

**Sociology 34
Health Disparities**

Winter 2019
Dartmouth College

Professor:	Emily Walton	Place:	Dartmouth 217
Office:	Blunt Hall 306B	Time:	MWF 2:10-3:15
Office Hours:	Thurs 4:30-5:30pm and by appt.	X-hour:	Thurs 1:20-2:10
email:	Emily.C.Walton@Dartmouth.edu		

Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.

-- Susan Sontag

Description of the course

What does it mean to dwell in “the night-side of life”? In this course, we will use our sociological imaginations to examine the role and meaning of health and illness in modern US society. Social, economic, and political forces powerfully influence who gets sick, the types of diseases that affect them, the treatments that are available, and the outcomes of those treatments. We will explore key social determinants of health, including: socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, neighborhood environments, social relationships, gender, and healthcare. We will discuss explanations for the relationships between these factors and various health outcomes, as well as related policy ideas. Students will spend a substantial amount of time developing their own specific interests in this field, culminating in a research paper that analyzes the relevant literature and discusses research-based policy solutions to a specific health disparity.

Course objectives

By the end of the course, students can expect to:

- Describe multiple aspects of the social environment that matter for health and identify the ways they contribute to health disparities.
- Critically evaluate evidence for social determinants of health and identify key gaps in knowledge.
- Apply a theoretical framework to understand one social determinant of health through research experience in a specific topic area.

Required reading

All the required readings are posted in electronic format on the course Canvas site. The reading load in this course is high, commensurate with an upper-level course. I expect you to read all course material before class on the day that we are discussing it.

Course requirements

1. Participation (20%)

Small group discussions (50 pts total; 20 pts for facilitating one discussion, and 30 pts for actively participating in all discussions). We will form six permanent groups of six students each. On most Fridays, we will use the first 45 minutes of the class period for small group discussions related to articles that apply or extend the week's conceptual topic. During the last 15 minutes of class, we will reflect on the readings as a class to ensure that all our questions were answered.

Each week, one student will serve as discussion leader in the small groups. Discussion leaders should come prepared with:

1. Questions that help us come to a common understanding of the readings' main arguments.
2. Outside information related to the topic. This can take the form of recent news articles, websites, examples of organizations that are taking up these issues in the real world, or other related materials that add depth to our understanding of the reading.
3. Questions that reflect on the greater implications of the findings.

The discussion facilitator should post these discussion questions and supplementary materials to Canvas under your Project Group Discussion thread at least an hour before class.

Large group discussions and activities (50 pts). Participation in class discussions and group activities makes up a very important part of your grade. How does one demonstrate participation?

1. By actively contributing to class discussion in a critical, insightful manner; and,
2. By actively contributing to small group exercises.

If you come class and sit attentively every day without actively contributing to larger group discussions or small group exercises, you will receive a 0 for your participation grade. I will keep track of your participation in discussions and in-class activities, and this record will comprise your participation grade.

2. Critical writing (20%)

Response Memos (75 pts). You will have an opportunity to write six Response Memos during the term, five of which will be graded. You may choose to write six memos and I will drop your lowest grade, or you may choose to write five response memos. Each memo should be a 1-page, single-spaced critical response to the readings. If there is more than one reading assigned for the day, you must include a synthetic account of all the readings. I suggest that you spend less time summarizing the main arguments, and more time analyzing common threads you discover across readings. Please upload an electronic copy to Canvas before class (by noon) on the day the readings are being discussed.

Response Memos should consist of two parts. First, you should work to determine the argument of the pieces, and what strategies/evidence the authors are using to support it. The first paragraph of your memo should *briefly* explicate how the authors convey and support their arguments. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- What are the authors' arguments?
- What evidence do they use to support their arguments?

Second, you should focus on your synthetic analysis and reflections on the piece(s). This means you should create and communicate your own argument about the readings. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this reading (from your perspective)?
- What questions/reflections does this piece bring up for you?
- Do the ideas in this reading relate to other concepts from the course, your life, ideas that are important to you, or current events?

News reflections (25 pts). Over the course of the term, I will post current news articles to the Discussion board on Canvas. You are responsible for reading and critically reflecting on these posts by commenting before class.

3. Papers (40%)

You are required to write two papers in this course. I will hand out detailed descriptions of each writing assignment before it is due.

Paper 1: Behavior Modification (50 pts). This paper should be approx. 5 pages, double spaced.

Paper 2: Health Equity Research Project (150 pts). In support of this research project, you are also responsible for writing a one-page proposal describing your topic and your research approach; and an outline containing your thesis statement (your argument), topic sentences (your main claims), and supporting bullet points for each body paragraph (your evidence). Your final paper should be approximately 10 pages, double spaced.

4. Exams (20%)

Midterm exam (50 pts). This will be a 65-min exam taken during a class period in Week 6. The midterm exam will require you to synthesize and analyze the course readings, discussion and lecture material. You will be graded on how well you incorporate all elements of course material into your short essay answers.

Final exam (50 pts). This will be a 65-min exam taken during a class period in Week 10. The final exam will be cumulative, requiring you to synthesize and analyze the course readings, discussion and lecture material. You will be graded on how well you incorporate all elements of course material into your short essay answers.

Grading

I follow the grading conventions as defined by the Organization, Regulations, and Courses (ORC) at Dartmouth. http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade_descriptions.html

- A Excellent** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a very high degree of originality, creativity, and excellent performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- B Good** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a high degree of originality, creativity, and good performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- C Acceptable** mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and acceptable performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- D Deficient** in mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- E Serious deficiency** in mastery of course material (student performance clearly lacking originality, creativity, and seriously deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)

I will determine your final letter grade according to the following percentage breakdown:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	95-100%
A-	92-94.9%
B+	89-91.9%
B	83-88.9%
B-	80-82.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	73-76.9%
C-	70-72.9%
D	60-69.9%
E	< 60%

Please note the following about grades: 1) I do not round grades; 2) I do not negotiate grades unless an error was made.

Important Notes

Attendance

It is my expectation that you will attend each class meeting—and that you will arrive to each class on time and stay for the duration. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class meeting; it is your responsibility to make sure you sign it each day. There are no opportunities to make up missed in-class participation work. If you miss more than three days of class, your course grade will decrease by one whole letter grade (e.g., A to B), and decrease by one step (e.g., B to B-) for each additional absence. If you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for getting notes from another student. As a general policy, I do not make my notes available. After you review your classmate's notes, I would be happy to meet with you to talk about the material or answer questions about anything that is unclear. If you anticipate missing class meetings because of athletic team participation, religious observances, or some other reason, please arrange a meeting with me at the start of the term and bring documentation of the expected conflicts.

Late work

Unexpected things will come up over the course of the term. To ensure you don't wind up in a difficult position, plan ahead; start your assignments early and finish them in advance of the deadline. Please speak with me at the beginning of the term if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time.

Response Memos are designed to help you prepare for in-class discussion, so we can make the most of our time together; therefore, they will not be accepted late.

For the papers (and all their components), the maximum grade you may earn will be reduced by one letter grade for each day late. In other words, if you turn your assignment in 1-24 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a B; if you turn your assignment in 25-48 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a C; if you turn your assignment in 49-72 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a D. I will not accept your assignment after 72 hours.

Extensions will only be given if a deadline was missed because of extreme circumstances beyond your control. For example, severe illness requiring a doctor's visit or hospitalization, or a death in the family. Generally not feeling well, forgetting about the deadline, having computer problems, needing to help your friend or family member with something, scheduling conflicts with interviews, appointments, or exams in other classes, etc. are not considered extreme circumstances. If you believe you are eligible for an extension, it is your responsibility to notify me before missing the deadline and explain in writing why your circumstances warrant an exception.

Accommodations

Students requiring disability-related accommodations must register with the Student Accessibility Services office. Once SAS has authorized accommodations, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to their professor. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential.

Communication

My office hours are for you. You are welcome to come in and talk with me about anything during my posted hours. I am also available by appointment if my office hours do not coincide with your schedule. I regularly check e-mail during the school day (9am-4pm) and will make every effort to reply to messages as soon as possible. I expect students to regularly check their Dartmouth e-mail and Canvas accounts for class announcements and updates.

Academic Honor

I will be following the Academic Honor Principle described in the Dartmouth College Student Handbook and will enforce this policy to the full extent. Students must do their own work—they will write their own papers and exams, prepare their own presentations, and cite the original sources of any material they draw on for their papers. Any student who submits work which is not his or her own, or commits other acts of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or separation. For a broad overview on the practice of citing sources, see <http://dartmouth.edu/writing-speech/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth>.

Classroom Responsibility and Courtesy

All students are expected to have a voice in our class dialogue. Class participation involves thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it involves sharing your own ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. Please put your cell phones on vibrate, do not text, and do not use your laptop during class.

The tone with which we engage one another is also extremely important and should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. You are free to disagree with the views raised in the material or by others in the class but must do so with a reasoned critique based on a complete consideration of their argument. Your own argument should be supported by sociological evidence rather than opinion or anecdotes. Disrespectful behavior such as talking while others are talking, dominating the floor, or engaging in personal attacks will not be tolerated. You are always expected to treat one another and me with respect .

Additional Support for Learning

Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology (RWIT): At RWIT, you can meet one-on-one with an undergraduate tutor to discuss a paper, research project, or multimedia assignment.

Academic Skills Center (ASC): The mission of Dartmouth's Academic Skills Center is to assist students in achieving academic success through a wide variety of services and programs. The Center is available to all students who wish to improve their academic skills and ability to learn, thereby maximizing their academic experience and allowing them to achieve greater academic performance and personal fulfillment.

Course Plan and Readings

Week One (Jan 4): What are health disparities?

- Friday** **Introduction to the course: Defining health disparities**
- Gladwell (2008), *Outliers*

Week Two (Jan 7-11): Equity and socioeconomic status

- Monday** **Health, disease, and equity**
- Sen (2002), “Why Health Equity?”
 - Braveman et al. (2011), “Health Disparities and Health Equity”

- Wednesday** **Watch film in class**
- *Unnatural Causes*, Episode 1: “In Sickness and In Wealth”

- Friday** **Education, income, and occupation**
- Adler and Newman (2002), “Socioeconomic Disparities in Health”

Week Three (Jan 14-18): Fundamental cause

- Monday** **SES as a fundamental cause of health and disease**
- Link and Phelan (1995), “Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease”

- Wednesday** **Small group discussion 1: Fundamental cause, an application**
- Lutfey and Freese (2005), “Toward Some Fundamentals of Fundamental Causality”
 - Response Memo 1 due

- Friday** **Health behaviors**
- Pampel, Krueger and Denney (2010), “Socioeconomic Disparities in Health Behaviors”
 - Mirowsky and Ross (2015), “Education, Health, and the Default American Lifestyle”
 - Marantz (1990), “Blaming the Victim”

Week Four (Jan 21-25): Unpacking the black box – health behaviors and stress

- Monday** **No class, MLK Holiday**

- Wednesday** **The stress process**
- McEwen (1998), “Stress, Adaptation, and Disease”
 - Thoits (2010), “Stress and Health”

Friday

Small group discussion 2: Behavioral interventions

- Verplanken and Wood (2006), "Interventions to Break and Create Consumer Habits"
- Ehrenreich (2018), "Why are the Poor Blamed and Shamed for their Deaths?"
- Fox and Smith (2011), "Sinner Ladies and the Gospel of Good Taste"
- Response Memo 2 due

Week Five (Jan 28-Feb 1): Race and ethnicity

Monday

Institutional racism

- Jones (2000), "Levels of Racism"
- Massey (2004), "Segregation and Stratification"
- Behavior Modification paper due

Wednesday

The interpersonal and intrapersonal burden of racism

- Kwate and Meyer (2011), "On Sticks and Stones and Broken Bones"
- Viruell-Fuentes (2011), "It's a lot of Work"

Friday

Small group discussion 3: Racism, two extensions

- Villarosa (2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html>
- Khazan (2018), "Being Black in America Can Be Hazardous to Your Health"
- Response Memo 3 due

Week Six (Feb 4-8): The power of place

Monday

No class: Midterm exam (65-min exam during class period)

Wednesday

Neighborhood context

- <http://www.vox.com/2016/6/6/11852640/cartoon-poor-neighborhoods>
- Gieryn (2000), "A Space for Place in Sociology"
- Rothwell (2015), "Sociology's Revenge"

Friday

Small group discussion 4: Environmental equity

- Muller, Sampson and Winter (2018), "The Social Causes and Consequences of Lead Exposure"
- García, Gee and Jones (2016), "A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Public Park Features in Latino Neighborhoods"
- Mueller and Abrutyn (2016), "Adolescents under Pressure"
- Response Memo 4 due

Week Seven (Feb 11-15): Gender and sexual identity

Monday Gender Disparities

- Bird and Rieker (1999), “Gender Matters”
- Courtenay (2000), “Constructions of Masculinity”
- Research paper proposal due

Wednesday Sexual and Gender Minority Health

- Mayer et al. (2008), “Sexual and Gender Minority Health”
- Meyer (2003), “Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations”

Friday Small group discussion 5: Intersectionality

- Bowleg (2012), “The Problem with the Phrase Women and Minorities”
- Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007), “You Have to Show Strength”
- Response Memo 5 due

Week Eight (Feb 18-22): The patient experience

Monday Class moved to x-hour

Wednesday The sick role

- Trillin (1981), “Of Dragons and Garden Peas”
- Glenton (2003), “Striving for the Sick Role”

Thursday Medicalization

- Loe (2008), “The Prescription of a New Generation”
- Schwartz (2016), “Generation Adderall”
- Research paper outline due

Friday Small group discussion 6: Biomedicalization

- Clarke (2014), “Biomedicalization”
- Clarke et al. (2013), “Biomedicalization”
- Response Memo 6 due

Week Nine (Feb 25-Mar 1): Health care past, present, and future

Monday Health care in the U.S.

- Carroll (2017), “The Real Reason the U.S. Has Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance”

Wednesday Money-driven medicine

- Film: *Money Driven Medicine*, “Inside the Medical-Industrial Complex”

Friday**Health care reform**

- Gawande (June 1, 2009), “The Cost Conundrum”
- Light and Terrasse (2017), “Immigrant Access in the Affordable Care Act”

Week Ten (Mar 4-6)**Monday****No class: Final exam (65-min exam during class period)****Wednesday****Course wrap-up**

- Woolf (2009), “Social Policy as Health Policy”
- Health Equity research paper due

References

- Adler, Nancy E. and Katherine Newman. 2002. "Socioeconomic Disparities in Health: Pathways and Policies." *Health Affairs* 21(2):60-76.
- Beauboeuf-Lafontant, Tamara. 2007. "You Have to Show Strength: An Exploration of Gender, Race, and Depression." *Gender & Society* 21(28-51).
- Bird, Chloe E. and Patricia P. Rieker. 1999. "Gender Matters: An Integrated Model for Understanding Men's and Women's Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 48:745-55.
- Bowleg, Lisa. 2012. "The Problem with the Phrase Women and Minorities: Intersectionality—an Important Theoretical Framework for Public Health." *American Journal of Public Health* 102(7):1267-73.
- Braveman, Paula A., Shiriki Kumanyika, Jonathan Fielding, Thomas LaVeist, Luisa N. Borrell, Ron Manderscheid and Adewale Troutman. 2011. "Health Disparities and Health Equity: The Issue Is Justice." *American Journal of Public Health* 101(S1):S149-S55.
- Carroll, Aaron E. 2017. "The Real Reason the U.S. Has Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance." The New York Times. *The Upshot*.
- Clarke, Adele E., Janet K. Shim, Laura Mamo, Jennifer Ruth Fosket and Jennifer R. Fishman. 2013. "Biomedicalization: Technoscientific Transformations of Health, Illness, and U.S. Biomedicine." *American Sociological Review* 68(2):161-94.
- Clarke, Adele E. 2014. "Biomedicalization." in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior, and Society*, edited by W. C. Cockerham, R. Dingwall and S. R. Quah: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Courtenay, Will H. 2000. "Constructions of Masculinity and Their Influence on Men's Well-Being: A Theory of Gender and Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 50:1385-401.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2018. "Why Are the Poor Blamed and Shamed for Their Deaths?" in *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/mar/31/why-poor-blamed-shamed-their-deaths-barbara-ehrenreich>.
- Fox, Rebekah and Graham Smith. 2011. "Sinner Ladies and the Gospel of Good Taste: Geographies of Food, Class and Care." *Health & Place* 17:403-12.
- García, Jennifer J., Gilbert C. Gee and Malia Jones. 2016. "A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Public Park Features in Latino Immigrant Neighborhoods." *Du Bois Review* 13(2):397-411.
- Gawande, Atul. June 1, 2009. "The Cost Conundrum." *The New Yorker*.
- Gieryn, Thomas F. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:463-96.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. 2008. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Glenton, Claire. 2003. "Chronic Back Pain Sufferers--Striving for the Sick Role." *Social Science & Medicine* 57:2243-52.
- Jones, Camara Phyllis. 2000. "Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale." *American Journal of Public Health* 90:1212-15.
- Khazan, Olga. 2018. "Being Black in America Can Be Hazardous to Your Health." in *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/07/being-black-in-america-can-be-hazardous-to-your-health/561740/>.
- Kwate, Naa Oyo A. and Ilan H. Meyer. 2011. "On Sticks and Stones and Broken Bones: Stereotypes and African American Health." *Du Bois Review* 8(1):191-98.
- Light, Donald and Mélanie Terrasse. 2017. "Immigrant Access in the Affordable Care Act: Legacies of the Confederacy." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(12):1985-2002.
- Link, Bruce G. and Jo Phelan. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35(Extra Issue):80-94.
- Loe, Meika. 2008. "The Prescription of a New Generation." *Contexts* 7(2):46-49.
- Lutfey, Karen and Jeremy Freese. 2005. "Toward Some Fundamentals of Fundamental Causality: Socioeconomic Status and Health in the Routine Clinic Visit for Diabetes." *American Journal of Sociology* 110(5):1326-72.
- Marantz, Paul R. 1990. "Blaming the Victim: The Negative Consequence of Preventive Medicine." *American Journal of Public Health* 80:1186-87.
- Massey, Douglas S. 2004. "Segregation and Stratification: A Biosocial Perspective." *Du Bois Review* 1(1):7-25.
- Mayer, Kenneth H., Judith B. Bradford, Harvey J. Makadon, Ron Stall, Hilary Goldhammer and Stewart Landers. 2008. "Sexual and Gender Minority Health: What We Know and What Needs to Be Done." *American Journal of Public Health* 98(6):989-95.

- McEwen, Bruce S. 1998. "Stress, Adaptation, and Disease: Allostasis and Allostatic Load." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 840(1):33-44.
- Meyer, Ilan H. 2003. "Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence." *Psychological Bulletin* 129(5):674-97.
- Mirowsky, John and Catherine E. Ross. 2015. "Education, Health, and the Default American Lifestyle." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 56(3):297-306.
- Mueller, Anna S. and Seth Abrutyn. 2016. "Adolescents under Pressure: A New Durkheimian Framework for Understanding Adolescent Suicide in a Cohesive Community." *American Sociological Review* 81(5):877-99.
- Muller, Christopher, Robert J. Sampson and Alix S. Winter. 2018. "The Social Causes and Consequences of Lead Exposure." *Annual Review of Sociology* 44:263-82.
- Pampel, Fred C., Patrick M. Krueger and Justin T. Denney. 2010. "Socioeconomic Disparities in Health Behaviors." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:349-70.
- Rothwell, Jonathan. 2015. "Sociology's Revenge: Moving to Opportunity (Mto) Revisited." Brookings. *Social Mobility Memos*. Retrieved 2018.
- Schwartz, Casey. 2016. "Generation Adderall." in *The New York Times Magazine*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/16/magazine/generation-adderall-addiction.html>.
- Sen, Amartya. 2002. "Why Health Equity?". *Health Economics* 11:659-66.
- Thoits, Peggy A. 2010. "Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51:S41-S53.
- Trillin, Alice Stewart. 1981. "Of Dragons and Garden Peas: A Cancer Patient Talks to Doctors." *New England Journal of Medicine* 304(12):699-701.
- Verplanken, Bas and Wendy Wood. 2006. "Interventions to Break and Create Consumer Habits." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 25(1):90-103.
- Villarosa, Linda. 2018. "Why America's Black Mothers and Babies Are in a Life-or-Death Crisis." in *The New York Times Magazine*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html>.
- Viruell-Fuentes, Edna A. 2011. "'It's a Lot of Work': Racialization Processes, Ethnic Identity Formations, and Their Health Implications." *Du Bois Review* 8(1):37-52.
- Wolf, Steven H. 2009. "Social Policy as Health Policy." *JAMA* 301(11):1166-69.