



SOCIOLOGY OF ILLNESS

286.4322

University of Haifa
School of Public Health
Sharon R. Sznitman

Wednesdays, 14.00-16.00
Semester A

Course description:

In this course, we begin with the idea that we cannot understand the topics of health and illness simply by looking at biological phenomena and medical knowledge, but, instead, we must also consider a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural forces. Sociologists of health and illness (also known as “medical sociologists”) use sociological perspectives and methods to understand topics such as: social meanings of illness and health; health related stigma; and social movements surrounding health, including the ways some socially controversial behaviors are “medicalized” (e.g. illicit substance use, same sex intercourse) while others are not (legal substance use, unhealthy diet). As a society, how do our labels for “medical problems” change over time so that medical jurisdiction over a problem can expand or recede?

This course is designed to provide a broad overview of the field of medical sociology, and, to this end, we will address the topics listed above and others. We will discuss different sociological theories and examine how these contribute to a better understanding of specific contemporary issues related to health and illness.

The objectives of this course are for the students to:

- To provide students with a broad overview of the field of sociology of illness.
- Students will practice connecting their individual biographies to the historical moment
- To gain an understanding of the invisible social forces that shape our lives and health
- To highlight health policy implications of medical sociology.
- Provide students with the tools to be creative and critical in analysis of readings on health and illness.
- Rate local cultural systems as important for impacting a community’s health practices and outcomes.
- Demonstrate awareness of one’s own cultural assumptions about health and behavior
- Recognize cultural humility as a practice that applies the sociocultural model.



Course evaluation:

- In-class presentation, counting 30% of your grade
- Final take home assignment: counting 70% of your grade

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Lecture 1:

- Structure of the course
- **Introduction to medical sociology**
- What is the sociology of health?

Reading:

1. Eliezer Witztum 1 and Daniel Stein (2012), Suicide in Judaism with a Special Emphasis on Modern Israel, *Religions*, 3, 725–738; doi:10.3390/rel3030725

Lecture 2:

Social status and social roles

Reading:

1. Germov, J., Theorizing Health: Major theoretical perspectives in health sociology, in Germov, J., (2009) *Second Opinion: an introduction to health sociology*, pp: 25-44

Lecture 3

Sociological imagination

Readings:

1. Germov, J., Theorizing Health: Major theoretical perspectives in health sociology, in Germov, J., (2009) *Second Opinion: an introduction to health sociology*, pp: 25-44

Lecture 4

Agency-structure debate in sociology of illness

1. Williams, G. H. (2003). The determinants of health: structure, context and agency. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 25, 131-154.
2. Rose, G. (2001). "Sick individuals and sick populations." *International Journal of Epidemiology* 30(3): 427-432.

Lecture 5

Student debates

Lecture 6

Social construction of reality



1. Conrad P, Barker KK. (2010) The social construction of illness: key insights and policy implications. *J Health Soc Behav*;51 Suppl:S67-79. Review. PubMed PMID: 20943584.

Lecture 7

Social construction of medical knowledge

1. White, K., (2009), The social construction of medical knowledge (pp. 14-32), in An introduction to the sociology of health and illness, second edition, Sage publication: London.

Lecture 8

Medicalization

1. Anleu, S.L.R., The medicalization of deviance, in Germov, J., The class origins of health inequality, in Germov, J., (2009) *Second Opinion: an introduction to health sociology*, pp: 242-268
2. Conrad, Peter. 1992. "Medicalization and Social Control." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18: 209-32
3. van Dijk W, Meinders MJ, Tanke MAC, Westert GP, Jeurissen PPT. Medicalization Defined in Empirical Contexts - A Scoping Review. *Int J Health Policy Manag*. 2020;9(8):327-334. Published 2020 Aug 1. doi:10.15171/ijhpm.2019.101
4. Moynihan, R. (2003), The making of a disease: female sexual dysfunction, *BMJ* 2003;326:45
5. Williams, S. J., Gabe, J. and Davis, P. (2008), The sociology of pharmaceuticals: progress and prospects. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 30: 813–824. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9566.2008.01123.x

EXTRA READING:

6. Barker KK. (1998) A ship upon a stormy sea: the medicalization of pregnancy. *SocSci Med*. Oct;47(8):1067-76. PubMed PMID: 9723852.
7. Conrad, Peter. (1975). "The Discovery of Hyperkinesis: Notes on the Medicalization of Deviant Behavior." *Social Problems* 23:12–21.

Lecture 9

Medicalization continued

1. Anleu, S.L.R., The medicalization of deviance, in Germov, J., The class origins of health inequality, in Germov, J., (2009) *Second Opinion: an introduction to health sociology*, pp: 242-268
2. Conrad, Peter. 1992. "Medicalization and Social Control." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18: 209-32
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Lecture 10: Medicalization case study: ADHD

- Movie: the drugging of our children
<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-drugging-of-our-children/>

Lecture 11: Medicalization take home assignment

- Clark J. Medicalization of global health 1: has the global health agenda become too medicalized? *Glob Health Action*. 2014;7:23998. Published 2014 May 16. doi:10.3402/gha.v7.23998
- Clark J. Medicalization of global health 2: The medicalization of global mental health. *Glob Health Action*. 2014;7:24000. Published 2014 May 16. doi:10.3402/gha.v7.24000
- Clark J. Medicalization of global health 3: the medicalization of the non-communicable diseases (NCD) agenda. *Glob Health Action*. 2014;7:24002.
- Clark J. Medicalization of global health 4: the universal health coverage (UHC) campaign and the medicalization of global health. *Glob Health Action*. 2014;7:24004.

הסטודנטים נדרשים לפתוח מצלמות בשיעורים. אי פתיחת מצלמה תחשב כהיעדרות. במקרים פרטניים של קושי בפתיחת מצלמה, יש לפנות למרצה הקורס מראש לפני השיעור לקבלת אישור או עזרה



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לאבחון והתאמות בגין לקות למידה ו/או הפרעת קשב יש לפנות ליה"ל: דוא"ל- mhait@univ.haifa.ac.il, טל'- 04-8249022
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