WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST FOR AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

We are living through a once-in-a-century global pandemic. To say that our lives have changed in the past six months is a gross understatement. Even if we are beginning to get used to these changes, none of this is normal. Some of us have lost friends and loved ones, and we are all juggling new responsibilities as we navigate an uncertain world where the rulebook has been thrown out. And relevant to this class, all of us are managing the stress and anxiety of living through historically unprecedented times. Some of us have the resources necessary to help us cope with these strains, while some of us do not.

It is important to acknowledge all of this because it is for these reasons that we cannot keep the same expectations we had before, and we cannot act as if these are normal times. We cannot make it through this without empathy, support, care, and grace. So, this course will look different than it usually does: We will not be meeting face to face. There are fewer and less demanding assignments. The grading criteria is more forgiving. You all have enough stress and uncertainty in your lives right now, and I do not want this class to add to that burden. And yet, I hope that we can retain the best elements of this class. Namely, that we have a space to talk about important issues and interesting ideas, build community, and learn from one another. I trust that we can do this. I am looking forward to getting to know you all, hearing your thoughts, and talking through these ideas with you.

AND NOW, BACK TO YOUR REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING.

Course Description:
Poor mental health and mental illness are often viewed as biological or genetic flaws. Sociologists, however, argue that mental illness is socially constructed, and that population mental health is profoundly shaped by social conditions. In this course, we will explore sociological understandings of mental health and illness. We will focus on a range of topics, including (but not limited to):

- The medicalization of deviant behavior; and how the definition of mental illness changes across time and place
- How sociologists think about, define, and measure mental health in research
- The social determinants of stress and mental health
- How inequalities in resources, power, and status “get under the skin” and influence the prevalence of mental health and well-being
- Societal responses to the mentally ill and the stigma of mental illness
- Innovative new research that brings together perspectives from multiple disciplines (sociology, economics, epidemiology, genetics, etc.)
This course is intended to give you an introduction to the Sociology of Mental Health, but because it is such a broad field, there will be many topics that are left uncovered. Due to my own research interests and expertise, this course will skew more towards contemporary, quantitative, and U.S. focused sociological research. In addition, we will mainly examine research that appears in academic journals—rather than textbooks—so that you can get a feel for how researchers are writing about issues in the major journals, and better understand the types of questions social science researchers are asking as well as potential gaps in the literature. For those of you who would like to further explore the topics that we do cover, I also include a list of optional readings (some of which will be lectured on) to peruse at your leisure. You may also use these optional readings in your student-led seminars. I am also happy to point you in the direction of other relevant research if you are so inclined. Note for QSS Students: In order to get QSS major credit for this course, you MUST be formally enrolled in QSS 30.13, not SOCY 35.

Course Structure in a COVID-19 context

This class is officially listed as “asynchronous, with synchronous components.” In practice, this course will be a mix of asynchronous lectures, synchronous and asynchronous discussion, and synchronous small group activities. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss and critically engage with the readings.

Evaluation and Grading

Discussion Posts (20%): We will be using Slack for all of our asynchronous virtual discussion this term. You will need to download Slack onto your machine, and join the SOCY 35 workspace (for more info, see https://services.dartmouth.edu/TDClient/1806/Portal/KB/?CategoryID=16984). For each unit, we will discuss the material through two slack channels: 1) a #Prompt channel, where students will respond to a question or prompt posed by Prof Houle; 2) an #Open channel, where students are free to start a discussion/respond to others on an issue of their choosing. This is an “open” discussion, so post freely on anything that is of interest to you, provided that it is relevant to the material in the unit. For example: what is an issue you feel strongly about that is addressed (or unaddressed!) in the material? What are some questions you have about the research, evidence, or theory covered? What is the most important, actionable solution to these issues? And so on. I want to hear your voice. To get full credit for this assignment, students must post to the #Open channel and the #Prompt channel at least once per Unit. For example, to get full credit in the Stigma unit, students must post at least once to the #StigmaPrompt channel and once to the #StigmaOpen channel over the course of the unit.

Student Mini-Lectures/Seminars (15%) On the last day of each unit, a group of 3-5 students will be responsible for presenting the findings of one of the optional readings from the unit to the class for 12 minutes max. Students can select any of the optional readings listed in bold at the end of the syllabus (and listed on the unit wikispage on canvas). Alternatively, students are also welcome to present on an alternative reading/study, provided that I approve it in advance. As part of these mini lectures, groups should focus on: 1) communicating the main points of the reading to the audience (what is the author asking/arguing? Why is this important?); 2) reflecting on how this article builds on/complicates/challenges what we have learned so far in this unit (and perhaps other units); 3) the implications for policy and/or future research. When presenting, keep in mind that 1) you should focus on broad brush strokes, and not get tripped up in the data/methods unless you argue these details are integral to understanding the piece; and 2) you are effectively teaching new material to your fellow classmates, who will not have read the piece you selected for the day. Students are welcome to do this as part of the synchronous class discussion on the last day of the unit, or submit an asynchronous recording to Prof Houle (which will then be uploaded to Canvas for students to view).
Midterm (20%) – The midterm will be a take-home essay exam, and you will be free to use any readings, notes, and other sources (with proper citation) in your completion of the exam. I will make the mid-term available via Canvas on or before 10/5. I *highly recommend* you get started early. **It is due by 11:59pm on 10/19. Midterms can be submitted on Canvas or via email (jason.houle@dartmouth.edu).**

Synchronous In-Class Activities (0%). We will meet synchronously 1-2 times per week during the F block. I understand that it may be difficult for some students to regularly attend our synchronous sessions. For those reasons, attendance to the synchronous sessions will not be required, and you will not be penalized if you are unable to attend. That said, I hope that you all attend as much as possible, because these sessions will be central to building community in our class.

Final Paper (Op-Ed) (45%) — For your final writing assignment, you are tasked with writing an op-ed (opinion) piece, similar to those that run in major newspapers and online outlets. Your goal is to craft an original argument, drawing from the research and theory covered this term. There are two objectives to this assignment: 1) to provide you with the tools to write op-eds in the future; 2) to give you experience translating academic research to public audiences. **Students who are taking the course for QSS credit are required to include a data visualization in their op-ed, based on an original data analysis. To produce this data visualization, students are welcome to use Tableau (https://public.tableau.com/en-us/s/), or the statistical analysis program of their choosing (ex. R, Stata).** This assignment has three components:

1) 1-2 paragraph “pitch” or proposal (11%): Your op-ed “pitch” is due to Prof Houle on 10/28. In 1-2 paragraphs, it should include 1) a clear statement of the argument you plan to make in your op-ed (a thesis statement); 2) why the issue at hand is important; 3) A properly formatted references page with at least 2 academic journal articles that you will draw evidence from in your op-ed. **QSS students should submit a plan for their proposed data analysis and visualization and explain why this visualization will be effective in making their argument.**

2) **Op-Ed First Draft (11%):** The first full draft of your op-ed is due to your peer review partner via email by Tues 11/10 (cc Prof Houle to receive credit). To receive credit for this assignment, you must provide written feedback on your peer review partner’s op-ed by 11/14. (Optional: If able, you should meet with your partner to discuss the op-ed and plans for revisions).

3) **Op-Ed Final Draft (23%):** The final draft of your Op-Ed is due to Prof Houle (via Canvas or email) by 11/30.

**COVID-19 Grading Procedures**

Given the unique nature of the situation we are in, grading will be based on the percent of assignments that you have completed:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>90%-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>80%-89.9%</td>
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<td>70%-79.9%</td>
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<td>60%-69.9%</td>
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For example, if you complete all of the assignments described above, and you hand them in on time, and include all of the required elements, you would get an A (100%) in the class. But: if you complete all of the discussion posts (20%), the student mini lecture (15%), the midterm (20%), and the final draft of the op-ed (23%), but you do not hand in the op-ed pitch or the first draft, you would receive a C in the course (78%). Incomplete assignments will receive only partial credit.
I realize that it is highly unusual to receive grades based on completion at Dartmouth. But we are in a highly unusual situation. **Students who produce excellent work that I deem to be “A” quality based on the Dartmouth Scholarship Ratings** will be awarded with a citation.

**Late Policy**

All students will receive one 24-hour extension on any class assignment of their choosing, no questions asked. Students should notify me via email if/when you plan to use their extension. After that, on any assignment, your (completion) grade will be reduced by 8 percentage points for each day late (e.g., 1 day late a grade of 100 would be reduced to a 92; 2 days, 84; and so on). **These are extraordinary times and I am willing to be flexible with this policy, within reason. Please come talk to me if you are having difficulty keeping up with the coursework.**

**Basic Needs**

Your safety and wellbeing are more important than anything going on in class. Please feel free to reach out to me if you need to talk. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing or personal safety is urged to contact the Dean of the College for support. Please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I can.

**Disability Needs**

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services office (Carson Hall, Suite 125, 646-9900). Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to me. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential, but please note that the Student Disabilities Coordinator may be consulted to verify the disability. See [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/) for more information.

**Statement of Mental Health and Resources**

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your undergraduate dean ([http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/)), Counseling and Human Development ([http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/)), and the Student Wellness Center ([http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/)).

Please also see the attached flyer at the back of the syllabus for information regarding Dartmouth’s mental health resources (compiled by former students).

One final note: there are times this term where we will discuss material that may be sensitive or triggering to students. If the material for the day is triggering (and I will include warnings where appropriate), you are welcome to leave the classroom at any time with no further explanation.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner and all members of the Dartmouth community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the Dartmouth community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. As such, dishonesty of any kind will not be
tolerated and students found in violation of the Dartmouth Academic Honor Principle will be notified and reported to the appropriate authorities (http://student-affairs.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle). Cheating and other forms of dishonesty (such as plagiarizing) often result when students feel too much pressure to perform and that they do not have the tools to achieve their goals. If you are falling behind or feeling overwhelmed, please come sit down and chat with me BEFORE you decide to cheat.

For additional resources on the Academic Honor Code, plagiarizing, and proper citation of sources, please see the following link: http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth

Religious Observance Policy
Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course (such as an exam day), please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Course Readings

*Note: The Ronson reading is what I would consider to be a “companion” reader to this course. As a popular paperback book, it repackages much of the course material in a very accessible and entertaining way. You will be responsible for the Ronson material (don’t be surprised if you see it on a midterm…), and you should feel free to discuss it on the Slack channels. Consider this book your light, entertaining reading for the term. The Ronson book is cheap, and available used from online retailers for less than $5. Dartmouth Library has access to a limited number of digital copies here and here. If you are not able to afford a copy of the book, please let me know as soon as possible.

All readings for this course will be available on Canvas, with the exception of Ronson. You are expected to complete the readings by the date listed on the syllabus before viewing the asynchronous lectures, and come to synchronous classes prepared to discuss these readings. If you were at all confused or lost by the readings, then you must come to class with questions for discussion (or raise these questions on Slack).

A general note on reading academic journal articles in this course: Much of the reading in this course will be from the major sociological journals (e.g. American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Journal of Health and Social Behavior). For this reason, the reading may be a bit more arduous for those of you who are unfamiliar with the technical style of academic journal articles. Please do not get too caught up or tripped up by the details of the analytical methods and results. I’m more concerned that you come away with the general arguments and conclusions of an article than I am with whether you understand the intricacies of multiple regression (or whatever method is used). Thus, you should pay closest attention to the “front end” of the paper (that is, the literature review and hypotheses) and the conclusion section. You should do your best with the methods and results sections of the paper, as they can provide important clues about the strengths and weaknesses of the study (e.g. how well do their variables actually measure the concepts they’re interested in? Do their data actually allow a good test of their hypothesis? Do we believe their findings?), but don’t let yourself get lost in the weeds. For those of you unfamiliar with reading academic articles, I will provide useful tips on how to read academic articles in the first or second week of the term.

All academic articles will be available on canvas, but if you want to access other academic journal articles, you will need to use the GlobalProtect VPN to access Dartmouth’s journal subscriptions.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1 (9/14-9/18): Introduction and Overview: What is the Sociology of Mental Health?

Monday: Introduction to the Course
*Click here* to access the CDC report that this article is based on.

Wednesday: An Overview of the Field

Friday: A primer on reading (and writing) academic articles

Unit 2 (9/21-9/25): The Social Construction of Mental Illness, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and Pharmaceuticals

Optional but Recommended film viewing for the unit: The Medicated Child. PBS Frontline.

Monday

Wednesday:

Friday: Student Led Mini Lecture:
Unit 3 (9/28-10/2): How Does Society Respond to Mental Illness? Labeling and Stigma

Monday:

Wednesday:

Friday; Student Led Mini Lecture:

Unit 4 (10/5-10/7): Mental Illness, Health Care, and Social Policy

Optional but Recommended film viewing for the unit: The New Asylums. PBS Frontline

Monday

Wednesday; Student Led Mini Lecture:


Unit 5 (10/9-10/12): Mental Health: How do we define it? How do we measure it?

Friday

Monday: Student Led Mini Lecture:
Unit 6 (10/14-10/16): Social Causation and Social Selection

Wednesday

Friday: Student Led Mini Lecture:

Unit 7 (10/19-10/22): How does social status get under the skin? The Variants of Social Stress Theory

Monday

Wednesday; Student Led Mini Lecture:

Friday: A Primer on Writing Op-Eds

Unit 8 (10/24-10/28): Stratification and Mental Health I: Social Class and Social Inequality:

Monday
Link, Bruce and Jo Phelan*. 1995. “Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35:80-94. *Note: this paper tends to focus on physical health, but it has important implications for mental health, and the general framework is important for understanding sociological perspectives on the social causes of health and mental health more generally
Wilkinson, Richard. “How Economic Inequality Harms Societies” *Ted Talk*

Wednesday

Friday: Student Led Mini Lecture:
Unit 9 (11/2-11/6): Stratification and Mental Health II: Gender

Monday


Wednesday
(for link to the research cited in this article, see the Garcia and Umberson paper in the optional readings):


Friday: Student Led Mini Lecture:

Unit 10 (11/9-11/13): Stratification and Mental Health III: Race, Ethnicity, and Legal Status

Monday

Wednesday

Friday: Student Led Mini Lecture:

Monday 11/16: Course Debrief: What’s Missing, What’s Next?
Revisit:
*Click here* to access the CDC report that this article is based on
Optional Readings by Unit

Unit 1


Unit 2


Schnittker, Jason, Savannah H. Larimore, and Hewig Lee. 2020. “Neither Mad Nor Bad? The Classification of Antisocial Personality Disorder Among Formerly Incarcerated Adults.” *Social Science and Medicine*, Online First.

Unit 3
Link, Bruce G, Elmer Struening, Michael Rahav, Jo Phelan, and Larry Nuttbrock. 1997. “On Stigma and


Phelan, Jo C, and Bruce Link. 2004. “Fear of People with Mental Illnesses: The Role of Personal and Impersonal Contact and Exposure to Threat or Harm.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 45:68-80


Saloner, Brendan, and Benjamin Lê Cook. 2014. “An ACA Provision Increased Treatment For Young Adults with Possible Mental Illnesses Relative To Comparison Group.” Health Affairs 33:1425-1434.


Yoon, Jangho and Jeff Luck. 2016. “Intersystem Return on Investment in Public Mental Health:
Positive Externality of Public Mental Health Expenditure for the Jail System in the U.S.”
*Social Science & Medicine* 170:133-142.

Unit 5
Horwitz, Allan. 2002. Outcomes in the Sociology of Mental Health and Illness: Where Have We Been and Where are We Going?” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42:143-151.

Unit 6
Boardman, Jason, Benjamin W. Domingue and Jonathan Daw. 2015. “What Can Genes Tell us
About the Relationship Between Education and Health?” *Social Science and Medicine* 127:171-180.


Unit 7


Fenwick, Rudy and Mark Tausig. 2007. “Work and the Political Economy of Stress:


Lei, Man Kit et al. 2015. "Neighborhood Crime And Depressive symptoms among African American Women: Genetic Moderation and Epigenetic Mediation of Effects" *Social Science and Medicine* 146:120-128.


Muntaner, Carles, Carme Borrell and Haejoo Chung. 2007. “Class Relations, Economic Inequality
18


Unit 9


18

Hart, Chloe Grace et al. 2019. “Gender and Health: Beyond Binary Categorical Measurement.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 60:101-118 (***note: this paper is about physical, rather than mental, health but is useful research for thinking beyond gender binaries.***)


Johnson, Austin and Baker Rogers. 2020. “‘We’re the Normal Ones Here’: Community Involvement, Peer Support, and Transgender Mental Health.” *Sociological Inquiry* 90:271-292.


Pudrovskaja, Tetyana and Amelia Karraker. 2014. “Gender, Job Authority, and Depression.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44:424-441.


Simon, Robin W. 2020. “Gender, Emotions, and Mental Health in the United States: Patterns, Explanations, and New Directions.” *Society and Mental Health*


Unit 10


Louie, Patricia. 2019. Revisiting the Cost of Skin Color: Discrimination, Mastery, and Mental Health Among Black Adolescents. "Society and Mental Health" (Online First).


Patler, Caitlin and Whitney Laster Pirtle. 2017. “From Undocumented to Lawfully Present: Do Changes to Legal Status Impact Psychological Well-being Among Latino Immigrant Young Adults?” Social Science & Medicine Forthcoming (Online First).


Schmitz, Rachel M. et al. 2019. “LGBTQ+ Latino/a Young People’s Interpretations of Stigma and Mental Health: An Intersectional Minority Stress Perspective.” Society and Mental Health (Online First)
For interested parties, some additional optional texts (I’m happy to lend out copies):


Classical Sociological Perspectives on Mental Health and Illness


Dartmouth’s Resources

1. Dick’s House
   a. 10-12 free counseling sessions per academic year
   b. 24hr Counselor-on-Call for crisis counseling

2. Dartmouth Peak Performance
   a. DP2 Mentors
   b. Free Counseling sessions with Mark Hiatt Ph. D

3. Other Resources:
   a. Counseling and Human Development: 603-646-9442
   b. Safety and Security: 603-646-4000
   c. UGAs

(Compiled by Jared Boyce, Will de Chatellus, Justin Halloran, Morgan McCalmon, and Keegan O’Hern)