

Medical Sociology

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2025 SEMESTER



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Office Hours:

- M: 7am – 9am (in-person)
- By appointment (zoom)
- Advising Drop-In Hours: 10:30 – 12:00pm (M/W)

Class Information:

Modality: In-Person

Date/Time: M/W 12:00pm – 1:15

Room: DMH 231

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What is this course about?

Welcome to Medical Sociology!

While it's common in the United States to view health and illness through a purely biological lens, the true essence of these concepts lies in their intricate dance with the broader world of social, political, economic, and cultural influences. As medical sociologists, we embark on an intellectual adventure, utilizing sociological perspectives and methods to unravel a rich tapestry of topics, including the medicalization and de-medicalization of human experiences, the social construction of illness, the complex patterns and distributions of health and sickness, the art of seeking help and managing illnesses, the interplay between doctors, nurses, and patients, and the entwining of culture, organization, and economics within healthcare institutions.

Our journey leads us to thought-provoking questions such as: How does one's social location – encompassing wealth, race, and gender – shape the very essence of human health and longevity? What factors underlie the crucial decision to seek medical attention? And how do these interactions with the healthcare system evolve based on the nature of the illness?

Get ready to embark on a captivating exploration of the social dimensions of health and illness!

What will I learn in this course?

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will analyze health inequities using current events to identify stakeholders, uncover causes, address ethics, and connect to weekly readings for real-world insights.
2. Students will apply key sociological concepts through weekly quizzes that reinforce foundational knowledge, ensure comprehension, and prepare them for discussions.
3. Students will create policy briefs that synthesize research, offer solutions, and highlight medical sociology's role in tackling health issues.
4. Students will evaluate real-world sociological scenarios on exams, demonstrating their mastery of course concepts by critically assessing and applying them to solve complex problems.

University Credit Hour Notice

This is a 3-Unit Class.

Which means by taking it SJSU expects that you will dedicate 2 hours of work outside of lecture per every credit (6 hours total per week). These 6 hours will cover time spent reading, doing written homework, and projects. You will find a breakdown of the time needed for the course in below.

What are the required texts and materials?

1. [Key Concepts in Medical Sociology](#), 3rd Edition by Johnathan Gabe and Lee F. Monaghan

What technologies will we use?

For this course you will be required to have a working smartphone, iPad, laptop, or other such device in order to participate fully in class. We will have regular participation assignments that must be turned in during the class period and will be utilizing [Socrative](#), a free online polling service.

What am I required to do in this class?

These are the assignments that will constitute your final grade.

| Assignment Type | Points Total |
|------------------------|--------------|
| In-Class Participation | 300 |
| Exams | 300 |
| Reading Quizzes | 100 |
| Current Events | 100 |
| Policy Briefs | 100 |

Homework Assignments

Current Events:

Every other week, students will select a current event to spark discussion in class. This recurring assignment is designed to connect course concepts to real-world issues, deepen your analytical skills, and promote collaborative learning through meaningful peer engagement. For each assignment, you will choose a fact or concept from the week's assigned readings and relate it to a current event from a reputable news source (e.g., AP News, Reuters, NPR, PBS, ProPublica) that occurred within the past year.

Then you will answer a set of 7 questions about the article. You'll be expected to provide thoughtful and earnest responses supported by evidence from your research and course materials. Additionally, you will explain how the current event helps make the ideas from the readings more tangible or applicable.

All sources should be cited in ASA or APA format. Your current events are due by Wednesday at 11:59 AM in Canvas.

In class, you will switch current events with your classmates and perform an activity with classmates. This final collaborative activity will help synthesize course concepts and encourage deeper engagement with real-world applications. (Total: 100 pts)

Policy Briefs:

Twice in the semester, students will be required to write a policy brief on a pre-selected subject. Policy briefs are a genre of writing that will require you to apply sociological research to real-world policy solutions. You will write a three-page (double-spaced) essay addressed to our current governor and the current director of the California Department of Public Health (google-able).

You will be given a broad topic (or you can pick one based on the weekly readings). Using the weekly readings, collect, generate and evaluate evidence and establish a position based on sociological evidence. After giving an overview of the issue, you will then propose evidence-based, actionable solutions.

Your essay must incorporate 10 sources to support your position: the course reading, a reputable news article, lecture materials, and 7 additional academic sources. Academic sources include Pew Research Center Reports or Polls, RAND research reports, OECD Data, etc.

Policy Briefs are due on their respective due dates, Friday by 5:00pm. Due dates can be found in the Course Outline.

(Total Points: 100)

Student Participation and Engagement

Participation Assignments

Participation in this course is not just a requirement—it is essential for your success. This class thrives on dynamic discussions, collaborative learning, and active engagement, and the majority of what you will gain from this course will come from your involvement during class. Your ability to connect concepts, develop critical thinking skills, and deepen your understanding of the material depends heavily on your presence and participation.

To support this, participation assignments will be collected randomly throughout the semester. These may include (but are not limited to):

- Poll-anywhere polls / word clouds/ activities
- Think-pair-share activities
- Group discussions and projects

When participating in discussions, content matters. Your contributions should be thoughtful, on-topic, and relevant to the discussion at hand. Participation is not just about speaking; it's about engaging with your peers' ideas, contributing meaningfully to group work, and demonstrating your understanding of the material. Points will be deducted for off-topic or insufficient engagement.

Remember, this class is designed to be interactive and collaborative. The more you put into the discussions and activities, the more you will gain from the course—not just in terms of grades, but in terms of skills and insights that extend beyond the classroom.

Please Note: If you are absent, you can complete a makeup assignment earning back 40 percent of the points for that missed class. You can earn an additional 20 percent by coming to office hours for a discussion of the assignment. (CO 1 & 3)

Engagement Exercises

Engagement assignments will occur during weeks that current events are not completed. This assignment requires you to critically engage with one of the assigned readings by connecting its content to a personal experience, an observed event, or a real-world example documented in a credible source. The purpose is to deepen your understanding of the reading by situating it within a tangible context and demonstrating your ability to synthesize ideas from multiple sources. Engagement exercises should be at least 150 words and include two sources (one from the textbook and one from an outside source). Both sources must be documented in ASA or APA format.

Total Shared Points: 300

Exams and Quizzes

Reading Quizzes: Each week students will engage in a reading quiz to demonstrate their preparedness for the week and to practice the skills necessary for the midterm and final exams. Quiz questions can come from any of the readings for the week and will demonstrate both understanding of definitions and application of concepts. Quiz questions will be multiple choice, 5 questions in length, and each will be worth 10 points. All quizzes will be done in class, first thing on Monday afternoon. Students will receive 15 minutes to complete the quiz (time and a half). Once the papers are collected, no more will be accepted – quizzes cannot be made up in class. You can make them up during Wednesday office hours (in the same week) or by zoom appointment with a 30 percent penalty. (Total points: 100)

Exams: You will take two exams during the course of the semester and a cumulative final. Exams will be done in class and will be a total of 25 questions worth 4 pts a piece. The questions will be multiple choice but can also include true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or multiple answer. The exam should take 50 minutes, in the spirit of universal design you will be all be given time and a half (75 minutes). You will receive an exam review for each exam in the form of a Jeopardy game. You will be allowed to bring one notecard of information (provided by me). Exams are not cumulative.

The Final for this class will be taken between May 13th and May 20th. The final will follow the structure of the previous exams, have 50 questions, and should take approximately 100 minutes, but in the spirit of universal design you will all be given time and a half (2.5 hours). You will take this final online. You will be provided an additional notecard to write on. Only your three notecards can be used, (Total Points: 300)

Total Points you can earn in the Class: 900

Extra Credit

Each student is allowed to review the course at the end of the semester. This review is incredibly important to the university and me personally – it helps determine the direction of the course in the future and contributes to job retention. Therefore, I will give each student ten points extra credit for filling out this evaluation tool.

To receive this extra credit, please take a screenshot or picture of the final screen in SOTE/SOLATE which says you've completed the evaluation for my course. Once you submit this picture to our Canvas page, I will add the points to your grade. Because evaluations are meant to be confidential, please be extra careful not to include a picture of your evaluation itself.

Of particular importance to me is the strength and improvements section. Even a tiny bit of (constructive) written feedback can help me decide what to keep at the end of the semester, ways to improve assignments, or what I should get rid of. I take these very seriously, as I want to make interesting courses that facilitate your learning!

Grading Scale

The final class letter grade will be assigned as follows.

A+: 97 - 100%
A: 94 - 96%
A-: 90 – 93%
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% and Below

Note: I will round up if your grade is .5 or above only. Meaning if you have 93.5%, I will round that number up. If you have a 93.4%, however, your grade will be rounded down to 93%.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I contact the professor?

I prefer you email me via Canvas. That way I have a constant visual reminder that an email is waiting and it won't get lost in my school inbox. I attempt to respond within 24-48 business hours (excluding weekends and holidays). If something is urgent, like a question about a project, please do not wait until the last minute. I cannot guarantee that I will get back to you immediately.

If I haven't gotten back to you in 48 hours, please send a (kind) follow-up email.

Is there a late policy?

I completely understand that your lives are busy, and/or you may experience poor health during certain points in the semester. As a professor, we go through this too. To that end, I have created a late policy that considers individual situations and gives you an on-ramp back to the course. **Unless otherwise noted**, late submissions will be accepted and docked points.

In order to utilize the late policy, you will need to write a note in the comment box of the assignment indicating you need an extension **prior** to the due date. Each day you will get a 5 percent penalty for late work. This will continue until you reach 25 percent (15 days after due date). After 15 days no assignments will be accepted.

If you have further questions about the late policy, please email me or see me during office hours.

What happens if I don't turn in anything?

All assignments that are missing will be marked at 25 percent. Instead of giving you zero points, which makes it almost impossible to rejoin class after a period of hardship, you will have fewer points to make up. That said, this is not a permanent solution. So please, make up the assignments where you can.

Can I make up participation points?

Yes! At various points in the semester, you may be out of class for whatever reason. This will mean you will lose out on opportunities to engage in discussions with your classmates and otherwise participate in the course. You can make up points for missed participation assignments by completing the participation assignment within a week (7 days) of the due date. You can only make up 40 percent of the points this way (due to not actually participating with your classmates).

Note: You do not need to report absences to me to use this policy.

Will you look over drafts of assignments?

Of course! Looking over drafts of assignments takes time though, so I would ask that if you want feedback on a draft, please email it to me at least 72 business hours before the deadline. Feedback will be conceptual in nature and will not include inline-edits. I am happy to tell you if you are on the right track, and whether there are any glaring issues.

Will we get feedback on completed assignments?

Yes, I love giving feedback on assignments! While some assignments are graded on a pass/fail basis and won't require detailed feedback, others will be assessed using rubrics and I'll provide constructive feedback accordingly. [Analytic rubrics](#) are the common feedback tool for qualitative assignments. [They](#) will assess each requirement for an assignment, and, using descriptive ratings, will give you detailed feedback.

For assignments that require written feedback (and to keep things efficient), I will leave comments on the first paragraph (or page, depending on the length of the assignment) along with the rubric. These comments will follow an abbreviation system, which you can reference in a corresponding Google Doc linked in Canvas. If you'd like more feedback beyond that, feel free to attend office hours, and I'll be happy to go over the rest of your work with you.

Please note that for late work, I will grade it using a rubric, but detailed feedback will only be provided if you attend office hours or speak with me after class. I'm always happy to discuss your strengths and areas for improvement!

When will my assignments be graded?

I will begin grading assignments in the order in which they are received. My goal is to have assignments graded two weeks after submission at the absolute latest.

Please note: If you turn in your assignment late, I will attempt to grade your assignment in a timely manner, but I cannot make guarantees. New assignments are given priority.

Can I appeal the grade I received?

Yes. You have up to one week after the submission of grades to appeal grades earned. In order to do so, you will need to write a concise report, using both the instructions and the rubric if provided, to explain where there is an

inconsistency. This doesn't mean that I must change your grade, but I will be happy to hear out your thought process and make changes if I feel they are appropriate. After one week, no grades can be appealed.

What if Canvas isn't working and I need to turn in an assignment?

Canvas does not usually crash for one student only. In the case of a school-wide Canvas issue, the university will send out an announcement. I will then make an announcement about potential assignment extensions.

In the case you are having an individual technical issue that hinders your ability to submit an assignment on Canvas, please email me the assignment ASAP.

Where do I go if I have general questions about Canvas?

If you have general questions about Canvas, please feel free to [click on this link](#).

What if I'm having internet connection issues?

In the event that you are having internet connection issues and need to turn in an assignment, each document on your computer shows when you created the document and when you last modified it. I want you to email me a picture of the date created and date modified on the assignment, whenever your internet services are restored. You will receive proper credit so long as it was completed on time.

I have a disability and I need accommodations. How does this work?

Both students and professors have certain responsibilities in order to establish the proper accommodations for student success. Student responsibilities include but are not limited to: getting medical documentation, taking that documentation to Accessibility Services, getting the official letter documenting accommodations needed, presenting that letter to the professor, and bringing any texts (including PDFs) to Accessibility services to be loaded on screen-readers (if applicable). My responsibility is to provide you the accommodations that are given in your letter.

Please Note: Accommodations are not retroactive. Meaning if you bring me an accommodations letter mid-semester, it only applies from that moment forward. No additional time, makeups, etc. will be provided for assignments and activities prior to receipt of accommodations letter. Please give me your letter ASAP – help me, help you.

What is Academic Dishonesty?

Academic dishonesty includes a range of prohibited behaviors such as plagiarism, cheating on quizzes and exams, working on exams as a group etc. Plagiarism is the most common of these offenses and so I want to take a little time to clarify what plagiarism constitutes.

In the most basic sense, plagiarism is taking the thoughts, ideas, opinions, or work of others and presenting it as your own. It happens in a variety of ways sometimes by accident (like paraphrasing an idea and forgetting to cite), or on purpose (like directly copying or buying a paper), but no matter the context plagiarism is plagiarism.

Please be aware you are responsible for knowing about the various types of Academic Dishonesty located in your student catalogue. Failure to read the catalogue does not excuse academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism also includes copying your own work. You cannot “double dip”, meaning you cannot (1) submit the same paper for two courses, (2) use parts of a paper in one class and insert them into another, or (3) submit any of your work as a “new assignment” which was previously submitted elsewhere (either in this class or in another class).

If I commit Academic Dishonesty, what’s going to happen to me?

Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. If such an act occurs, there are several avenues that I may pursue ranging anywhere from having you redo the assignment or assigning a zero, to assigning an F for the course. In addition to these individual punishments, I will write up an Academic Dishonesty Incident Report beginning with the very first act of plagiarism. These reports are sent to the Academic Affairs Office. Continued plagiarism reports could result in expulsion from the university. If you are having trouble understanding plagiarism it is your responsibility to see me during office hours for further help.

AI Policy

I understand that as people living through the advent of AI there is a temptation to use it for everything – it is a really interesting piece of technology! However, in this classroom I expect that AI usage will remain at minimum, as an assistant to help develop a skeleton outline, and at maximum, as an editor, rather than as a replacement for original thought. What does this mean for you?

It means that if I suspect you’ve used AI you will 1) be required to attend a meeting with me during office hours (or at a time which works for both of our schedules), 2) you will produce proof that the work is original (showing the before and after of AI) and/or 3) you will be required to sit for an oral exam / conversation regarding the work.

In the case where you cannot prove that you created original content that was then edited by AI, your ability to demonstrate understanding and/or application face-to-face will replace the zero you would receive for using AI to create content. The maximum points earned in this case is a 90 percent.

Are the Materials of This Course Copyrighted?

My lectures and course materials, including presentations, tests, exams, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials I create. I encourage you to take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. However, you may not, nor may you knowingly allow others to, reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly without my express written consent.

This includes providing materials to commercial course material suppliers such as CourseHero and other similar services. Students who publicly distribute or display or help others publicly distribute or display copies or modified copies of an instructor's course materials may be in violation of University Policy 406, The Code of Student Responsibility. Similarly, you own copyright in your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in anonymously posting your answers or papers on the course web site as examples, I will request your written permission.

Electronic video and/or audio recording is not permitted during class unless the student obtains permission from the instructor. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Students with specific electronic recording accommodations authorized by Accessibility Services do not require instructor permission; however, the instructor must be notified of any such accommodation prior to recording. Any distribution of such recordings is prohibited.

Course Outline

This course outline is tentative and may change during the semester. Items marked with * indicate everyone must read them in depth. All other readings will be summarized by presentation groups and professor and should at least be skimmed over.

| Week | Date | Topic | Pre-class work (Readings, Videos, etc.) | Assignments due | Important Dates |
|-----------|-------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|
| First Day | | <input type="checkbox"/> Start Here | <input type="checkbox"/> Read Syllabus | <input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus Pledge | |
| 1 | 1/27 – 1/29 | <input type="checkbox"/> What is medical sociology? | <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 9 (6 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 31 (7 pg.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction Quiz | |
| 2 | 2/3 – 2/5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Epidemiology and COVID-19 <input type="checkbox"/> No Class 2/5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 1 (7 pg.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement Exercise 1 | 2/3: Waitlist ends |
| 3 | 2/10 – 2/12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Class and Health Disparities | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 2 (7 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 14 (6 pg.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Current Event 1 | |
| 4 | 2/17 – 2/19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender, Sexuality and Differences in Morbidity | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 3 (7 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 5 (7 pg.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement Exercise 2 | 2/18: Last drop-day |
| 5 | 2/24 – 2/26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exam Review | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Exam 1 | |
| 6 | 3/3 – 3/5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Age, Race, and Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 4 (7 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 6 (7 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 12 (6 pg.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Current Event 2 <input type="checkbox"/> In-Class Peer-Review | |
| 7 | 3/10 – 3/12 | <input type="checkbox"/> How does stress impact health? | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 11 (6 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 28 (7 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Policy Brief 1: Social Determinants of Health and the Future of Epidemics (3/14) | |
| 8 | 3/17 – 3/19 | <input type="checkbox"/> The Sick Role, and Deviance | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 15 (7 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 17 (8 pg.) <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 25 (7 pg.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 6 <input type="checkbox"/> Current Event 3 | 3/21: Graduation Application due |
| 9 | 3/24 – 3/26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 18 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 21 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 22 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 7 <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement Exercise 3 | |

SOCI 166 – Sec. 01

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------------|--|--|--|---------------------------|
| | 3/31 – 4/2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Break | | | |
| 10 | 4/7 – 4/9 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exam Review | | <input type="checkbox"/> Exam 2 | |
| 11 | 4/14 – 4/16 | <input type="checkbox"/> The Changing Roles of Physicians and Nurses | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 41 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 43 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 8 <input type="checkbox"/> Current Event 4 | |
| 12 | 4/21 – 4/23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Behaviors and CAM | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 35 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 36 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 46 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 9 <input type="checkbox"/> In-Class Peer Review <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement Exercise 4 | 4/22: Withdrawal Deadline |
| 13 | 4/28 – 4/30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor-Patient Interactions | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 26 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 39 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 41 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Policy Brief 2: Healthcare Systems and Social Inequities in the State of California (5/2) | |
| 14 | 5/5 – 5/7 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals as Institutions | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 44 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 49 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 50 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 57 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Current Event 5 | |
| 15 | 5/12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Policy in the U.S. and abroad | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 33 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 36 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading 45 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz 12 <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement Exercise 5 | |
| Final | 5/15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Final Exam (2.5 hrs) | | | |