"But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a *visceral* experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body"

—Ta-Nehesi Coates

Sociology has long been concerned with the myriad of pathways through which the U.S.’s ongoing legacy of racial discrimination structures social inequality. As a consequence of racially discriminatory policies, institutional arrangements, and micro-sociological processes, discrimination across multiple levels of social organization continues to be a source of stress shaping minority health disparities over the life course. Of particular interest, is a large and growing body of health research documenting widespread African American health inequalities, further showing that disparities are not wholly explained by socioeconomic differences. African Americans are at particularly high risk for chronic conditions related to cardiovascular disease risk and mortality. Consequently, racial discrimination becomes individually embodied beginning in utero through senescence, shortening lives, and aggregating to produce costly health disparities at the population level. Though the root causes of African American health disparities are social in nature, understanding the *how* and *why* of health disparities requires further integration with biological understandings of the body. *To this end the goal of this class is to detailed survey of the discrimination-health literature integrating sociological and biological understandings of discrimination exposure, stress, and physiology over the life course.*

**Requirements:** This class is organized in a seminar format. Students are required to attend each class and actively participate in class discussions. Lack of attendance to even one class may have negative implications for your final grade in this course. All students are required to participate in discussion in every class. Students are also expect to have read ALL of the readings thoroughly and be prepared to discuss them in detail during each class session. In reading the assigned articles, you should be able to describe the content of each piece as well as discuss the scientific and theoretical motivations of the study, the strengths and weakness of the study, the adequacy of the methodology implemented, and the scientific implications.
Three major tasks are required for successfully completing this course:

**Class Discussion Leader**
Students are required to lead at least one class discussion over the course of the semester. Class discussion leaders are required to have greater knowledge regarding the topic for the day, requiring more research than assigned readings for that week (meeting with the instructor is strongly encouraged). Specifically, you should be able to discuss the larger context around this topic as well as relevant debates and trends with the class. Discussion leaders are also required to prepare discussion questions. Students are allowed to split class time with another student. You may pick the readings you would like to cover.

**Weekly Writing**
Each week, students are required to write a 1-2 page synthesis paper identifying and discussing one to two key themes connecting the assigned readings. The paper should compare and contrast the readings with attention to how the readings contribute to larger national and disciplinary debates both within Sociology or a related discipline. The synthesis should also include critical insights. Are there compelling strengths in the readings? What are weaknesses of the readings, such as major omissions or methodological concerns in the empirical papers? This exercise will aid students in integrating key ideas in the readings and to prepare for thorough, thoughtful discussions in class. Assignments are due by 5:00pm Sunday prior to each class.

**Final Paper Presentation**
In addition to the first task, leading class discussion, mentioned above, students are also required to prepare a presentation on their final paper during the last two weeks of class. This presentation should be similar to that of a professional conference presentation. Presentations will be done using Power Point (with or without handouts), providing visual aids when necessary. Presenters should be prepared to field questions.

**Final Paper**
You have one of two options for your final paper:

**Option #1**
Students may write an empirical paper in peer reviewed journal format on a topic related to health disparities. This paper should add to the field by testing untested hypotheses (or updating/improving previous hypothesis tests). The final paper should include an introduction which clearly stated your research question/s, a review of relevant literature, discussion of data and methods used to test the hypotheses, data analysis section, and discussion and conclusion section which cohesively addresses the implications of the analysis and how it contributes to the existing literature. While this is not a statistics or methods course, the choice of data and analysis must be appropriate to the research question and contemporary methods. Quantitative and qualitative analyses are both acceptable. Take advantage of this as an option for getting started on your thesis or dissertation. This paper may overlap with research being done in another class, or as part of your thesis/dissertation with the permission of the professor.
Option #2
Students may write a non-empirical paper. This paper would be an in-depth paper on a key theoretical perspective in the area of medical sociology and/or health disparities that is not fully addressed in the class or in the current discussion of health disparities over the life course. Because this is a non-empirical paper, you are required to amalgamate key research in the field regarding your topic of interest. For example, students could discuss the extent to which the social stigma of illness or disability plays a role in the perpetuation of health disparities in certain populations. In this essay, you would note the existing theoretical frameworks around social stigma and health in the U.S. (or across countries). Moreover, you would summarize the major findings of existing research testing the competing perspectives around this topic. Paper topics can also build on areas discussed in the course specifically.

Final papers should be 15 to 20 pages of text (not including references, tables, or figures; no cover pages please). Format: 12 point Times New Roman, one inch margins, double spaced, stapled, with page number printed on the bottom of each page.

Over the course of the semester I will require a 1) one page introduction of your final paper as a short proposal. This is due in week 5 and week 8. This will require you to begin thinking about your paper topic early. You will turn in a revised version of this introduction/proposal in week 8. In week 8 you will also turn in 2) a detailed outline of your entire paper. This includes a skeletal outline of the introduction, literature review, data and methods, etc.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Grading Percentages
Class participation --------------------- 10
Weekly Writing Assignments---------- 30
Class discussion leader --------------- 15
Paper intro/outline------------------- 5
Final Paper----------------------------- 30
Final Presentation--------------------- 10

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1. January 9- Introduction
  Film: The 13th

Week 2. January 16- No Class- Martin Luther King Holiday Observance
Week 3. January 23-

**Black Lives Matter: Theoretical and Historical Foundations of Racial Inequality and the Study of Biosocial Health Risk**


Week 4. January 30 – **Sign up for class discussion leaders**

**Allostasis, Risk Accumulation, and Allostatic Load**


Week 5. February 6 – **Due: 1 Paragraph paper proposal**

**Discrimination and Life Course Inequities- Pregnant Mothers- A developmental origins model**

**In-Utero Stress**


**Week 6. February 13 –**

**Birth Outcomes**

**Measuring Discrimination and Implications for Child Health and Life Chances**

**Childhood**

**Week 7. February 20 –**

**Adolescence and the Transition to Adulthood**

**Week 8. February 27–**

**Due: (1) Revised paper proposal; (2) Detailed paper outline (see instructions on page 2).**

**Chronic Stress Related Disease Risk**


**Week 9. March 6 –**

**Intersectionality of Race, Class, and Gender over the Life Course**


**Week 10. March 13 –**

**Genetics and the study of Racial Disparities**

**Genomics**


**Epigenetics- Methylation and Gene Expression**


**Week 11. March 20 – Spring Break**

**Week 12. March 27 – Genetics Continued—GxE and Measuring Accelerated Aging**

**GxE**

**Accelerated Aging**


**Week 13. April 3 – NO CLASS**

**Week 14. April 10 – Discrimination and Sleep- The missing master variable?**

**Week 15. April 17 – Final Class Presentations**

**Week 16 – Final Class Presentations continued…**
Final Papers Due Friday April 28th. NO EXCEPTIONS!
No exceptions!