

SOC 402: Medical Sociology  
Wednesday, 6:00 pm - 8:45 pm

Instructor: Paul Prew  
Office: AH 113  
Office Hours: 2:00-4:00 MW, or by appointment  
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### Course Description

As health care costs rise and medical bills become the primary cause of bankruptcies, concern for the health of the vast majority of residents in the US becomes paramount. Understanding the factors governing people's health and well-being is crucial to addressing health problems such as access to healthcare, level of care, spread of infectious disease, and preventable disease and death. This course focuses on the social factors driving health and illness in the US and other regions of the world. Little known to the general public, the number one predictor of a person's health is social and ecological factors. **Social class and environmental factors, such as pollution, are by far the greatest predictors of someone's health than any other single factor such as diet, medical care, high risk behaviors, and heredity.** This course will introduce students to some of the social factors affecting people's health outcomes. Students are encouraged to view health as part of a complex web of social, environmental, political, economic as well as biological forces. Of particular focus in this course are issues of diet and obesity, the social origins of the spread of disease, environmental racism, socially created hunger, and "culturally aware" care.

### Course Requirements

- I have certain expectations for you when you are in the classroom. A few things are crucial for successful completion of this course.
  - First, students are expected to have completed all of the relevant readings prior to coming to class.
    - Students must complete the readings in order to participate regularly in class discussions.
  - Class participation will be weighted heavily as part of the graded portion of the class.
    - Since you must be present to participate in class, attendance will be part of your participation grade.
    - Mere presence in class is not sufficient for participation.
      - Students using laptops, checking cell phones, or otherwise distracted during the class will be considered absent from class.
    - After the first week, more than two absences will count against participation.
    - Also included in participation are in-class assignments.
    - Your participation and performance will also be evaluated by the professor.
  - Students will also have three in-class exams covering the previous weeks' material.
  - During the term, I will assign homework based on the readings for you to bring in to class.
    - The homework assignments may be used as a basis for discussion.

### The grading for the course breaks down as follows:

30% Class Participation  
35% In-Class Essay Exams (3)  
35% Homework Assignments

### Required Texts

- Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

## Desire 2 Learn (D2L)

All of the course readings (not listed above) are available in the D2L webpage under Content in PDF format. Feel free to contact me regarding the use or access of both D2L or Adobe Acrobat Reader.

## Absences

There are no “make ups” for absences, class exercises, or participation. If you have a situation where you may need to miss an exam or a significant amount of class time, please come see me.

## Course Expectations

**The use of laptops or cell phones is not permitted in the classroom.**

- Other distractions such as text messages, conversations between students, etc. are not permitted.
- I will stop the class if students are using laptops, checking cell phones, texting, or otherwise distracting other students in the class.
  - If the problem persists, students distracting others will be asked to leave and/or failed for the course.
- I request that you abide by these expectations, not for my benefit, but for the students around you.

## Quality of Work and “Academic Honesty”

- Students are responsible for ensuring that their assignments, essays and general intellectual contributions are their own.
  - In other words, I demand that the students’ contributions are the result of their own creativity and critical assessment of the material covered during this course.
  - I encourage students to study together and discuss the course material outside of class, but do not write your assignments together.
  - Intentional or unintentional similarities in papers, exams, assignments or answers **will result in the students failing the course.**
    - This includes but is not limited to:
      - borrowing portions or whole essays from another source such as a friend or “paper mill.”
      - using authors’ ideas without proper credit,
      - submitting a paper that is not your own work,
      - similarities between student papers,
      - copying answers from others in class,
      - using notes during exams,
      - submitting work for others such as attendance sign in, assignments, etc.

## Students’ Needs

- If you are having trouble in the class understanding the material or doing well on the exams, **I encourage you to contact me.**
  - If you are worried about how you are doing in the class, contact me early in the term.
    - If you wait until the 3<sup>rd</sup> exam, it will be too late.
  - There are also resources on campus to aid your study skills and provide tutoring.
    - Check the list of resources on the next page, or ask me about your options.
- Please let me know if you have any need for accommodations in the classroom to meet your needs.
  - I realize that students have different learning styles and different needs.
    - I will do my best to help you in any way I can.
  - My objective in this course is to get you to look at the world in a different, more sociological, way.
    - My goal is not to “weed out” those who cannot do well on a test.
  - In this way, I do encourage you to use my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the course material, concerns you may have, or general issues relevant to the course.

- For those of you who may have more specific needs, MSU-Mankato provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in education programs, activities or services.
- Students with disabilities requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with the Office of Disability Services (contact info below) and then contact me as soon as possible.

### Resources for Students on Campus

There are many resources on campus for students, especially those new to the campus. Below you can find the location and contact information for various services on campus. They are there for you, so take advantage of them. All of these resources are aimed at helping you succeed and excel while you are here. Please ask me if there is anything I can help you find. I may be able direct you to other offices that can help you out.

#### Tutoring and Other Services for All Students

Center for Academic Success  
 Memorial Library in ML 125 (lower level)  
 Phone: 507-389-1791  
 Email: [academicsuccess@mnsu.edu](mailto:academicsuccess@mnsu.edu)  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/supersite/academics/success/>

#### Ethnic Student Population Resources

Office of Multicultural Affairs  
 243 Centennial Student Union  
 Mankato, MN 56001  
 Phone: 507-389-6300  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/cultdiv/programs/>

#### General Information and Help with Study Skills

Student Relations, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
 Advising "U"  
 Armstrong Hall 114  
 Phone No: 507-389-6306  
<http://sbs.mnsu.edu/prospective/advisingu.html>

#### Academic Support In Writing, Reading And Computer Literacy For Underrepresented Students

Diversity English Institute (IDEI)  
 Intercultural Center, CSU 269  
 Phone: 507-389-5594  
 Email: [amy.mukamuri@mnsu.edu](mailto:amy.mukamuri@mnsu.edu)  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/cultdiv/ei/>

#### Resources for International Students

The International Student Office (ISO)  
 Kearney International Center  
 250 Centennial Student Union  
 Phone: 507-389-1281 (V) or 800-627-3529 (MRS/TTY)  
 E-mail: [iso@mnsu.edu](mailto:iso@mnsu.edu)  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/iso/>

#### Resources for First-Generation College Students and Others

Student Support Services  
 355 Wiecking Center  
 Phone: (507) 389-2797  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/sss/>

#### Facilities and Resources for Students with Disabilities

Office of Disability Services  
 132 Memorial Library (lower level)  
 Phone: 507-389-2825 (Voice/TTY)  
 Email: [julie.snow@mnsu.edu](mailto:julie.snow@mnsu.edu)  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/dso/index.html>

#### Confidential Help to Assist Students in Resolving Personal, Social, and Educational Concerns

The Counseling Center  
 245 Centennial Student Union (CSU)  
 Phone: (507) 389-1455  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/counseling/>

#### Student Health Services

Medical Clinic  
 21 Carkoski Commons  
 Phone: 507-389-6276  
Health Education  
 100 Carkoski Commons  
 Phone: 507-389-5689  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/shs/>

## **Weekly Readings**

### **Week 1 (January 13)**

#### ***Medical Sociology: Syllabus and Course Themes***

No Readings

### **Week 2 (January 20)**

#### ***The Effects of Social Class on Health***

Wermuth, Laurie. 2003. "Global Inequality and Human Needs: Health and Illness in an Increasingly Unequal World." Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

### **Week 3 (January 27)**

#### ***Socially Created Diseases: Hysteria and Eating Disorders***

Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deirdre English. 1973. *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness*. Brooklyn: The Feminist Press.

### **Week 4 (February 3)**

#### ***Workplace Safety and Health***

Schlosser, Eric. 2002. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York: Perennial. Chapters 8-9 (168-222)

### **Week 5 (February 10)**

#### ***Indigenous Groups and Biological/Chemical Warfare***

Vallette, Jim. "Larry Summers' War Against the Earth." in *Counterpunch*.

Churchill, Ward. 1997. "Cold War Impacts on Native North America: The Political Economy of Radioactive Colonization." Pp. 289-362 in *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.

### ***Review of Course Material***

#### ***Exam 1***

No Readings

### **Week 6 (February 17)**

### **Week 7 (February 24)**

#### ***The Effect of Western Diets on the General Public***

Critser, Greg. 2004. *Fat Land: How Americans Became the Fattest People in the World*. New York: Mariner Books.

### **Week 8 (March 3)**

#### ***Indigenous and the Effects of Western Diets***

Norgaard, Kari. 2004. "The Effects of Altered Diet on the Health of the Karuk People: A Preliminary Report." Karuk Tribe of California: Department of Natural Resources Water Quality Program.

### **Spring Break**

*(No Class March 10)*

**Week 9 (March 17)**

***Aids and Africa***

Hunt, Charles. 1989. "Migrant Labor and Sexually Transmitted Disease: AIDS in Africa." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 30:353-73.

**Week 10 (March 24)**

***Developing Areas and Health***

Shiva, Vandana. 2000. *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

***Review of Course Material***

**Week 11 (March 31)**

***Exam 2***

No Readings

**Week 12 (April 7)**

***The US Health Care System***

Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Pages 3-11, 20-31, 38-59, 78-92 (Chapters 1, 3, 5, 7)

**Week 13 (April 14)**

***Culturally Aware Care***

Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Pages 140-153, 171-180, 210-224, 262-277 (Chapters 11, 13, 15, 18)

**Week 14 (April 21)**

***Course Wrap Up and Possibilities for Improvement***

Navarro, Vincente. 2003. "The Inhuman State of U.S. Health Care." *Monthly Review* 55:56-62.

Anderson, Matthew, Lanny Smith, and Victor Sidel. 2005. "What Is Social Medicine?" *Monthly Review* 56:27-34.

Guevara, Che. 2005. "On Revolutionary Medicine." *Monthly Review* 56:40-8.

Jardim, Claudia. 2005. "Prevention and Solidarity: Democratizing Health in Venezuela." *Monthly Review* 56:35-39.

***Review of Course Material***

**Week 15 (April 28)**

***Exam 3***

No Readings