

SOC 4369 Public Health and Society

Spring 2011 Tuesday/Thursday 2:30 – 3:45 p.m. Classroom: GR3.606
Dr. Richard Scotch Email: scotch@utdallas.edu Phone: 972-883-2922
Office: GR3.510 Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:30 p.m. and by appointment

While people's health is the result of their individual background, behavior, and experiences, it is also profoundly shaped by the social, economic, and cultural environments in which they live and the physical and biological risks to which they are exposed. In this course we will examine how social, environmental, and population factors affect health and illness; the development of public health and epidemiology as a response to health threats, and issues in health care policy and finance that shape people's exposure to risk, access to care, and the treatments they receive. This class will involve lectures by the instructor, presentations on the readings by students, seminar discussion, and occasional guest lectures and media presentations.

Students will learn about 1) the sociological perspective on public health; 2) concepts in social epidemiology and the nature of health disparities in the contemporary United States; 3) the creation and history of the American public health system, and its responses to public health challenges; 4) factors shaping global health, and in particular public health infrastructure issues in developing countries and recent efforts to address those issues; and 5) key public policies that shape access, cost and quality within the American health care system; and 6) comparative systems for providing and financing health care in nations around the world.

Anticipated course requirements include 1) weekly quizzes covering material from the assigned readings and class presentations (40% of the final course grade); 2) four take home essays (approximately 4-5 pages each) on the required course books (40% of the final course grade), 3) a health profile portfolio dealing with a particular nation or locality's health care issues and infrastructure (10% of the final course grade); and 4) a group presentation and accompanying policy brief on a specific public health issue or controversy (10% of the final course grade). While there is no formal grade for class participation, regular attendance and participation in class discussion (or lack thereof) will be taken into account in determining the final course grade.

Primary course readings will be assigned from the texts listed below and from material available on the Internet and through McDermott Library's electronic reserves:

John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*, Penguin, 2004, ISBN 0-14-303649-1 (\$16.00)

Chloe Bird and Patricia Rieker, *Gender and Health: the Effects of Constrained Choices and Social Policies*, Cambridge University Press, 2008. (\$26.99)

T.R. Reid, *The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care* Penguin, 2009, ISBN-13: 978-1594202346 (\$16.00)

Alan Whiteside, *HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2008
ISBN 0-19-280692-0 (\$8.95)

The grading scale to be used will be: A+ 97-100, A 93-96, 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 or less. Students are responsible for understanding and following all university rules for academic honesty as stated in the university catalog; any possible violations will lead to immediate referral to the Dean of Students for disciplinary proceedings.

This class is designed to complement the material presented in SOC 4372 Health and Illness, but there is some overlap in topics to be covered. Nevertheless, students who have previously enrolled in SOC 4372 are welcome to enroll in SOC 4396 at the discretion of the instructor.

COURSE OUTLINE

The timetable for discussion of course readings is subject to revisions announced in class and through email.

January 11 – 13	The Sociology of Public Health No assigned readings
January 18 – February 4	Social Epidemiology and Health Disparities Bird and Rieker, all; eLearning material TBA ESSAY ONE DUE February 11
February 9 – 25	Public Health in the United States Barry, all; eLearning material TBA ESSAY TWO DUE March 3
March 1 – 25	Global Health Issues Whiteside, all; eLearning material TBA ESSAY THREE DUE March 31
March 15 – 17	SPRING BREAK
March 29 – April 14	Health Policy and Comparative Health Systems Reid, all; eLearning material TBA ESSAY FOUR DUE April 21
April 19 – 28	Student Presentations ESSAY 3 DUE March 11
May 10	PORTFOLIOS DUE