Sociology 205: Poverty, Race and Health
Course Syllabus

Meeting time: TTH 8:30-10:00  
Meeting place: 2004 Natural Sciences
Instructor: Marc Musick  
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Email address: mmusick@isr.umich.edu  
Office phone: 936-0556
Office hours: TTH 10:30-12:30 and by appointment
Course web page: http://www.umich.edu/~mmusick/soc205.html

Course Description
This course critically examines the health status of the poor and of major racial/ethnic minority groups in the United States. Attention will be focused on the patterned ways in which the health of these groups is embedded in the social, cultural, and political, and economic contexts and arrangements of U.S. society. Topics covered include, racism and its effects on health; the effect of social inequality on health; health problems among the poor; the impact of social factors on medical care use; trends in population health over time; and the impact of poverty and race on health in other countries.

Required Readings
Coursepack available from Accu-copy (518 E. William Street).

Supplemental Readings
A number of readings are on reserve at the Undergraduate Library. A list of the readings on reserve appears at the end of the syllabus. I will notify you when I put new readings on reserve. Note: these readings are NOT required for the tests. I have put them on reserve to assist you in completing assignments and to complement the material I present in the lectures.

Attendance Policy
Although I strongly encourage students to attend all of the classes, I will not take attendance nor will use attendance in determining grades.

Course Requirements
The requirements for the course follow two tracks. In the first track, students will take two exams (mid-term and final) that assess knowledge of the required readings and lecture material. In the second track, students will forgo the exams and will instead write a 20-25 page research paper. For both tracks, students will also be required to write a short paper (4-5 pages) and prepare a group poster presentation. The grading distributions for both tracks are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track 1: Exams</th>
<th>Track 2: Paper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebuttal paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster presentation</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Track 2: Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
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Exams (Mid-term: Thursday, 10/29; Final: during finals period)
The mid-term exam will focus on all of the required readings and lecture materials covered from the start of the class through Thursday, 10/22. The final exam will focus on all of the required readings and lecture material covered throughout the course. The format for both exams will be short answer and essay questions. At least a week prior to each exam, I will distribute a review guide to assist you in preparing for the exam. In addition, I will hold review sessions wherein you can ask questions about the material that will be covered on the exam. The review session for the mid-term will be during the class on Tuesday, 10/27. The review session for the final will be held at some point outside of class at a date and time to be decided later.
Research Paper (due dates: Thursday, 10/1; Thursday, 12/10)
Should you choose to take the paper track, you will be required to write a 20-25 page research paper on a topic that is related in some way to the issues covered in the course (i.e., poverty, race, and health). For the paper, you can choose either to do original research (e.g., conducting interviews, doing data analysis with survey data) or review the literature on some topic. On the first due date (Thursday, 10/1), you will be required to submit a single page research prospectus that describes your research project. This prospectus will not be graded, but it must be approved by me before you can undertake the research paper. If I do not receive a prospectus from you by the due date, I will assume that you are NOT taking the paper track. The paper itself is due on Thursday, 12/10. Later in the semester I will distribute a guide for formatting the paper and references. Note: your paper must include at least 10 references to other literature.

Rebuttal Paper (due date: Thursday, 11/19)
Everyone in the course will be required to write a short (4-5 page) rebuttal paper. The purpose of this paper is to have you to think critically about some issue you uncover in the literature. More specifically, you will be required to find an argument that is made in one of several sources (e.g., required readings, supplemental readings, on-line lecture notes) and take an opposing position. In writing the paper, you will need to (1) summarize the argument that is being made in the reference you choose; (2) state your counter-argument to that position; and (3) provide evidence to support your position. The evidence must come in the form of other literature on the topic. I will distribute more extensive guidelines for this paper later in the semester.

Poster Presentation (due dates: Tuesday, 12/8 & Thursday, 12/10)
Early in the semester, I will divide the class into groups of four. Each group will be required to assemble a poster presentation that will be displayed either on 12/8 or 12/10 (I will assign each group a presentation day later in the semester). The topic of the poster must relate in some way to poverty, race, and health. Groups can either do original research or can present a review of some topic in the literature. Later in the semester I will distribute guidelines for the posters. I will grade each poster on its display day. Each person in the group will be given the same grade.

On the first presentation day, half of the groups will display their posters and the other half will be in attendance to discuss the posters on display. Each person in the non-presenting groups will be required to briefly critique at least 2 of the posters on display (I will provide the critique forms at the beginning of the session; they will be due by the end of the session). On the second presentation day, the second set of groups will display their posters and the first set will do their critiques. Of the overall poster presentation grade (20% of your total grade), 25% (5% of your total grade) will correspond to your critiques of the posters on your non-presenting day.

Make-up Exams and Late Papers
Make-up exams will only be given in rare circumstances. I will require a physician’s note or some other suitable documentation to allow a make-up exam. Late papers will be accepted, but with a penalty. For each day the paper is late (a day ends at 5:00pm), your grade will be reduced 10%. If the paper has not been turned in within a week of the due date, it will not be accepted.

Re-grading Policy
If you feel that you have not received a grade that is consonant with your performance on a test or paper, I will only review your grade if you submit a written request for me to do so. I will not consider revising a grade until I receive this written request. In the request, you must make clear how I made an error in your grade. In other words, simply saying that you want me to re-grade your paper will not suffice. I will review your request, and should I need to discuss it with you, I will set up a meeting with you to do so.
Course Outline and Reading Schedule

Note: Readings should be completed for the day they are assigned.

Week 1
Tuesday, 9/8  Introduction to poverty, race, and health
Required: None

Thursday, 9/10  Definitions and distributions of poverty

Week 2
Tuesday, 9/15  Explanations for Poverty
Required: Ropers, Richard H. “Blaming the Victim.”
Ropers, Richard H. “Blaming the System.”
Ropers, Richard H. “The Production of Poverty.”

Thursday, 9/17  Assistance for the poor (welfare and insurance)
Rank, Mark Robert. “Getting On.”

Week 3
Tuesday, 9/22  Poverty and health – overview
Required: Haan, Mary N. et al. “Socioeconomic Status and Health: Old Observations and New Thoughts.”
Dutton, Diana B. “Social Class, Health and Illness.”

Thursday, 9/24  Poverty and health – trends
Kaplan, George A. “People and Places: Contrasting Perspectives on the Association Between Social Class and Health.”

Week 4
Tuesday, 9/29  Poverty and health linkages: housing and social environment
Stillwagon, Eileen. “Housing and Health.”

Thursday, 10/1  Poverty and health linkages: work factors
Required: Chasin, Barbara H. “Structural Violence for Workers and the Unemployed.”
**Research paper prospectus due**

Week 5
Tuesday, 10/6  Poverty and health linkages: health behaviors and nutrition
Alaimo, Katherine. “Food Insufficiency Exists in the United States: Results from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III).”
Thursday, 10/8  Poverty and health linkages: psychosocial factors
  Required: Merton, Robert K.  “Social Structure and Anomie.”
  James, Sherman A.  “John Henryism and the Health of African Americans.”

Week 6
Tuesday, 10/13  Violence as a public health problem for the poor – part 1

Thursday, 10/15  Violence as a public health problem for the poor – part 2
  Required: Reiss, Albert J., Jr. and Jeffrey A. Roth.  “Violence in Families.”
  Chasin, Barbara H.  “Interpersonal Violence and Race and Gender.”

Week 7
Tuesday, 10/20  Health care issues – part 1

Thursday, 10/22  Health care issues – part 2
  Required: Slesinger, Doris P.  “Health Care in Rural America.”
  Rice, Mitchell F.  “Medical Indigency and Inner-City Hospital Care: Patient Dumping, Emergency Care, and Public Policy.”
  DeChaira, Michael and Tom Wolff.  “If We Have the Money, Why Is It So Hard?”
  Riessman, Catherine Kohler.  “Improving the Health Experiences of Low Income Patients.”

Week 8
Tuesday, 10/27  Film: Living Below the Line
  Mid-term exam review
  Required: none

Thursday, 10/29  Mid-term Exam
  Required: none

Week 9
Tuesday, 11/3  Definitions and meanings of race
  Required: Polednak, Anthony P.  “‘Social Race’ and Black-White Segregation.”
  Williams, David R.  “Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status: Measurement and Methodological Issues.”
  LaVeist, Thomas A.  “Why We Should Continue to Study Race…But Do a Better Job: An Essay on Race, Racism, and Health.”

Thursday, 11/5  Racism/discrimination as a health risk factor
  Williams, David R.  “Racism and Health: A Research Agenda.”
  Williams, David R. and An-Me Chung.  “Racism and Health.”

Week 10
Tuesday, 11/10  Race and Health Issues: African Americans
  Required: Jaynes, Gerald David and Robin M. Williams, Jr.  “Black Americans’ Health.”
Thursday, 11/12  Race and Health Issues: African Americans
   Bullard, Robert D. and Beverly H. Wright. “Toxic Waste and the African American Community.”
   Williams, David R. “African American Health: The Role of the Social Environment.”

Week 11
Tuesday, 11/17  Race and Health Issues: American Indians
   May, Phillip A. “Overview of Alcohol Abuse Epidemiology for American Indian Populations.”

Thursday, 11/19  Race and Health Issues: Hispanics
   Required: Garza, Cutberto. “Diet-Related Diseases and Other Health Issues.”
   **Rebuttal paper due**

Week 12
Tuesday, 11/24  Film: To Be Old, Black and Poor
   Required: none

Thursday, 11/26  Thanksgiving Holiday
   Required: none

Week 13
Tuesday, 12/1  Race and Health Issues: Asian and Pacific Islander Americans
   Required: Gardner, Robert. “Mortality.”
   Lin-Fu, Jane S. “Asian and Pacific Islander Americans: An Overview of Demographic Characteristics and Health Care Issues.”

Thursday, 12/3  International Race and Health Issues
   Spencer, Nick. “Poverty and Child Health in Less Developed Countries.”

Week 14
Tuesday, 12/8  Poster presentations – first session
   Required: None

Thursday, 12/10  Poster presentations – second session
   Required: none
   **Research paper due**
Supplemental Readings (on reserve at Shapiro Undergraduate Library)


