

**SOCY-4052: Social Inequalities in Health**  
**Fall Semester 2013**  
**Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-10:45 a.m. in Ketchum Hall 235**

Instructor: Ryan K. Masters

Office: Ketchum Hall 214

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 3:15-5:00 p.m.

Email: [ryan.masters@colorado.edu](mailto:ryan.masters@colorado.edu)

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### **Course Overview**

This course is intended to introduce you the origins, extent, and theories explaining inequalities in health and mortality. The primary goal is to provide an introduction to measures of health inequalities, sociological theories used to understand inequalities, and the extent of health inequalities in the United States. In addition, there will be some discussion of historical health disparities and present-day inequalities between other populations. My hope is for you to develop an understanding of the social causes of disparate health outcomes among populations, or what many have dubbed, “the social determinants of health.” Please know that I approach the content of this course in the way I know best: from a social demographer’s perspective. While many of the topics receive (and deserve to receive) sociological scrutiny from a cultural lens, my approach is largely empirical. That said, I am heavily influenced by medical sociologists and find it useful to start our exploration by thinking about health not so much as an objective, physical state, but rather as a group-level process that is substantively shaped by social context.

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

1. Read, interpret, and understand a wide array of population health measures.
2. Understand and apply several social theories about the origins and persistence of health inequalities.
3. Know the basic patterns and trends of U.S. health inequalities by race, gender, and socioeconomic class.
4. Develop an ability to discuss, contextualize, and think critically about how society shapes health.

### **Course Material:**

Books: Adam Phillips. *Darwin’s Worms: On Life Stories and Death Stories*. Basic Books, Perseus Books Group.

Steven Johnson. *The Ghost Map: The Story of London’s Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How it Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World*. Riverhead Books, Penguin Group.

Both books can be purchased online.

Online: The vast majority of course content will be made freely available on the course website.

### **Course Requirements and Assessment**

There will be 200 possible points in this course, broken down as follows:

30 (15%)	Class Participation (classroom discussion, reading Qs)
30 (15%)	One Writing Exercise
60 (30%)	Midterm
80 (40%)	Final

≥94=A 90-93=A- 87-89=B+ 84-86=B 80-83=B- 77-79=C+ 74-76=C 70-73=C- 67-69=D+ 64-66=D 60-63=D-

## **POLICIES & ACCOMMODATIONS**

### **Accommodations**

1. Appropriate academic accommodations will be provided to students with disabilities. Please contact the Disability Services office located in Center for Community as soon as possible to obtain documentation: N200 (303-492-8671)  
<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/> . Guidelines for addressing temporary medical conditions and/or injuries can be found at <http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/general-information/temporary-injuries>
2. Students involved with CU Athletics shall refer to the course schedule and alert me of any scheduling conflicts at least a month before the midterm exam. You are also responsible for developing a plan to cover any absences.
3. The University of Colorado at Boulder has both legal and moral obligations to accommodate students who choose to abstain from classes and/or miss scheduled examinations in order to observe holidays. If you plan to be absent from class to observe a holiday, please notify me of any scheduling conflicts, in writing, by September 1.

### **Course Expectations and Honor Code**

1. I expect academic integrity (and the university requires it!). While I encourage students to collaborate with one another in your studies and edit each other's work, you are expected to turn in original work and complete all exams on your own. Students caught cheating will be reported to the Honor Code Council, and will also have their course grade justly penalized. Information about the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-honor-code-policy>
2. The writing assignment shall be turned in during the first five minutes of class on the scheduled due date. Any assignment turned in after this time on the same day or emailed on the due date will be punished two points. Two additional points will be deducted for every subsequent day late.

3. Please know that the syllabus and course schedule are not set in stone. I reserve the right to change the basic course requirements, due dates, and overall content and schedule with adequate notice to students via class announcements and/or email.

### **Classroom Etiquette**

Please refrain from conversing with your neighbors during class. This can be quite disruptive to fellow students around you.

Laptops are not needed in class. (personally, I find them to be a nuisance that provide no advantage to note-taking) That said, if you choose to bring a laptop to class, please know that you're subject to a one-strike policy. If you are found using your laptop for an activity unrelated to class – a notepad/word processor – I will ban computers entirely from the classroom.

Turn off all cell phones before class begins.

You and I both have the responsibility for maintaining a professional learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to basic modicum of adult behavior may be subject to discipline. Please be courteous and sensitive to alternative perspectives, especially when dealing with topics pertaining to race, culture, religion, sexuality, political ideology, nationality, gender identity & expression, age, and disability.

Please know that the University provides me a class roster containing your picture and legal name. I will happily honor your request to remove your picture and/or address you by an alternative name if you like. Please notify me early in the semester if you would like changes to be made to the roster.

### **Email Policy**

Please include “4052” in the subject line of all course-related emails.

Please know that I will respond to course-related emails only during my office hours. If your concern is an emergency please write “4052 Emergency” and I will respond ASAP.

### **Respect, Discrimination, and/or Harassment**

Please respect your classmates. Topics discussed in class may be interpreted as contentious by some, and I would like everyone to feel comfortable enough to freely and openly participate. I do not tolerate bullying.

### **Prerequisites**

This is an upper-division course. While there are no prerequisites, the course will demand diligence, will push you to apply complex and critical thinking, and will require more from you than rote memorization of material. In short, you need to be able to demonstrate that you have thought about the arguments, theories, and concepts covered in the course.

**Fall 2013 Course Schedule: SOCY4052**

**WEEK 1: 8/27-8/29**

Introduction, Approach, & Syllabus  
Why Death? Why Health? Why Inequalities?

**Reading: *Darwin's Worms...***

**Optional Audio: Radiolab "Killing Babies, Saving the World"**

**WEEK 2: 9/3-9/5**

Historical Perspective of Disease and Death  
What is a "Cause"? What is "Unit of Analysis"?  
Key role played by Urbanization

**Reading: *Ghost Map...* (Preface through All Smell is Disease)**

**Optional Audio: Radiolab "Cities"**

**WEEK 3: 9/10-9/12**

Birth of Sociology and Epidemiology  
The Epidemiologic Transition and Demographic Transition  
Technophysio Evolution

**Reading: *Ghost Map...* (Building the Case through Epilogue)**

**Fogel & Costa (1997)**

**WEEK 4: 9/17-9/19**

Where are We (U.S.A.) Now?  
How do we measure "Health"? How do we measure "Inequalities/Disparities"?  
Distal and Proximate Causes

**Reading: *Shorter Lives, Poorer Health: Introduction***

***Shorter Lives, Poorer Health Summary***

***8 Americas***

***Categorically Unequal: Ch. 7***

**Video (9/17): *Unnatural Causes Part 1: In Sickness and In Wealth***

**WEEK 5: 9/24-9/27**

Social Determinants of Health: Relative or Absolute Deprivation?  
Fundamental Cause Theory: Do Mechanisms Matter?

**Reading: Phelan & Link 2013**

**Phelan et al.**

**Link**

**Link et al.**

**Optional Audio: Link and Carpiano**

WEEK 6: 10/1-10/3

U.S. Health Inequalities by Race/Ethnicity

**Reading: Williams et al.**

**Hummer & Chinn**

**Gee and Ford**

**Geronimus (M&M)**

WEEK 7: 10/8-10/10

U.S. Health Inequalities by Socioeconomic Class

**Reading: Elo**

**Scott**

**Lynch**

**Palloni**

WEEK 8: 10/15-10/17

U.S. Health Inequalities by Sex and Gender

**Reading: Rieker & Bird**

**Ross et al.**

**Case & Paxson**

**Read & Gorman**

WEEK 9: 10/22-10/24

-----10/22 = MIDTERM-----

The “Long Arm of Childhood” – Tying it Together with Life Course Perspectives

**Reading: Berkman**

**Hayward & Gorman**

**Masters et al.**

WEEK 10: 10/29-10/31

Social Capital, Stigma, and Segregation in Shaping Health Inequalities

**Reading: Hatzenbuehler  
Cockerham: Ch. 8  
Hansen**

**Video (10/31): *Unnatural Causes Part 5: Place Matters***

WEEK 11: 11/5-11/7

The Stress Paradigm and “Allostatic Load”  
The Role of Social Capital, Autonomy, and Control

-----11/7 = WRITING EXERCISE ASSIGNED-----

**Reading: Ross & Mirowsky  
Geronimus**

**Video (11/7): *Unnatural Causes Part 2: When the Bough Breaks***

WEEK 12: 11/12-11/14

The “Fourth” Stage of The Epidemiologic Transition (A ‘Hybristic’ Stage?)  
Lifestyle and Risk Behaviors: Smoking, Obesity, and Accidental Deaths

**Reading: Preston and Wang  
Masters et al.  
Ho**

**Video (11/14): *The Weight of the Nation Part 1: Consequences***

WEEK 13: 11/19-11/21

Health Care Policy and Inequalities in Health Services

**Reading: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health: Ch. 4  
Lutfey & Freese  
Frisbie et al.**

-----WEEK 14: THANKSGIVING BREAK-----

WEEK 15: 12/3-12/5

-----12/5=WRITING EXERCISE DUE-----

Less Developed Regions and Alternative Epidemiologic Transitions

**Reading: Bloom  
Kent & Yin**

WEEK 16: 12/10

Persistent Challenges to Population Health of LDRs and MDRs  
Aging Pops, Gender Politics, Dogma, Inequality, Affordable and Extensive Health  
Services, and Environmental Degradation.

12/12: Course Review and Final Review

**FINAL EXAM: TBA**