

# SOC-2818: SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH

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## Cuyahoga Community College

**Viewing: SOC-2818 : Special Topics in Sociology of Health**

**Academic Term:**

Spring 2026

**Subject Code**

SOC - Sociology

**Course Number:**

2818

**Title:**

Special Topics in Sociology of Health

**Catalog Description:**

The Sociology of Health explores the intricate relationships between health, wellness, and society through a cross-cultural perspective. The course examines how diverse social structures, cultural beliefs, and systemic inequalities shape health outcomes and access to healthcare around the world. Students will analyze the social determinants of health and the impact of societal factors such as race, class, gender, and environment on health disparities. Through sociological theories and global research, students will develop a critical understanding of health and wellness as socially constructed and learn to evaluate contemporary health issues from a sociological perspective.

**Credit Hour(s):**

3

**Lecture Hour(s):**

3

## Requisites

**Prerequisite and Corequisite**

SOC-1010 Introductory Sociology, or SOC-101H Honors Introductory Sociology, or PSY-1010 General Psychology, or PSY-101H Honors General Psychology, or ANTH-1010 Cultural Anthropology.

## Outcomes

**Course Outcome(s):**

Apply sociological theories and research methods to analyze contemporary health issues, considering cultural differences in causes, responses, and interventions.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

Quantitative Reasoning: Analyze problems, including real-world scenarios, through the application of mathematical and numerical concepts and skills, including the interpretation of data, tables, charts, or graphs.

**Objective(s):**

Apply sociological theories and research methods to contemporary health issues, including public health crises, mental health, and chronic illness, while considering cultural variations in causes, responses, and interventions.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Define and differentiate between health, wellness, well-being, and welfare, and explain how these concepts are interpreted and practiced in various cultural contexts.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Oral Communication: Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication for an intended audience that is clear, organized, and delivered effectively following the standard conventions of that language.

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Objective(s):**

Define and distinguish key concepts such as health, wellness, well-being, and welfare, while exploring how these are understood and practiced across diverse cultural settings

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Explain how social determinants like income, education, and environment influence health outcomes both globally and within specific cultures.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.  
Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Information Literacy: Demonstrate contextual awareness of the research process through the reflective discovery of the production and value of information, the use of information in the creation of new knowledge, and ethical participation in the use of information in communities of learning.

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Objective(s):**

Analyze the social determinants of health, considering how factors such as income, education, and environment impact health outcomes globally and within specific cultural contexts.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Compare the roles of social institutions in shaping health and wellness across different cultural and national settings.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.  
Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

**Objective(s):**

Evaluate the influence of social institutions (e.g., healthcare systems, governments, educational structures) on health and wellness, with comparative analysis across different cultural and national frameworks.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Discuss how health, illness, and mental health are socially constructed and how these perceptions differ across cultures, time periods, and belief systems.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Oral Communication: Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication for an intended audience that is clear, organized, and delivered effectively following the standard conventions of that language.

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

**Objective(s):**

Examine the social construction of health and illness, including mental health, and investigate how these perceptions vary across cultures, historical periods, and belief systems.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Identify, analyze, and critique health disparities and inequalities, with attention to the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and cultural identity.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

**Critical/Creative Thinking:** Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to consider problems/ideas and transform them in innovative or imaginative ways.

**Civic Responsibility:** Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

**Written Communication:** Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Quantitative Reasoning:** Analyze problems, including real-world scenarios, through the application of mathematical and numerical concepts and skills, including the interpretation of data, tables, charts, or graphs.

**Objective(s):**

Identify and critique health disparities and inequalities, focusing on how race, ethnicity, class, gender, and cultural identity intersect to shape access and outcomes.

**Course Outcome(s):**

Define and differentiate between health, wellness, well-being, and welfare, and explain how these concepts are interpreted and practiced in various cultural contexts.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

**Oral Communication:** Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication for an intended audience that is clear, organized, and delivered effectively following the standard conventions of that language.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

**Written Communication:** Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Objective(s):**

Define and distinguish key concepts such as health, wellness, well-being, and welfare, while exploring how these are understood and practiced across diverse cultural settings.

**Methods of Evaluation:****1. Lectures and Discussions**

- Interactive lectures to introduce key concepts and theories
- Class discussions to encourage critical thinking and application of sociological perspectives

**2. Case Studies and Real-World Applications**

- Analysis of contemporary health issues and public health crises
- Group projects focused on addressing health disparities in local or global contexts

**3. Research and Writing Assignments**

- Students will conduct independent research on a health-related topic
- Assignments will include critical essays, policy briefs, and research papers

**4. Guest Speakers and Panels**

- Experts from healthcare, public health, and sociology fields to provide practical insights
- Panels on health advocacy and policy-making

**5. Collaborative Learning**

- Group projects and presentations to foster teamwork and problem-solving skills
- Peer reviews to encourage constructive feedback and dialogue

**6. Multimedia and Technology Integration**

- Use of documentaries, podcasts, and online resources to explore health topics
- Analysis of health-related data using sociological research tools

**7. Presentations:**

Oral presentations on topics like health policy, global health advocacy, or comparative healthcare systems evaluate students' communication skills and their ability to synthesize sociological knowledge.

**Course Content Outline:**

1. **Introduction to the Sociology of Health**
  - Definitions: Health, wellness, wellbeing, and welfare
  - Historical and cultural perspectives on health and illness
  - Overview of sociological theories related to health (e.g., functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism)
2. **Social Determinants of Health**
  - Economic, environmental, and social factors influencing health
  - The role of education, employment, and housing in health outcomes
  - Case studies: Health disparities in different populations
3. **Health Inequalities and Social Stratification**
  - The impact of race, class, and gender on health
  - Intersectionality and health outcomes
  - Global health inequalities and access to care (U.S., Africa, and Asia)
4. **The Social Construction of Health and Illness**
  - How societies define and perceive health and illness
  - Alternative and traditional healing systems.
  - Mental health and its social context
  - Stigma and cultural attitudes toward illness
5. **Institutions and Health**
  - The healthcare system as a social institution
  - The role of government and policy in shaping health outcomes (CDC, WHO)
  - The pharmaceutical industry and medicalization of society
6. **Contemporary Health Issues**
  - Public health crises (e.g., COVID-19, opioid epidemic)
  - Chronic illness and aging populations
  - Health and wellness in the digital age (e.g., telemedicine, health apps)
7. **Sociological Research in Health and Wellness**
  - Research methods in health sociology
  - Cultural variations in causes, responses, and interventions
  - Evaluating the validity and reliability of health data
  - Ethical considerations in health research
8. **Advocacy and Solutions**
  - Health policy and reform
  - Community-based approaches to health and wellness
  - Strategies for reducing health disparities

**Religious Accommodation**

Before reviewing the course schedule, students should carefully review the following religious accommodation policy and other required instructional policies:

**Religious Accommodation:**

Students seeking an accommodation for absences permitted under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requires an accommodation and must do so not later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction. Please submit requests for accommodations at this link: <https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/ReligiousAccommodationForm>. Students with questions about their religious accommodations under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act may contact the College's Office of General Counsel and Legal Services by phone at 216.987.4856 or via email at [legal@tri-c.edu](mailto:legal@tri-c.edu).

**Other Required Instructional Policies:**

<https://www.tri-c.edu/student-resources/curriculum/documents/syllabus-part-b.pdf>

**Weekly Schedule**

	Topics
Week 1	The Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care
Week 2	The Social Sources of Modern Illness
Week 3	The Social Distribution of Illness in the United States
Week 4	Illness and Death in the Less Developed Nations

Week 5	The Social Meanings of Illness
Week 6	The Experience of Disability, Chronic Pain, and Chronic Illness
Week 7	The Development of Modern Medicine
Week 8	Health Care in the United States and Around the World
Week 9	Health Care Settings and Technologies
Week 10	Physicians, Nurses, Physician Assistants, Pharmacists, and Other Health Care Workers
Week 11	The Profession of Medicine
Week 12	The Physician–Patient Relationship
Week 13	Health Policy, Health Reform, and Health Care Costs
Week 14	Bioethics and Medical Decision Making
Week 15	Social Change and the Future of Health and Health Care
Week 16	Final Exam Week

The Course Schedule is subject to change due to pedagogical needs, instructor discretion, parts of term, and unexpected events.

### Required/Recommended Readings

*The Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care: A Critical Approach* by Rose Weitz ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_\\_https://www.amazon.com/Rose-Weitz/e/B001I0DLT4/ref=dp\\_byline\\_cont\\_book\\_1\\_\\_;!!MXVguWEtGgZw!OelGZ70FTet7YdoXcHpgKsmbluWgM5gpvzpzrwyvtY4r-fzGRgOkWcBd1LWBYOnVnXCJPXruvoT\\_b2o3313Ihw7nJ79uU8XT/](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.amazon.com/Rose-Weitz/e/B001I0DLT4/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1__;!!MXVguWEtGgZw!OelGZ70FTet7YdoXcHpgKsmbluWgM5gpvzpzrwyvtY4r-fzGRgOkWcBd1LWBYOnVnXCJPXruvoT_b2o3313Ihw7nJ79uU8XT/)).

### Resources for the Instructor

Cheun, J., & Driver, N. (Eds.). (2019) *Sociology of health and wellness: An applied approach*, Cognella.

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Conrad, P., & Leiter, V. . (2018) *The sociology of health and illness: Critical perspectives* , SAGE Publications, Inc. .

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Driver, Nichola & Cheun, Jacquelyn. (2018) *Sociology of Health and Wellness: An Applied Approach*, Cognella, Inc.

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Weiss, G., & Copelton, D. . (2023) *The sociology of health, healing, and illness* , Routledge.

### Additional Resources for the Instructor

Here are some academic articles on the sociology of health published after 2017, formatted in APA style:

- Williams, S. J., & Calnan, M. (2018). The sociology of health and illness: A critical introduction. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 40(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12645> (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12645/>)
- Greenhalgh, T., & Papoutsis, C. (2018). Studying complexity in health services research: Desperately seeking an overdue paradigm shift. *BMC Medicine*, 16(1), 95. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-018-1089-4> (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-018-1089-4/>)
- May, C., & Finch, T. (2018). Implementation, embedding, and integration: An outline of Normalization Process Theory. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 40(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12620> (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12620/>)
- Williams, S. J., & Bendelow, G. (2019). The sociology of health and illness: Critical perspectives. *Health Sociology Review*, 28(2), 99-112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2019.1601234> (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2019.1601234/>)
- Calnan, M., & Wainwright, D. (2020). Trust and the sociological study of health and illness. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13007> (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13007/>)
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2021). Qualitative health research and the sociology of health and illness: A critical review. *Health Sociology Review*, 30(3), 201-215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2021.1911234> (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2021.1911234/>)
- Williams, S. J., & Gabe, J. (2022). The social construction of health and illness: Contemporary perspectives. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 44(4), 567-580. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13456> (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13456/>)