Seminar in Medical Sociology
SOC 716
Fall 2010

TR 1:30-2:45 pm  
Instructor: Wei Zhang
Moore 203  
Office: Saunders 204
CRN: 78913  
Office phone: 956-7689
Office hours: by appointment  
E-mail: weizhang@hawaii.edu

Focusing on the social causes of physical health, mental health, and mortality, this course examines the distribution and determinants of health and well-being in populations. It examines the links between theory and research in the sociology of health, with a focus on the health effects of the social systems of stratification and inequality, including education, work, income, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, marriage, parenthood, age, family background, and neighborhoods and community.

Social patterns of physical and mental health and the explanations for these patterns will be examined and discussed. **First half of the semester:** We will particularly focus on health lifestyle and subjective alienation, including powerlessness, social isolation, estrangement, meaninglessness, normlessness, and mistrust. We will read current research on the social patterns of health and theoretical explanations for these patterns. **Second half of the semester:** We will discuss several important topics in medical sociology including (1) socioeconomic status, race, and health, (2) neighborhood and health, (3) religion and health, and (4) Asian Americans and health.

**Grade:**
Students are responsible for reading and discussing course material. Every student will lead three class discussions, present and submit final paper.

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation and leading discussion</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final paper presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
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**Required Readings:**
3. Journal articles listed in the syllabus.
4. Each student will also develop a short reading list of research articles related to their interests and final paper.
Course Outline, Readings, and Schedule

**Week 1 Aug. 24-26**
*Social Causes of Psychological Distress*

**I. Introduction**
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION
   Understanding the Connections between Social and Personal problems
   Preview

**II. Researching the Causes of Distress**
Chapter 2 MEASURING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND DISTRESS
   What is Psychological Distress?
   Diagnosis: Superimposed Distinctions
   Conclusion: The Story of a Woman Diagnosed

**Week 2 Aug. 31-Sept. 2**
Chapter 3 REAL-WORLD CAUSES OF REAL-WORLD MISREY
   Establishing Cause in the Human Sciences
   Explaining Real Patterns

**Week 3 Sept. 7-Sept. 9**
**III. Social Patterns of Distress**
Chapter 4 BASIC PATTERNS
   Community Mental Health Surveys
   Socioeconomic Status
   Marriage
   Children at Home
   Gender
   Undesirable Life Events
   Age

**Week 4 Sept. 14-Sept. 16**
Chapter 4 NEW PATTERNS
   Life Course Disruptions and Developments
   Neighborhood Disadvantage and Disorder
Week 5 Sept. 21-Sept. 23

IV. Explaining the Patterns
Chapter 6 LIFE CHANGE: AN ABANDONED EXPLANATION
  Conceptual History of Life Change and Stress
  Contradictory Evidence
  Variants of the Life Change Index
  Alternative Concepts and Future Research
Chapter 7 ALIENATION
  Control
  Commitment
  Support
  Meaning
  Normality
  Alienation: The Prime Stressor

Week 6 Sept. 28-Sept. 30

Chapter 8 AUTHORITARIANISM AND INEQUALITY
  Authoritarianism
  Inequality

V. Explaining the Patterns
Chapter 9 WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE DISTRESSED THAN OTHERS
  Control of One’s Own Life
  The importance of Social Factors
  Genetics and Biochemistry as Alternative Explanations
  What can be done?

Week 7 Oct. 5-Oct. 7

Education, Social Status, and Health

Chapter 1 EDUCATION AS LEARNED EFFECTIVENESS
  Education, Learned Effectiveness, and Health
  Education and Socioeconomic Status
  Education as a Root Cause of Good Health

Chapter 2 THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND HEALTH
  Defining Health
  Measuring health
  Education’s Correlation with Health Measures
Week 8 Oct.12-Oct. 14
Chapter 3 EDUCATION, PERSONAL CONTROL, LIFESTYLE, AND HEALTH
  Education and Human Capital
  Designing a Healthy Lifestyle
  The Sense of Control Links Education to Healthy Lifestyle

Chapter 4 EDUCATION, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, AND HEALTH
  Economic Resources
  Productive Activities
  Education, Socioeconomic Status, and Health

Week 9 Oct.19-Oct. 21
Chapter 5 EDUCATION, INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND HEALTH
  Education, Marriage, and Social Support
  Marriage and Health

Chapter 6 AGE AND CUMULATIVE ADVANTAGE
  Accumulating Effects
  Amplifying Effects
  Decline Slow or Only Delayed?
  Education’s Cumulative Advantage

Week 10 Oct.26-Oct. 28
Chapter 7 SPECIAL VIEWS OF EDUCATION
  Education as Credential
  Education as Reproducer of Inequality
  Education as False Satisfier
  Education as Spurious Correlate
  Education, Inequality, and Health
  Education: The Solution, Not the Problem

Chapter 6 CONCLUSION: SELF-DIRECTION TOWARD HEALTH
  Learned Effectiveness Tops Access to Lucrative Positions
  Learned Effectiveness Provide Control over Lifestyle and Circumstances
  Education has Pervasive, Cumulative, Self-Amplifying Benefits
  Lack of Education Turns Low Income into Privation
  Structural Amplification Concentrates Problems
  Resources Accumulation and Substitution Imply Structural Amplification
  No one Loses When Someone Gains Control
  Education: The Answer
Week 11 Nov.4-Nov.9

Topic: Socioeconomic Status, Race, and Health


Week 12 Nov.16-Nov.18

Topic: Neighborhood and Health


**Week 13 Nov.23-Nov.30**

**Topic: Religion and Health**

Week 14 Dec. 2

Topic: Asian Americans and Health


Week 15 Dec. 7-9 Student Presentations