

## UGEC 2993 Healthy Living: Social Influences and Determinants

1<sup>st</sup> term, 2022-2023

Thursdays 2:30 – 5:15 PM

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### **Summary:**

Health is a fundamental aspect of human existence. We all want good health, effective treatments of illness and affordable health care. Yet we are faced with many challenges and controversies in our pursuit of good health: glaring inequality in health and longevity, the prevalence of unhealthy lifestyle, the conflicts between patients and doctors, the uncertainty of medical treatments and medical knowledge, and the ever-increasing health care spending. In this course, we dissect these issues from the perspectives of social sciences. We first assess the social determinants of health and illness and examine the following topics: the social distribution of health and illness, societal inequality and health, social networks, social capital and health, health lifestyle and public policy, and the interaction between genetics and social environment. We then address the social organization of health and health care and discuss the following topics: the social construction of health and illness, the social context of patient-doctor relationship, and the social organization of healthcare systems. Throughout the course, we will emphasize the current COVID-19 pandemic and use it to illustrate how social and cultural factors influence health and well-being. This course helps the students understand and relate to the following UN sustainable development goals: good health and well-being, reduced inequalities and peace, justice and strong institutions. By illuminating the social and cultural determinants of health and well-being, this course will enrich the students' understanding of what contributed to good health and well-being, of the unequal distribution of health and well-being, and of the role of social and political institutions in producing health. It also seeks to motivate the students to think about public policies and social interventions that may promote health and well-being, reduce social disparities in health and strengthen health-promoting institutions.

健康是人生萬事的根本。我們都想要良好的健康、有效的和負擔得起的醫療。然而，我們當前面臨著許多挑戰和爭議：健康不平等，不健康生活方式的盛行，病人和醫生之間的衝突，醫療和醫學知識的不確定性，以及不斷增加的醫療支出。在本課程中，我們將從社會科學的角度剖析這些問題。我們首先評估健康和疾病的社會決定因素，並研究以下主題：健康和疾病的社會分佈、社會不平等和健康、社會網絡、社會資本和健康、健康生活方式和公共政策，以及基因和社會環境之間的相互作用。然後，我們討論健康和醫療保健的社會組織，並討論以下主題：健康和疾病的社會分佈，醫患關係的社會背景，以及醫療保健系統的社會組織。在整個課程中，我們將強調當前的新冠肺炎大流行，並用它來說明社會和文化因素如何影響健康和福祉。本課程幫助學生理解並聯系以下聯合國可持續發展目標：健康和福祉、減少不平等與和平、正義和強大的機構。通過闡明健康和福祉的社會和文化決定因素，本課程將加深學生對健康和福祉的決定因素、健康和福祉的不平等分佈以及社會和政治機構在創

造健康方面的作用的理解。本課程也會激勵學生思考如何利用公共政策和社會干預措施，以促進健康和福祉，減少健康方面的社會差異，並強化有利於健康的機構。

### Learning Objectives:

1. To understand the social and cultural determinants of health and the social distribution of health and well-being
2. To understand the social and political institutional context that may influence health and the distribution of health
3. To critically consider policy and social interventions that may foster health, reduce health disparities and strengthen health-promoting institutions, and reflect on the role the students can play
4. To gain insight into the constituent components of the healthcare system and the social and political factors related to the quality, cost and accessibility of healthcare.
5. To learn to critically assess biomedicine from sociological perspectives
6. To learn to critically compare medicine to other social systems.

### Course requirements:

- 1) **In-class discussions (20%):** During most class sessions, we will have discussions based on the content of the class and short video clips watched in class. In some sessions, you will be required to provide a write-up of your opinions.
- 2) **Sick role memoir (15%):** The sick role memoir describes and reflects on a time when you or someone close to you experienced an illness (Due on Nov. 17). I will hand out detailed guidelines well before it is due.
- 3) **Midterm and final quizzes (65%):** Both quizzes will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer questions and essay questions. They will be based on topics and concepts covered in the class and in required readings. Both quizzes will be open-book. The midterm (25%) will last an hour and is scheduled on Oct. 20; the final will last two hours and is scheduled on Dec. 1.

Grade	Descriptors
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirement.

### Readings:

All books required for this course are on reserve at the University Library. Journal papers can be downloaded from the databases for electronic journals through the University Library. Some reading materials may be distributed in class.

## **Blackboard**

We will maintain a course website on Blackboard. Course syllabus and class PPTs are available on the website. Periodically announcements are made on the website. You should check it on a regular basis.

## **Academic Honesty**

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

Students are required to submit the two short papers to the university's plagiarism detection system (Veriguide) before submitting the papers to me. Students should attach the signed "Academic Honesty Declaration Statement" with their papers.

## **Course schedule and readings (subject to minor changes throughout the term):**

Week 1: Introduction; the role of medicine in the improvement in population health (Sept. 8)  
McKinlay, John and Sonja M. McKinlay. 2019. "Medical Measures and the Decline of Mortality." Pp. 10-23 in *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Peter Conrad and Valerie Leiter. Sage Publications. [on reserve in UL]  
Watch clips from the documentary "Unnatural Causes"

## **Part 1: Social determinants of health**

Week 2: Socioeconomic status and health over the life course (Sept. 15)  
Link, Bruce G., and Jo Phelan. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35 (1995): 80-94.  
Watch excerpts from "Unnatural Causes", PBS documentary on social inequality, social hierarchy and health

Week 3: Contextual social inequality and health (Sept. 22)  
Wilkinson, Richard, and Kate Pickett. 2009. "Physical health and life expectancy." & "How inequality gets under the skin." in *The spirit level : why more equal societies almost always do better*. London; New York Allen Lane.[on reserve in UL]  
Watch excerpts from "Unnatural Causes"

Week 4: Relative social status and health (Sept. 29)  
Marmot, Michael. "Relatively Speaking." In *Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity*, 82-104. New York: Times Books, 2005. [on reserve in UL]  
Cohen, Patricia. "Praise and Skepticism as One Executive Sets Minimum Wage to \$70,000 a Year." *The New York Times*, April 19, 2015, sec. Business.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/20/business/praise-and-skepticism-as-one-executive-sets-minimum-wage-to-70000-a-year.html>.

Week 5: Social networks, network interventions and health (Oct. 6)

Umberson, Debra, and Jennifer Karas Montez. 2010. "Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51:S54-S66.

Valente TW. Network Interventions. *Science* 2012; 337: 49–53.

Watch excerpts from "Social Dilemma", a documentary about the dark side of being connected online

Week 6: Social capital, neighborhood and health (Oct. 13)

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. "Race, Place and Vulnerability: Urban Neighborhood and the Ecology of Support." Pp. 79-128 in *Heat Wave: a Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Borgonovi, Francesca, and Elodie Andrieu. "Bowling Together by Bowling Alone: Social Capital and COVID-19." *Social Science & Medicine* 265 (November 1, 2020): 113501.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113501>.

Watch excerpts from "Unnatural Causes"

Week 7: Midterm; Genes, social environment and health (Oct. 20)

Curry, Andrew. "Parents' Emotional Trauma May Change Their Children's Biology." *Science | AAAS*, 2019. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/07/parents-emotional-trauma-may-change-their-children-s-biology-studies-mice-show-how>.

Week 8: Health behavior, social context and public policy (Oc. 27)

Mello, Michelle M., David M. Studdert, and Troyen A. Brennan. 2006. "Obesity -- The New Frontier of Public Health Law." *New England Journal of Medicine* 354:2601-2610.

Watch excerpts from "Supersize Me", a documentary about a young man who embarked on an experiment to eat McDonald's for 30 days

## **Part 2: The Social Organization of Health and Health Care**

Week 9: The social construction of illness (Nov. 3)

Martin, Emily. *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987: pp27-67 [Online access available]

Watch clips from "Selling Sickness", a documentary about the strategies of big pharmaceutical companies to promote their products

Week 10: Illness behavior and patient-doctor relationship (Nov. 10)

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 9: Doctor-patient Interaction." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge. [Online access available]

Week 11: Health care systems I (Nov. 17)

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 16: Global Health Care." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge [Online access available]

Cockerham, William C. 2017. "Chapter 15: Health Care Reforms and Health Care Policy in the US." In *Medical Sociology*. New York, NY: Routledge [Online access available]

Watch excerpts from "Sicko", a documentary highly critical of the US health care system

Week 12: Health care system II (Nov. 24)

Blumenthal, David, and William Hsiao. "Lessons from the East — China's Rapidly Evolving Health Care System." *New England Journal of Medicine* 372, no. 14 (April 2, 2015): 1281–85.

Watch “有病點算好？” , a short feature by RTHK about health care in Hong Kong

Week 13: **Final Quiz** (Dec. 1)