

SOC 351: Medical Sociology
Block 2 2019-20
Berlin Room, Thomas Commons

Prof. Tori Barnes-Brus

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College Hall 211 Office Hours By Appointment

Class Hours: Generally M-TH 12:30PM, F 9 AM-?

Additional mornings noted on the course schedule.

This course can count as a GSS elective.



Course Description:

According to a study conducted by the Commonwealth Fund every three year, “The United States spends far more on health care than other high-income countries, with spending levels that rose continuously over the past three decades. [Further] The United States ranks last in health care system performance” among the 11 developed countries evaluated.”¹

This course provides an in-depth introduction to the major conceptual frameworks of medical sociology to interrogate the culture and delivery of health care in the contemporary U.S. Taking a critical approach, we will investigate the institution and profession of medicine as well as doctor-patient relationships, and patients’ experiences within this system. The course will explore the social, political, economic, and cultural forces in which health, illness, and medicine are produced and understood, focusing on the medicalization of American society, as well as the relationships between medicine, health, and social inequality as it relates to class, gender, and race. We will approach health and illness as social, rather than biological, endeavors, questioning normative and biological understandings of health and illness, evaluating the social structures surrounding healthcare options, and investigating individuals’ experiences with healthcare decision-making.

Learning Objectives:

After completing this course, students will have the skills to:

- ★ Apply sociological theories and concepts to explain the current debates and issues surrounding health, health care, and medicine in the U.S. (Knowledge, Inquiry)
- ★ Communicate the ways in which health, illness, and medicine are socially constructed. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Communication)
- ★ Explain the ways that notions of medicine and health permeate American society through medicine as social authority and the process of medicalization. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Intercultural Literacy)
- ★ Analyze individuals’/patients’ agency within the institution of medicine. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Intercultural Literacy)
- ★ Articulate inequalities in the ways that health and medicine are shaped and interpreted based on race, class, gender, and other social locations. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Intercultural Literacy)
- ★ Demonstrate critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills which strengthen our ability to understand, integrate, analyze, and communicate complex ideas. (Communication, Inquiry, Citizenship)

This course supports the Educational Outcomes and Priorities of the College with an emphasis on Knowledge, Inquiry, Reasoning and Communication and Intercultural Literacy.

Course Information:

This course incorporates texts by sociologists, anthropologists, doctors, and journalists, combining theoretical and empirical scholarship with public discourse. It has an average reading load of 75 pages

¹ <https://interactives.commonwealthfund.org/2017/july/mirror-mirror/>

per night. As such, it will require time, patience, and commitment to grasp the depth and nuance of the arguments and concepts presented. This means it is imperative for students to commit several hours a night to preparing for class so you are equipped and willing to contribute to the academic discussion.

As a student at a liberal arts college, you are responsible for your own engagement in the academic conversation. This means being a prepared and active participant. You must read the syllabus and all the assigned material, but as importantly, this means thinking critically, asking questions, coming to class having formulated your own ideas and responses to the course material, and engaging in dialogue with others. I will facilitate the discussion and lecture on concepts, but I also expect each student to develop, discuss, and express opinions and questions and actively listen as other students do so. You should not take this class if you feel that you are unable to (1) complete the required reading, (2) examine course material from an analytic, sociological perspective, and (3) engage in productive, challenging discussions in a non-combative manner.

Texts/Readings:

Required:

Brawley, O. W. 2011. *How We Do Harm: A Doctor Breaks Ranks About Being Sick in America*. New York: St. Martins Press.

Joffe, Carol. 2009. *Dispatches from the Abortion Wars: The Costs of Feticide to Doctors, Patients, and the Rest of Us*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Recommended:

Weitz, R. 2017. *The Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care: A Critical Approach*. Boston: Cengage Learning.

Additionally, **required articles are available on Moodle**. Print these materials and bring them to class as we will frequently reference specific passages during discussion. While diligent efforts have been made to make these items accessible, it was not possible to ensure accessibility for all materials. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have any difficulty accessing the materials.

The following book is recommended:

Bridges, K. 2011. *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site for Racialization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Assignments and Evaluation:

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| Constructive Participation & Analytic Journals | 15% |
| Hospital Land Group Presentation | 10% |
| Midterm Exam | 25% |
| Final Essay | 25% |
| Research Presentation (including script) | <u>25%</u> |
| TOTAL | 100% |

Grade Scale: I follow a traditional grading scale:

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|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| A = 93-99 | 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 and below |

Constructive Participation & Analytic Journals (15%):

Participation & Discussion (Knowledge, Intercultural Literacy, Inquiry, Communication):

This seminar class mixes lecture and discussion and is designed to promote interaction and exchange. To help us engage in discussion, most days we will begin class by writing short responses to a broad question that frames the day's materials. At the end of the class, students will reflect on the discussion and their responses, posing any questions that remain. Further, to achieve engaging class discussions, each student must contribute to the academic conversation, and be actively engaged in the discussions taking place. This requires you read carefully and think about the assigned material before every class. No one—neither professor nor student—can participate effectively without having completed and contemplated the course readings. Being an engaged, vocal, and relevant contributor to the discussion and in-class group work is imperative for success in this course. Your comments should be related to the course material and should add to the topic being discussed. At the same time class discussion is a time to “think out loud” - to try out your ideas and work through your understanding of the issues at hand. Listen to each other with patience, empathy, and mutual respect. Respectfully share your ideas and be open to opposing perspectives. It is possible to disagree and still interact respectfully. The goal for this course is for each person to participate actively every day. I know talking in class can be difficult, but I expect each of you to set individual goals for contributing to the classroom learning community. If you have not contributed to the daily class discussion, I may call on you to “think out loud” or to summarize main concepts and discussion threads.

Arriving late, inattention, sleeping, talking to neighbors, texting, facebooking, and rude or disconnected responses all show a lack of respect for the members of this class and for your own intellect. I reserve the right to limit computer use if it is distracting or I feel that students are abusing this privilege. Obviously, participation necessitates attendance, so be in class. Notify me of any college-sanctioned or pre planned absences in advance of the scheduled date. Missing more than one class period will negatively impact your participation grade. *Excessive absences may result in a failing course grade. We will have 2-3 field trips that occur outside of typical class hours (9/27 & 10/11). Attendance and meaningful participation is required. If you have an unavoidable conflict, contact me immediately.*

Analytic Journals (Knowledge, Inquiry):

Due at 11:30 AM for afternoon readings, 8 AM for morning readings. Late journals are not accepted.

Post a short analytic reflections on the day's reading to the “**Daily Journal**” forum on Moodle.

Journals should **NOT** be a summary of the readings. **Each journal must:**

- **Identify the main argument or thesis statement from each of the day's readings;**
- **Identify and briefly explain at least 1 sociological concept or theory relevant that day;**
- **Pose a “true” discussion questions that require serious reflection on the material and encourage analytical, engaged discussion;** Questions should not solicit simple summaries of the reading, simple pronouncements of opinion, or require significant factual knowledge outside of the reading material. We will use some of the questions generated in our class discussion so be prepared to discuss the questions that you pose.
- **Reflect on the readings** by offering a response to the discussion question, connecting the readings/theory to a real-world example, explaining how the theory/concepts applies to the readings, or explaining a key example or quote from the readings. This response should be approximately 100-200 words and include direct references to course material and illustrate your engagement with this material.

There are 14 different reading days, **11 journals are required for full credit, including at least 1 on Brawley and 1 on Joffe.** Completing fewer 11 journals will negatively impact your grade and submitting fewer than 8 may result in a failing grade for the course, completing more than 11 journals may increase your participation grade. Bring copies of your journals to class in order to facilitate discussion. These journals will help you process your readings and prepare for class discussion.

Hospital Land Group Presentation (10%) :

We will take a field trip to the University of Iowa Hospital on Friday, September 27th (Time TBD). Students will take notes on this trip and, in small groups, prepare a short presentation about their experience. Presentation will take place on Tuesday, 10/2 at Noon. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Communication)

Midterm (25%) :

Students will complete an in-class essay/short answer exam on **Friday, October 4th 8:AM-12:30PM**. You should anticipate a minimum of 3 hours. (Knowledge, Communication, Intercultural Literacy)

Final Essay (25%):

Students will complete a take home exam, comprised of 1-2 essays, due **Monday, October 14th** by noon. Late papers will not be accepted without prior approval. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Intercultural Literacy, Communication)

Research Project (25%):

Students will engage in a research project on a current issue relating to health, healthcare, medicalization, and/or illness that will culminate in a [PechaKucha](#) presentation on the last day of the block, **Wednesday, October 16th**. PechaKucha presentations require 20 powerpoint slides to auto-advance after 20 seconds each, for a 6 minute 40 second presentation. Slides must contain few or NO words, thus requiring the presenter to be focused and concise. To prepare for the presentation, students will submit a project proposal by **noon on Sunday, 10/6**. Students will engage in several workshops and individual meetings with the professor to assist the development of the project. Completing all components of the projects is paramount for success, thus neglecting any components will negatively impact one's grade. More information will be posted on Moodle. (Knowledge, Inquiry, Intercultural Literacy, Communication)

Additional Resources:

There are a number of resources on campus to support your academic work. I strongly encourage you to utilize the support of Laura Farmer and other consultants in the Writing Studio; Matt Zhorne in the Academic Media Studio, Meghan Yaminishi, Social Science Librarian, and Jessica Johanningmeier, the Quantitative Reasoning Consultant. These individuals and offices can provide basic help as well as advanced guidance to help polish your research, writing, and presentation skills.

Policies

Missed/Late Work:

Students are responsible for all assignments and materials covered in class, whether or not they attend and regardless of the reasons for absence. Without either prior approval or evidence of a serious emergency, late journals and make-up work for classroom assignments will not be accepted and other late work may be penalized. If an extension is needed, please consult with me prior to the assignment deadline. *Failure to turn in any of the assignments may result in a failing grade for the course, regardless of points.*





Course Accommodations:

Cornell College is committed to being an exciting place of learning and discovery for all of its students and strives to provide equal educational opportunities to students with disabilities. [College Policy](#) regarding students with disabilities indicates that students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services

coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor, ideally within the first three days of the term, of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course. I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this class who has a particular need related to this course. If you would like to request course accommodations for any reason, see me after the first class or make alternative arrangements to meet with me. While I am reasonably sure we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary, course accommodations should be discussed pro-actively before there is a failure to meet course requirements.

Academic Honesty:

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is their own work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Compass, under the heading "[Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work](#)".

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student in this course who is involved in academic dishonesty (portraying another person's work or ideas as their own, submitting the same or similar papers in more than one course without permission from the course instructors, facilitating plagiarism, etc.) will not earn credit for the relevant assignments and may be formally charged with academic dishonesty, and could earn a failing grade in the course.

