OVERVIEW

This course explores how variations in the human experience have come to be understood as medical problems. We will critically examine how various social actors have deployed medicalizing discourses to reframe the boundary between normal and deviant as the (increasingly blurry) boundary between sickness and health. Rather than asking whether or not a particular difference is really a disease or illness, we will examine how it is understood by the proponents and resisters of medicalization. We will also examine the consequences of medicalization for moral responsibility, authority, knowledge and identity for society and the patient. We will ask what each actor has to gain and lose in deploying the particular discursive framing they espouse. This course is organized around five major sections, each dedicated to exploring a central concept:

I. What is medicalization  
II. Medicalization and the self  
III. Medicalization of everyday life  
IV. Medicalization of Sexualities  
V. Contested illnesses and de-medicalization  

Each section includes reading selections from sociological theorists/historians and the accounts of people who live with the consequences of medicalization. We will begin each section by placing the theme into its social-historical context. We will then familiarize ourselves with the frames each dominant actor uses to approach the difference. The arrangement of this course is designed to facilitate comparisons of medical frames. This class is also structured to teach you to apply the critical analysis assigned in class to the world around you. After taking this course, you should be able to:

1) Identify the role of medical framing in understanding variations in the human experience  
2) Compare, contrast and critically evaluate competing frames  
3) Effectively communicate a well-reasoned argument in writing and to their peers
REQUIRED BOOKS

Conrad, Peter and Joseph W. Schneider Medicalization and Deviance: From Badness to Sickness

Critser, Greg Generation RX How Prescription Drugs are Altering American Lives, Minds and Bodies.


CLASS STRUCTURE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Undergraduate Students
Your grade in this class will be determined by the following: 1) Theory applications 2) Class attendance and Participation

Graduate Students
Your grade in this class will be determined by the following: 1) Theory applications 2) Class attendance and Participation 3) Final paper

Weekly Application: Seeing Sociology in the World around You
The weekly writing assignments will require you to explain, in writing, how medicalizing discourse has been applied to a specific scenario or issue presented in class. Theory application assignments generally require you to look at phenomena through the lens of medicalization. Ask yourself, what would a sociologist studying the medicalization process "have to say" about a particular situation or phenomenon. To practice this skill, you will be required to write 10 essays that apply the readings to a new scenario. Essays should be between 500 and 750 words long and they will be assigned one week before the date they are due. Assignments must be handed in via Canvas prior to the beginning of class on Friday. One point out of five (or two for graduate students) will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. Essays are open book, and will be graded on insight, thoroughness, clarity, and overall quality of writing. If you would like me to re-grade an assignment, I will allow you to re-submit it up to one week after the due date for up to 90% of the grade (i.e. if you had 4/5 or 80% (undergrads) or 1.5/2 or 75% (grads), if you submitted a revised draft, your grade would be revised up to 90% (4.5/5 or 1.8/2).

Class participation and group discussion (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)
Your participation is required to succeed in this class. A portion of each class will be devoted to lecture; however, class discussions will be critical to developing a deeper understanding of the material. To this end, we will use breakout rooms to discuss the weekly readings for a portion of each class period. This will provide us with opportunities to engage the readings, allow for questions and intellectual exchange. Regular online participation and class attendance are therefore critical for the fulfillment of this portion of your grade.

Discussion questions Before each class (12:30pm), from week 3 forward, you will be required to submit at least three discussion questions relating to the readings for each class period. You may miss two group discussions for any reason through the semester. If you require further absences throughout the semester, please speak with me prior to missing the class and/or assignment.
Discussion summary
After each class, from week 3 forward, you will be required to submit a (brief ~150 words) summary of your group discussion. Specifically, you will be asked the following questions: What questions did your group discuss most? What topic were you most interested in? Which topic was the most challenging? Do you have any follow-up questions? Each discussion summary will contribute 2 points to your final grade, you will have until 5:00 the following day to summarize your group discussion.
You may miss two group discussions for any reason through the semester. If you require further absences throughout the semester, please speak with me prior to missing the class and/or assignment.

Mid-semester course evaluation
During week 7, I will ask you to evaluate and provide (anonymous) feedback on key aspects of the course. Only whether or not you completed the evaluation will be recorded.

Final Paper (Graduate Students)
Your final paper (8-10 pages, due May 3rd) will provide you the opportunity to explore in greater depth and detail lines of inquiry developed through engagement with class material and discussion. You will need to provide me with a proposal which you will describe to me in a meeting before March 15th. Guidelines on choosing a paper topic and writing the proposal will be distributed and discussed in class. It is your responsibility to ensure that I have approved your topic. You will also prepare a 15-minute presentation on your topic for the class during the final class periods.

Undergraduate assessments
You will choose one graduate student presentation to summarize, paying special attention to describing how the graduate student connected their empirical example to medicalization theory.

Undergraduate Student Course Requirements and Grades (100 points total):
Theory applications (10 @ 5% each) 50%
Discussion (18 @ 2% each) 36%
Mid-semester course evaluation 4%
Analysis of presentation 10%
Total: 100%

Graduate Student Course Requirements and Grades (100 points total):
Theory applications (10 @ 2% each) 20%
Discussion (18 @ 2% each) 36%
Mid-semester evaluation 4%
Final Paper: Proposal 5%
Final Paper: Presentation 15%
Final Paper: 20%
Total: 100%

Grade Scale for the Course
A+ 97-100 A 93-96 A- 90-92 B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82
C+ 77-79 C 73-76 C- 70-72 D+ 67-69 D 63-66 D- 60-62
F <=59
Academic Honesty
Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's Student Code of Conduct addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.

Services for Students with Disabilities
The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin. Bldg.; 402-472-3787.

Counseling and Psychological Services
UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS) is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. Big Red Resilience & Well-Being, (BRRWB) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770.

Video or Audiotaping Class Sessions
Due to the sensitive and controversial nature of some of the topics that will be discussed over the duration of the semester, all classes are closed to the Press/Media. No video or audio taping of class sessions is allowed unless you obtain my permission to do so.

Face Coverings Syllabus Statement
As of July 17, 2020 and until further notice, all University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) faculty, staff, students, and visitors (including contractors, service providers, and others) are required to use a facial covering at all times when indoors except under specific conditions outlined in the COVID-19 face covering policy found at: https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy. This statement is meant to clarify classroom policies for face coverings:

To protect the health and well-being of the University and wider community, UNL has implemented a policy requiring all people, including students, faculty, and staff, to wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose while on campus. The classroom is a community, and as a community, we seek to maintain the health and safety of all members by wearing face
coverings when in the classroom. Failure to comply with this policy is interpreted as a disruption of the classroom and may be a violation of UNL’s Student Code of Conduct.

Individuals who have health or medical reasons for not wearing face coverings should work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (for students) or the Office of Faculty/Staff Disability Services (for faculty and staff) to establish accommodations to address the health concern. Students who prefer not to wear a face covering should work with their advisor to arrange a fully online course schedule that does not require their presence on campus. Students in the classroom:

If a student is not properly wearing a face covering, the instructor will remind the student of the policy and ask them to comply with it. If the student will not comply with the face covering policy, the instructor will ask the student to leave the classroom, and the student may only return when they are properly wearing a face covering. If the student refuses to properly wear a face covering or leave the classroom, the instructor will dismiss the class and will report the student to Student Conduct & Community Standards for misconduct, where the student will be subject to disciplinary action.

**Instructors in the classroom:**
If an instructor is not properly wearing a face covering, students will remind the instructor of the policy and ask them to comply with it.

If an instructor will not properly wear a face covering, students may leave the classroom and should report the misconduct to the department chair or via the TIPS system for disciplinary action through faculty governance processes.

*Courses that have been granted an exception to the Face Covering Policy for pedagogical reasons are excluded. Exceptions to the Face Covering Policy are only granted after an approved health safety plan is developed.

**READING SCHEDULE**
I will attempt to follow this reading schedule, but it is subject to change at my discretion.

**I. Introduction to the course (Week 1)**

*Tuesday, January 18th: What is deviance?*

Introduction to the course (no assigned readings)

*Thursday January 20th: What is deviance?*


**Supplemental Reading**


**Tuesday January 25th: Who decides? (Week 2)**


**Thursday January 27th: Who decides? (Week 2)**


**Supplemental**


**II. Medicalization and the self (Weeks 3 and 4)**

**Tuesday February 1st: Depression (Week 3)**


**Thursday February 3rd: Depression (Week 3)**


**Supplemental Reading**


**Tuesday February 8th: Alcohol addiction and mental illness (Week 4)**


**Thursday February 10th: Alcohol addiction and mental illness (Week 4)**

**Tuesday February 15th: Alcohol addiction and mental illness (Week 5)**


**Thursday February 17th: Alcohol addiction and mental illness (Week 5)**


**Supplemental Reading**


**Tuesday February 22nd: Autism (week 6)**


**Thursday, February 24th: Autism (week 6)**


**Supplemental Reading**


**Tuesday, March 1st: ADHD (week 7)**

Thursday March 3rd: ADHD (week 7)


Supplemental Reading


III. Medicalization of everyday life and life events (Weeks 8-10)

Tuesday, March 8th: Medicalization of birth (Week 8)


Thursday, March 10th: Medicalization of birth (Week 8)


Supplemental Reading


Spring Break
*Tuesday, March 15th*: No class (week 9)  
*Thursday, March 17th*: No class (week 9)

*Tuesday, March 22nd*: Medicalization of Pain and Aging (Week 10)


*Thursday, March 24th*: Medicalization of Pain and Aging (Week 10)


Supplemental Reading


IV. Medicalization of sexualities

*Tuesday, March 29th*: Medicalization of hegemonic sexualities (week 11)


**Thursday, March 31st:** Sexuality and gender variance (week 11)
ADD Making of menopause

**Tuesday, April 5th:** Sexuality and gender variance (week 12)
ADD Low T

**Thursday, April 7th:** Medicalization of hegemonic sexualities (week 12)


**Supplemental Reading**


**Tuesday April 12th:** Sexuality and gender variance (week 13)


**Thursday, April 14th:** Sexuality and gender variance (week 13)


**V. Contested illnesses and Demedicalization**

**Tuesday April 19th:** Contested illnesses (Week 14)

**Thursday, April 21st: Contested illnesses (Week 14)**

**Tuesday, April 26th: Demedicalization (Week 15)**


**Thursday, April 28th: Demedicalization (Week 15)**

**Tuesday, May 3rd: Graduate Student Presentations (Week 16)**

**Thursday, May 5th: Undergraduate analyses of graduate student presentations (Week 16)**

**Tuesday, May 13th: Graduate student papers due, undergraduate assessments due**

**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RUBRICS**

**Reading application rubric**
Summarize the issue (1)
Describe medicalization (1)
Describe major actors (2)
Describe consequences (2)

**Discussion summaries**
Describe which discussion was the most interesting to you
Describe the discussion prompt (1)
Describe what was most interesting to you (1)

**GRADUATE STUDENT RUBRICS**
**Reading application rubric**
Summarize the issue (0.5)
Describe medicalization (0.5)
Describe major actors (0.5)
Describe consequences (0.5)

**Discussion leader questions**
Provide five thought provoking discussion questions (2)