

HLTH AGE 1AA3E: Introduction to Health Studies
Winter 2017

Instructor: Dr. Mat Savelli
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Office: Kenneth Taylor Hall Rm 230
Office Hours: Wed 3:30-6:30pm.

Course Description: This course introduces students to the study of health from non-biomedical perspectives. It examines the ways in which culture, politics, economics, and other social forces shape our conceptions of health and illness. Emphasis is placed on learning to apply competing and complementary sources of professional and academic knowledge to the complexities inherent in health and illness.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to discuss the socio-cultural dimensions of health and analyze health and illness from a variety of critical perspectives. They should demonstrate an ability to discuss the ways in which characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, age, and class contribute to health outcomes and definitions. Students are also required to demonstrate the ability to research and write a clear, properly cited, well-organized academic essay.

Key Course Questions: What is the difference between health and illness? Are these fixed categories or subject to interpretation? What social forces and processes determine if a person is (considered) healthy or ill? How do different professional and academic disciplines approach these issues? What can non-biomedical approaches contribute to our understanding of health, illness, disease, and medicine?

Required Texts:

Gillett, Andrews, and Savelli, *Health and Society: Critical Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

All other readings are available on [Avenue to Learn](#).

Lectures:

Wed Jan 4 – Why do we need critical health studies?

Reading: *Health & Society*, chapter 1.

Wed Jan 11 – Social determinants of health

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 10; Larsen, K., & Gilliland, J. (2008). Mapping the evolution of 'food deserts' in a Canadian city: Supermarket accessibility in London, Ontario, 1961–2005. *International Journal of Health Geographics* 7:16.

Wed Jan 18 – Politics, ideology, and health

Readings: Raphael, D., Curry-Stevens, A., & Bryant, T. (2008). Barriers to addressing the social determinants of health: Insights from the Canadian experience. *Health Policy*, 88(2), 222-235.

Wed Jan 25 – Health as a social construction

Reading: *Health & Society*, chapter 3; Rodin (1992) "The Social Construction of Premenstrual Syndrome" *Social Science and Medicine*, 35 (1), 49-56.

Wed Feb 1 – Culture and health

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 4; Wilson “Therapeutic Landscapes and the First Nations Peoples: An Exploration of Culture, Health, and Place,” *Health and Place* 2003.

Wed Feb 8 – Biomedical culture

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 8; Lambert, H. (2006). Accounting for EBM: notions of evidence in medicine. *Social Science & Medicine*, 62(11), 2633-2645.

Wed Feb 15 – MIDTERM

Wed Feb 22 – No class (reading week)

Wed Mar 1 – Health care systems in a comparative context

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 9; Vos, P. D. (2005). "No one left abandoned": Cuba's national health system since the 1959 revolution. *International Journal of Health Services*, 35(1), 189-207.

Wed Mar 8 – Identity, marginality, and health

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 5; Courtenay, W. H. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 50(10), 1385-1401.

Wed Mar 15 – Alternative approaches to health and healing (**Essay due**)

Reading: *Health & Society*, chapter 11; From quackery to “complementary” medicine: The American medical profession confronts alternative therapies. *Social Problems*, 52(1), 38-61.

Wed Mar 22 – Health consumerism

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 12; Fox, N.J. & Ward, K.J. (2006). Health identities: From expert patient to resisting consumer. *Health*, 10(4), 461-479.

Wed Mar 29 – Globalization and the global health movement

Readings: *Health & Society*, chapter 7; Groenhout, R. (2012). The ‘brain drain’ problem: Migrating health professionals and global health care. *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 5, 1-24

Wed April 5 – Exam review

Grade breakdown:

Tutorial Participation: 15%

Midterm: 25%

Essay: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Tutorials: All students are expected to regularly attend tutorial and to participate in discussion. Attendance alone will not earn students marks, it is FUNDAMENTAL that they participate in discussions based on that week’s readings.

Midterm: The midterm will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Material for the midterm will be drawn from lecture and readings. It will be held in our regular classroom during regular class hours.

Essay Assignment: Students are required to complete a 5-6 page essay on one of the topics listed below. It is necessary to consult (and cite) a minimum of SEVEN peer-reviewed sources. Students must include a bibliography. Essays should be double spaced, using a 12 point font and APA style margins. Make sure to hand in a hard copy in class. Topics not listed below are possible but they MUST be cleared by the instructor at least two weeks prior to the essay deadline.

- 1) How can we best explain the health disparities experienced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Canadians in comparison to the non-indigenous population?
- 2) How can we best explain the substantial rise in rates of ADHD over the last thirty years?
- 3) Should complementary and alternative health interventions be covered by publicly-funded health insurance programmes such as OHIP?
- 4) Does Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) necessarily produce “pure” science and better health outcomes?
- 5) Should hospitals be required to employ “cultural experts” as official policy?
- 6) Why has the United States failed to adopt a more comprehensive and publicly funded healthcare system?
- 7) Tremendous health disparities exist between the developing world and the West. How useful are disease eradication/elimination campaigns for bridging this gap?
- 8) How can we explain the recent proliferation of medical tourism?

Final Exam: The final exam will be cumulative and will consist of broad long answer questions that tie together the course’s primary themes. Students will be expected to draw on multiple lectures/readings in providing their answers. Students will have choice in deciding which questions they answer.

OTHER CRUCIAL COURSE NOTES

- 1) Do not email the course instructor or TAs via Avenue to Learn. Direct all communication to our McMaster email addresses.
- 2) Students making use of MSAFs will have to complete all assignments at a later date. In other words, there is no chance that the grade for missed assignments or tests will be tacked onto the final exam.
- 3) Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day.
- 4) There will be absolutely no leniency on plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any type. Don’t copy and paste anything directly into your essay...even if you cite it!

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society at 905.525.9140 ext. 27227 or hasdept@mcmaster.ca.

Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be

deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities: Students who require academic accommodations must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652, or by email at sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Avenue to Learn: Course material will be posted on Avenue to Learn. Please check the site often to keep informed of important course information or announcements.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy: Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. Email Forwarding in MUGSI: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>
*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.