sanctions can and do include failing the course entirely.

In writing your papers, be *very careful* about using sources from the world wide web. As noted above, be sure to cite them. Guidelines for citations will be distributed. Use sources from the world wide web *very sparingly*. In general, sources that begin with "www" found through Google or another similar search engine are not "scholarly" sources. Research papers should not be based upon such sources, but may be supplemented by them. Journal articles accessed through the BC Library On-line databases *are* scholarly sources (as are many books and some articles accessible through "Google Scholar") and may be the basis for research papers. You will receive more guidelines about the types of sources you should use in your papers as the semester unfolds.

### **Policies on Papers**

As a rule, I do not grant extensions. If you cannot finish a paper on time, consider whether or not accepting a late penalty is in your best interest. If your paper is late, I will assign a late penalty of one letter grade *per week* late. For example, if the paper is due on a Monday, you can turn it in on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or any day up to and including the following Monday and your paper will be considered one week late. Your best possible grade will be a B.

It is your responsibility to ensure I receive your paper. Unacceptable excuses: I emailed it to you, my email must be messed up. My roommate was supposed to turn it in for me. I left it in your mailbox/under your door/with the secretary, I don't know what happened to it. If I don't receive your paper the day it is due, it will be considered late.

Please print out your papers and hand them in in class. You may email me your paper only in unusual circumstances. Do not make a habit of emailing me your papers.

### **Attendance & Participation**

Your attendance is mandatory during group presentations. Aside from this, attendance and participation are not formally a part of your grade. However, I strongly recommend attending class regularly and participating in discussion. This will help you earn a good grade in the course by preparing you for your papers and your exams. It will also help make this a more fun and interesting class. Finally, your parents and/or you are (or will be) paying a great deal for this experience! Maximize it! If you love this material, share your experiences and insights from reading and learning. If you hate the material, come challenge us with your perspective. If the material just bores you, try to find something that engages you and bring that to class with you or better yet, try to figure out what is missing that would make it more interesting and bring that informed critique to class (and your papers!)

### **Final Note**

In general, expect that the course will follow this outline. Circumstances may arise that require some changes in due dates, readings, and/or specifics of assignments.