

Sociology 314

**MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY**

Mr. Imber  
Office Hours: Th: 9-12  
or by appointment

Spring 2009  
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**OBJECTIVES:**

This course will introduce students to the medical sociological and social-epidemiological understanding of health and disease. The course is intended as a broad overview of a variety of substantive concerns in medical sociology, including medical education, the responsibilities of the physician, public health, and the intense public debates over human experimentation, stem-cell research, abortion, and euthanasia. The sociological approach that links these disparate matters uses quantitative perspectives (e.g., epidemiology) and qualitative methods (e.g., ethnography) as well as historical analysis to enable us to understand better what health and illness mean in the new century.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Bosk, Charles                      *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- Boulis, Ann K. and  
Jerry A. Jacobs                      *The Changing Face of Medicine Women Doctors and the  
Evolution of Health Care in America*
- Chambliss, Daniel F.              *Beyond Caring: Hospitals, Nurses, and the Social Organization of  
Ethics*
- Frank, Arthur W.                      *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics*
- Rothman, David J.                      *Strangers at the Bedside: A History of How Law and Bioethics  
Transformed Medical Decision Making*
- Stolley, Paul D. and  
Tamar Lasky                      *Investigating Disease Patterns: The Science of Epidemiology  
(distributed in class)*
- Woloshin, Steven et al.              *Know Your Chances: Understanding Health Statistics*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**All papers must be submitted by email by the time specified to jimber@wellesley.edu**

- A. Two papers, 8-10 pages. All assignments submitted late without permission will be penalized.

**FIRST PAPER DUE: March 5**

**SECOND PAPER DUE: April 16**

- B. Take-Home Exam Final Paper: Distributed at Last Class

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

### **PART ONE: Sociological Approaches to Health and Medicine**

February 5: Introduction to the course.

What is medical sociology?

What is social epidemiology?

Required: Steven Woloshin et al., *Know Your Chances*

### **PART TWO: Social Epidemiology: Theory and Practice**

February 12: Social Epidemiology and the Determinants of Health (Pt. 1)

Required: Stolley and Lasky, *Investigating Disease Patterns*, chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-49.

Additional: Robert H. Friis and Thomas A. Sellers, "The History and Scope of Epidemiology," ch. 1, in *Epidemiology for Public Health Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (distributed in class)

February 19: Social Epidemiology and the Determinants of Health (Pt. 2)

Required: Stolley and Lasky, *Investigating Disease Patterns*, chapters 3, 4, and 5, pp. 51-137.

Additional: Emilia Simeonova<sup>1</sup>, “Doctors, Patients, and the Racial Mortality Gap: What Are the Causes?” (distributed in class)

February 26: Thinking About Epidemiology in Sociological Perspective

Required: Jonathan B. Imber, *Trusting Doctors: The Decline of Moral Authority in American Medicine*, chapters 3 and 7 (distributed in class)

### **PART THREE: The Medical Profession in Sociological Perspective**

March 5: Two Ways to Understand the Changing Face of Medicine

Required: Ann K. Boulis and Jerry A. Jacobs, *The Changing Face of Medicine*

### **First Paper Due.**

March 12: NO CLASS: Make-up class to be scheduled.

President’s Commission on Bioethics, June 2003

#### **Session 2: Medicalization: Its Nature, Causes, and Consequences**

*Discussion of a correspondence between Paul McHugh, M.D. and Leon R. Kass, M.D.*

March 19: Medical Education and Physician Socialization (Pt. 1)

Required: Charles L. Bosk, *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure*, chapters 1 and 2.

April 2: Medical Education and Physician Socialization (Pt 2)

Required: Charles L. Bosk, *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure*, chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6..

April 9: Learning the System

Required: Daniel F. Chambliss, *Beyond Caring*

Executive Summary: *Resident Duty Hours: Enhancing Sleep, Supervision, and Safety*, by Cheryl Ulmer, Dianne Miller Wolman, Michael M.E. Johns, Editors, Committee on Optimizing Graduate Medical Trainee (Resident) Hours and Work Schedule to Improve Patient Safety, National Research Council (distributed in class)

**PART FOUR: Medical Progress: Sociological Narratives**

April 16: A Patient's Narrative

Required: Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, Ethics*

**Second Paper Due**

April 23: Visit to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Brigham's and Women's Hospital

April 30: A Public Narrative

Required: David J. Rothman, *Strangers at the Bedside: A History of How Law and Bioethics Transformed Medical Decision Making*.

**PART FIVE: The Futures of Health and Medicine: One Culture after All?**

May 7: Imber, *Trusting Doctors*, ch. 8 (distributed in class)

**Questions for Final Paper Distributed**