

**HEALTH, MEDICINE, AND SOCIETY**  
**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
**Course Syllabus**

Instructor: Dr. Lisa Kort-Butler  
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 Office: 718 Oldfather Hall  
 Walk-in office hours: Wed. & Fri. 1:30-2:30

SOCI 252  
 MWF 11:30-12:20 a.m.  
 Andersen Hall Rm. 15  
 Prereq: 3 hrs of SOCI /related soc. sci.

**Required Materials**

- Text: *The Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care: A Critical Approach, 7th Edition* by Rose Weitz
- Readings as indicated in the course schedule, posted as PDF files or HTML links on Canvas
- In Canvas, Units are organized by “Modules.” Along with additional materials, PowerPoint presentation outlines are posted chronologically.

**Course Description**

Disease unequivocally has a biological basis, but the distribution of disease, the experience of illness, and the process of recovery take place in the social world. The sociological study of health and medicine places human well-being in social context. It focuses on the relationship between social conditions and physical and mental health, differences in health across social groups and across time/place, as well as the provision of medical care and health care policies. Throughout the course, we will be discussing the concepts, approaches, and terminology of the sociology of health and medicine by way of lectures, discussions, group activities, and media.

**Course Objectives**

- To introduce students to the sociological approach to understanding health and medicine, through an array of topics, ideas, issues, and terms used by those who study health and health care.
- To foster student understanding of the social factors linked to physical and mental health, including acute illness, chronic conditions, and mental illness.
- To engage critical debates on health care issues, such as medical care and public policies.
- To encourage students to approach health and health care from a sociological perspective, rooted in the scientific method.
- To develop evidence-based critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- To equip students to use their sociological knowledge about health issues in the “real world.”

**Course Policies**

- Attendance: Your attendance is expected by university policy and by me. Although I do not “grade” attendance, being in class is the best way to get the information you need. My PowerPoint presentations will be posted online, but these postings only provide you an outline. You are responsible for any material you miss. This includes notes, films, and assignments. **I do not share my notes.** Habitual absences, tardiness, and/or early departures will be noted and will be considered in determining final grades.

- 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! 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](http://www.unl.edu/equity).
- Academic Integrity: 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. For more information, visit <https://studentconduct.unl.edu/academic-integrity>.
  - When you place your name on an assignment or exam, I interpret this to mean that you have received no unauthorized assistance. Unauthorized assistance includes but is not limited to: cheating on an exam, turning in assignments/exams as your own work when it is not, and plagiarism (presenting someone else's published ideas as your own). For more on what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, visit [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org). These acts **will not** be tolerated. In this course, the 1<sup>st</sup> offense will result in failing the assignment. The 2<sup>nd</sup> offense will result in failing the course. Infractions will also be reported to the Dean of Students.
- 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](http://www.unl.edu/ssd)), 232 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.
- Technology Issues: If you are experiencing a problem with Canvas (e.g., accessing materials, uploading information), please let me know as soon as possible. Don't wait until 30 minutes before something is due; I won't be able to help you then. For any technical or computing questions, you can contact the UNL Help Desk (<http://www.unl.edu/helpdesk>).
- Other Classroom Policies: (1) Please be courteous and **turn off** phones, iPods, and other gadgets before you enter class. This includes removing ear-buds, Bluetooth devices, etc. *I consider texting in class unnecessary and disrespectful, as is using your phone for other activities.* (2) Course materials are intellectual property. Photography, video, and audio recording in class require the instructor's permission. (3) If you choose to use a laptop/tablet in class, you should **ONLY** be using it for class purposes. *Your privileges can be revoked.* (4) Please be respectful of me and your classmates: focus on attentive listening while others are speaking. *If, for any reason, you are distracting or disrespectful to your classmates, I may deduct from your grade and/or ask you to leave class for the day.*
- 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). Allow for a 24-hour turnaround.

## Course Requirements

- **Take 4 Exams.** The exams consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. The exams are administered online at the Digital Learning Center in Love Library North. Because you have an exam window, there are no make-up exams. *All testing times must be pre-scheduled by students in advance. Students are responsible for self sign-up and early sign-up is recommended.* Plan ahead! Sign-up here: <http://its.unl.edu/dlc/students>. You are responsible for noting your test time and showing up at that time.
  - There is an OPTIONAL final exam during finals week. It is cumulative. Your score on this test can replace your lowest regular exam score or a missed exam. If the final score is lower than all other exam scores, it will not be counted. In other words, taking the final can only help your grade.
- **Class Participation.** Participation is an important part of the course. Your attendance is expected; your participation in class discussion is required. In order to participate fully, you must be prepared. Simply reading/skimming the assignment is not sufficient. Rather, you should be attentive and critical, so that you are prepared to contribute relevant ideas, reactions, and questions to the conversation. Your participation grade will be based on a combination of the following, which cannot be made-up if you miss them. The few lowest/missing grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.
  - 1) Pop quizzes on assigned readings, consisting of true/false questions
  - 2) In-class small group activities
  - 3) Short homework assignments to be used in class discussion, typically brief analyses of news stories, magazine clippings, websites, commercials, etc. Hard copies are due in class and must be submitted in person.
- **Portfolio project.** This assignment is an opportunity to dig deeper into a health issue of interest to you. Portfolios will be constructed in three segments due over the course of the semester. Assignments are submitted on-line via Canvas. No hard copies please!
  - **Portfolio poster presentations.** During the final week of class, you will create and present a visual project based on your portfolio. You are encouraged to be creative in your presentation. This is an opportunity for students to learn from one another. Students will be assigned a presentation day; other students are expected to attend and engage their classmates in conversation about their projects.

### Grading

#### Specification:

Exams (4)	40%
Portfolio Project & Poster	40%
Class Participation	20%

#### Grading scale:

97 – 100% = A+			
93 – 96% = A	83 – 86% = B	73 – 76% = C	63 – 66% = D
90 – 92% = A-	80 – 82% = B-	70 – 72% = C-	60 – 62% = D-
87 – 89% = B+	77 – 79% = C+	67 – 69% = D+	0 – 59% = F

## Other Information

Canvas: Please make sure you have a preferred contact method set in Canvas. This is how I will communicate with you throughout the semester.

Required Readings: The readings are vital parts of this course. However, from past experience I have found that some students think that an assigned reading, especially a textbook, *is* the course, and the purpose of an instructor is to guide the student through the book. This is rarely true at the college level. I do not “teach” the books. There will be overlap between the material covered in class and the readings, but do not expect one to duplicate the other. *You* are responsible for all reading assignments and asking questions about them, just as you are responsible for taking notes and asking questions during class.

Deadlines: Deadlines are deadlines! All work *must* be submitted by the posted date and time, or it will *not* be graded and you will receive a *zero*. (Properly documented excuses for illness and the like will be considered.) If you wait until the last minute and do not finish on time or experience technical difficulties, it is your responsibility. I take seriously my role in preparing you for future employment. Employers do not want excuses; they want competent people who can get the job done. I have the same expectations for my students.

Written work policies: For *all* written assignments, please follow the “written work policies” that are posted on Canvas.

Adverse Weather: If bad weather threatens, I will notify you as soon as reasonably possible if class is cancelled.

### UNL Dates to Note

- Jan. 21 = Last day to drop a class. After this date, a “W” will appear on your transcript.
- Mar. 6 = Last day to change to Pass/No Pass grade.
- Apr. 3 = Last day to withdraw from a class.

### Schedule of Readings, Exams, & Due Dates

The dates listed are the dates I expect you to have completed the assigned material.  
Please note that I reserve the right to modify the syllabus to meet the needs of the course.

Week 1	
Jan. 13	Introduction
	<b>Unit 1: Social Factors and Illness</b>
Jan. 15	Ch. 1 (W) The Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care
Jan. 17	Read <a href="#">"These Maps Show how Americans are Dying Younger"</a> Read <a href="#">"Everybody Outside the Top is Suffering: How Stress in Harming Americans' Health"</a>
Week 2	
Jan. 20	No Class – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan. 22	(PDF) Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities, by Phelan et al.
Jan. 24	Ch. 2 (W) The Social Sources of Modern Illness
Week 3	
Jan. 27	<b>Homework #1</b> due in class
Jan. 29	Ch. 3 (W) The Social Distribution of Illness in the United States.
Jan. 31	Read: <a href="#">"Patterns of Death in the South"</a>
Week 4	
Feb. 3	Ch. 4 (W) Illness and Death in Developing Nations
Feb. 5	Read <a href="#">"See How Global Health Has Changed Since You Were Born"</a> (click the Global Health Check link in the article) Read <a href="#">"Suicides of nearly 60,000 Indian farmers linked to climate change"</a> Read <a href="#">"Why climate change poses a particular threat to child health"</a> Unit 1 Review
Feb. 7	Class Cancelled... <b>Exam 1 Window:</b> Thu. Feb. 4 – Sun. Feb. 9
Feb. 9	<b>Portfolio Part 1 due:</b> post to Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
Week 5	<b>Unit 2: The Meaning and Experience of Illness</b>
Feb. 10	Ch. 5 (W) The Social Meanings of Illness
Feb. 12	Read <a href="#">"There's a highly successful treatment for opioid addiction. But stigma is holding it back."</a> (PDF) Stigma and its Public Health Implications
Feb. 14	(PDF) Morality and Health: News Media Constructions of Overweight and Eating Disorders, by Saguy & Gruys
Week 6	
Feb. 17	Ch. 6 (W) The Experience of Disability, Chronic Pain, and Chronic Illness
Feb. 19	Read <a href="#">"Researching Contested Illness: The Case of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome"</a>
Feb. 21	Ch. 7 (W) The Sociology of Mental Illness
Week 7	
Feb. 24	(PDF) Transforming Normality into Pathology, by Horwitz
Feb. 26	Read <a href="#">"AMA Urges Ban on TV Drug Ads"</a> <b>Homework #2</b> due in class Unit 2 review
Feb. 28	Class Cancelled... <b>Exam 2 Window:</b> Thu. Feb. 27 – Sun. Mar. 1
Week 8	<b>Unit 3: Professions, Patients, &amp; Healthcare Settings</b>

Mar. 2	Ch. 11 (W) The Profession of Medicine
Mar. 4	(PDF) The Continued Transformation of the Medical Profession, by Timmermans & Oh
Mar. 6	Read " <a href="#">What Doctors Can Learn from Looking at Art</a> " – Meet at Sheldon Museum
Mar 8	<b>Portfolio Part 2 due:</b> post to Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
<i>Week 9</i>	
Mar. 9	Ch. 12 (W) Other Mainstream and Alternative Health Care Providers
Mar. 11	(PDF) From Quackery to 'Complementary' Medicine: The American Medical Profession Confronts Alternative Therapies, by Winnick
Mar. 13	Read (or listen) " <a href="#">The Nursing Industry</a> "
<i>Week 10</i>	
Mar. 16	The Patients (PDF) I've had Cancer for 45 Years, by Schneider Read " <a href="#">Deadpool Gets Cancer Right</a> " Read " <a href="#">The Problem with Satisfied Patients</a> "
Mar. 18	Ch. 10 (W) Health Care Settings and Technologies
Mar. 20	(PDF) "It's Like Having a Physician in Your Pocket!" A Critical Analysis of Self-Diagnosis Smartphone Apps, by Lupton & Jutel Read " <a href="#">Dr. Google May Not Be Best</a> "
<i>Week 11</i> Mar. 23-27	<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>
<i>Week 12</i>	
Mar. 30	Read " <a href="#">Medical schools don't teach these key lessons and it's ruining our health</a> " Read " <a href="#">Overkill: An avalanche of unnecessary medical care is harming patients physically and financially. What can we do about it?</a> "
Apr. 1	Unit 3 Review <b>Homework #3 due</b> in class
Apr. 3	<i>Class Cancelled...</i> <b>Exam 3 Window:</b> Thu. Apr. 2 – Sun. Apr. 5
Apr. 5	<b>Portfolio Part 3:</b> post to Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
<i>Week 13</i>	
	<b>Unit 4: Healthcare Systems</b>
Apr. 6	Read " <a href="#">A good dentist is hard to find</a> "
Apr. 8	Ch. 8 (W) Health Care in the United States
Apr. 10	Read " <a href="#">Many dislike health care system but are pleased with their own care</a> "
<i>Week 14</i>	
Apr. 13	Ch. 9 (W) Health Care around the Globe
Apr. 15	Read: " <a href="#">Access, affordability, and insurance complexity are often worse in the United States compared to ten other countries</a> " by Schoen et al. Read: " <a href="#">In new survey of eleven countries, US adults still struggle with access to and affordability of health care</a> " by Osborn et al.
Apr. 17	(PDF) Sociology of Health Care Reform, by Mechanic & McAlpine
<i>Week 15</i>	
Apr. 20	(PDF) Transformation of the US Healthcare System: Why is Change So Difficult? by Blank
Apr. 22	Read: " <a href="#">One smart upstream investment</a> " <b>Homework #4 due</b> in class Unit 4 review

Apr. 24	<i>Class Cancelled...</i> <b>Exam 4 Window:</b> Thu. Apr. 23 – Sun. Apr. 26
<b>Week 16</b>	
Apr. 27	Poster presentations Round 1
Apr. 29	Poster presentations Round 2
May. 1	Poster presentations Round 3
<b>Finals Week</b>	<b>Optional Final Exam Window:</b> Mon. May 4 – Wed. May 6

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