COURSE DESCRIPTION

Medical sociology provides an analytical framework for understanding the social contexts of health, illness, and health care (www.asanet.org/medicalsociology). Criminology is traditionally defined as the study of lawmaking, law breaking, & the social reaction to crime (Sutherland, 1924). In this course, health is broadly defined to include physical health, mental health, and behavioral health (particularly law violation and substance use). Health care is pluralistically defined to include medical science, professional care, and associated industries (e.g., hospitals; treatment facilities). Likewise, the criminal justice system is defined by “systems” of criminalization, enforcement, and corrections (i.e., probation, jails, prisons, parole).

This course meets at the intersection of scholarship in medical sociology and criminology. In the first half of the course, we focus on the overlapping etiologies of physical, mental, & behavioral health from theoretical and empirical perspectives. The second half of the course shifts focus to the public health implications of/for criminal justice practices and policies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation and Attendance. As a graduate seminar, your attendance is expected. (If you are ill stay home and email me that you will be absent.) Your participation in class discussion is required. In order to participate fully, you must be prepared. Simply skimming the assigned readings is not sufficient. Rather, you should be attentive and critical as you read, which prepares you to contribute relevant ideas, reactions, and questions to the conversation. Your participation grade is based on demonstrated familiarity with the readings and engagement in class conversations. Students will self-rate their weekly participation using a rubric provided by the instructor. The instructor will take these self-assessments into consideration to assign mid-term and end-of semester participation grades. See Appendix 1 for discussion guidelines.

Homework Assignments. In addition to reading all assigned material, you are responsible for preparing a summary outline. The purpose of homework assignments is to: (1) help you process the readings; (2) prepare you to contribute fully to class discussions; (3) help you improve your writing skills. Outlines are due before class, submitted to Canvas no later than Wednesdays at 2:30. See Appendix 2 for details.

Course Project. You are responsible for preparing a critical literature review or empirical research paper. You will also present your results to the class. See Appendix 3 and additional details on Canvas.

Peer Review & Paper Discussant. Each student will serve as a discussant for another student’s paper. The discussant will provide a written (1-2 pages) and an oral review of a paper on the day that paper is
presented. The written portion should be similar to a review that one might receive from a journal reviewer (see examples on Canvas). A copy of the written portion should be given to the student and me on the day the paper is presented.

GRADING

Standard graduate course grading is on an “A-B-C” scale (above average – average – below average). Lower grades can and will be assigned if the student fails to submit an assignment or fails to meet the requirements of the course/assignment. I reserve pluses for either exceptional work (A+) or for work that is somewhere in the middle (B+, C+) but needs improvement to get over the hump. Late work will automatically be deducted 10% per day. If you have connectivity, scheduling, or other issues it is your responsibility to let me know ASAP.

In general, my interpretation of the letter grades is:

A. Main ideas from the literature/research are described correctly, and the discussion is accurate, appropriate, thoroughly explained and illustrated.
B. Basic understanding of the material shown through an accurate description and appropriate discussion
C. Some appropriate discussion, but limited understanding of the material exhibited (i.e., inaccurate description of point and/or inappropriate discussion; lack of focus)

Numerically, these grades are: A+ = 100, A = 95, B+ = 89, B = 85, C+ = 79, C = 75

Each of the items below will be assigned one of these grades. Final grade distribution:

- Class Participation: 10%
- Homework: 35%
- Prospectus & Outline: 5%
- Final Paper: 35%
- Presentation: 10%
- Paper Discussant: 5%

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES & INFORMATION

- You are responsible for reading and following all information, keeping up with materials and assignments, knowing and respecting all deadlines, and asking for assistance when you need it.
- I reserve the right to alter the syllabus to meet the demands of the course.
- Mask policy: To protect one another and our community, given current transmission level of COVID-19 in our community, masks/face coverings are required in classrooms and indoor spaces per UNL policy. Use these links keep up-to-date with WHO, CDC, Lincoln-Lancaster County, and UNL COVID-19 responses and guidelines. If UNL lifts their requirement, I respectfully request that you continue to join me in wearing a face covering during our classes.
- Inclusive and Positive Environment: I intend to foster a learning environment in which everyone can feel open to share their ideas and participate fully in class. I need your help to do it! Because the topics in this course may be emotionally charged or challenging for class members, I hope we can create an environment that is both intellectually productive and supportive for all. I expect you to show respect for others. You should thoughtfully listen to others and be able to disagree with their ideas without judging or disparaging them. This creates a positive learning space. I encourage,
welcome, and support thoughtful discussion. However, I do not tolerate discussion that becomes disrespectful or behavior that becomes threatening. All faculty, staff and students are responsible for understanding and complying with equity policies. For more information, visit www.unl.edu/equity

- **Academic Integrity:** When you place your name on an assignment, I interpret this to mean that you have received no unauthorized assistance on the assignment. Unauthorized assistance includes but is not limited to: turning in assignments as your own work when it is not; plagiarism (presenting someone else’s published ideas as your own). These acts **will not** be tolerated. You will automatically fail the course, and I will report the incident to the graduate chair. For more information, visit https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct#sectionii

- **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. To receive accommodation services, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office (www.unl.edu/ssd), 17 Louise Pound Hall, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

- **Course materials are intellectual property.** Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures, exams, and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities.

- **Weather policy:** If in-person classes are canceled, you will be notified of the instructional continuity plan for this class by email. Because we meet only once per week, expect to move to Zoom.

- **Email:** Remember that all communications with faculty are **business** communications, and write emails accordingly. Please consult this Inside Higher Ed article for formatting guidelines. Please note I only check and respond to emails during business hours (Mon-Fri, 8 to 5), and allow for a 24-hour turnaround.

- **Student Wellness Resources:** 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 24/7 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.
  - The **Center for Advocacy, Response & Education (CARE)** provides support for individuals who have experienced relationship violence or sexual assault. CARE Advocates are a **confidential** resource who can provide information about services and support decision-making. CARE can be reached by calling 402-472-3553. For after hours and weekend support, you can call **Voices of Hope** at 402-437-9302.
SCHEDULE

January 19 – Introduction to Epidemiological Criminology


January 26 – Fundamental Cause Theory


February 2 – Stress Theory / General Strain Theory

February 9 – Life Course / Developmental Theory


February 16 – Medicalization & Social Control


February 23 – Stigma

- Rothe, D.L. (2016). The Failure of the Spectacle: The Voices Within. *Critical Criminology, 24*, 279–302. (Note that this is an bioethnographic study in which an individual with mental illness graphically describes their experiences.)
March 2 – Health, Medicalization, & Criminalization on the Margins


March 9 – Violence & Public Health


March 16 – Spring Break

March 23 – Criminalization/Medicalization of Illicit Drug Use


March 30 – Policing & Public Health

April 6 – Carceral State & Health

April 13 – MSS Annual Conference – See you there!

April 20 – Health Justice, Public Health & Criminal Justice

**April 27** – Presentations

**May 4** – Presentations

**May 11** – Paper Due
APPENDIX 1 – DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Class Discussion Goals: Our collective goal is to identify the most pertinent information within the core topics from the assigned readings and stimulate discussion about these core topics. Discussions should arise from the current and previously assigned readings, as well as other literature as appropriate. We want to increase everyone’s understanding of the readings and stimulate the class’s critical evaluation of the theories, methods, and substantive applications. We should try to be balanced in our assessment by noting both the strengths and weaknesses.

Rules of Discussion
- Listen.
- Everyone has a voice. Take turns; do not dominate conversation.
- Be patient; do not interrupt.
- Take a collaborative attitude not a combative attitude.
- Ask questions; ask for clarification; ask for more information.
- Be open to new ideas and diverse thoughts.
- Practice respectful disagreement of opposing viewpoints.
- Be willing to be wrong or change your mind.
- Listen.

Come to Class Prepared to Talk: You should come to class prepared to contribute to a discussion. Read, take notes, think, and complete your summary outline and talking points/questions (see Appendix 2). Daily discussion may focus on a combination of the following:
- General questions about or clarifications for a particular reading. This allows everyone to start from the same place regarding content.
- Summarizing and clearly fleshing out the substance and meaning of the common themes (e.g., how are the concepts/theories/findings raised distinct from one another or past readings)
- Explaining the key arguments and discussing evidence for (or against) the arguments. (There may be a middle ground, too). Where do we need to go next to provide more insights into a debate? How might we resolve this debate?
- Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the theories/arguments (e.g., are there untenable assumptions or empirical evidence for or against a theory)
- Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of empirical research designs (e.g., issues of measurement reliability and validity, limits to generalizability from sampling procedures, degree of causal validity)
- Where we should go from here (what future research would you suggest, how should we refine theories or empirical research designs).

Please note: “I don’t like this” is not a critique. || “Quantitative/qualitative methods are bad” is not a critique. || “Positivism/interpretivism is better” is not a critique. || “I don’t like this author’s attitude” is not a critique. || Some version of “They didn’t include apples in this paper about oranges” is not a critique.
APPENDIX 2 – SUMMARY OUTLINES

Each week, prepare a summary outline that (1) integrates the assigned readings, (2) offers a critical analysis, and (3) lists “talking points” for further discussion. You should approach the outline as if you were drafting an entry for the *Annual Review of Sociology*. When complete, *Annual Review* articles integrate the literature to tell the reader something about the “state of the field,” identify common themes and findings across the literature, note contradictions between readings, attempt to resolve the source of such disagreements, and suggest new directions.

As you might imagine, writing such an article does not simply involve writing – a good deal of outlining and drafting happens prior to the finished product. Your outline should thus reflect that process. In your outline, following the appraisal and integration of the readings, be sure to identify unresolved issues, controversies, and directions for further research/theoretical development. At the end of your outline, add a few talking points/questions that are suitable for class discussion.

Outlines should not exceed 3 pages. Outlines should be posted BEFORE class each Wednesday by 2:30.

**Tips for your outlines that also support your class participation and discussion**

- **Use bullet points to write out** (or a diagram to draw out) key phases that allow you to highlight connections across all of the assigned readings. These connections can take many forms, such as:
  - Common themes that arise across all the readings (e.g., research questions, concepts, theories, or arguments addressed by more than one author; common empirical findings across the readings)
  - Complementary ideas that occur between articles (e.g., one article may answer or address questions raised by another) or other ideas in the field
  - Debates or contradictory ideas that occur between articles (e.g., different readings may sponsor opposing arguments or express conflicting ideas, and/or report contradictory empirical evidence) or other ideas in the field

- **Beyond simply identifying these common connections, you also need to engage with the reading** through critical analysis/evaluation. Critical analysis can take several forms, such as:
  - Your critique of the set of readings or a specific reading (e.g., what are strengths and weaknesses of the theory/argument or research design)
  - Identifying what is missing from the conversation or what else we would want to know (e.g., are there unresolved issues, clear gaps in the literature, or potential directions for future research)

- **Sometimes it is easier or more straightforward to raise critical issues in the form of a discussion question or talking point.** In your questions/points:
  - The purpose/intent may be to reveal viewpoints of your fellow students on a certain issue or topic, or it may be to generate a discussion that will help you better understand the issue or topic
  - Focus on a specific core topic that is most interesting and/or perplexing to you
  - Consider questions/points that integrate ideas from or make connections to readings completed earlier in the semester
  - For each question/talking point you develop, you should have at least the beginning of an idea for how to “answer” it.
APPENDIX 3 – COURSE PROJECT

The course project should substantially expand on a topic covered by the course or relevant topic in the field. Both types of papers should review relevant literature and theory. A critical review then presents hypotheses or directions for future research or theoretical development, similar to an Annual Review piece. An empirical paper then presents a methods section and qualitative or quantitative analysis. A critical review may be more appropriate for an early career student or for a student preparing a thesis or dissertation proposal. An empirical study may be more appropriate for an advanced student who is working on a thesis or dissertation, or working on a paper for professional presentation or publication.

Deadlines:
- A 1-2 page prospectus for the paper is due on Sun. Feb. 6. A prospectus outlines the focus of your paper, identifies key references, and describes the data (if applicable). You should plan on touching base with me at some point before submitting your prospectus to review your basic idea.
- A revised prospectus, accompanied by an outline of the paper and a more complete reference list, is due on Sun. March 6.
- A full draft of your paper should be emailed to your discussant and posted to Canvas not later than Mon. April 18. Discussants: Return comments to your peer and cc. me no later than Apr. 25.
- Presentations will be either Apr. 27 or May 4. I will random select your presentation day, unless you want to volunteer for Apr. 27. The presentation should be similar to one given at a professional meeting and be no more than 10 minutes in length. After the presentation, you will revise your paper based on the input of the assigned discussant’s comments and comments raised during class discussion.
- A final paper is due Wed. May 11. Your final paper should include a “response to reviewer” that describes how you addressed the discussant’s comments and any comments raised in class.
- If you are attempting to dovetail to your other course work or thesis/dissertation, you must confer with me first.