Syllabus†

SOCI 4851: Medical Sociology

Fall 2004 (3 credits)      Dr. Diane S. Shinberg
Wednesday 5:30pm – 8:30 pm  Clement Hall, Room 305
203 Clement Hall          Office phone: (901) 678-3031
Office hours: Monday 2:00pm-5:00pm, dshinbrg@memphis.edu
and by appointment

This course is intended to introduce you to sociological perspectives on the study of
health and illness in the context of the American health care system. We will consider health,
illness, sickness and disease as social phenomena. In particular we will examine ways in which
health (and ideas about health and its causation) is shaped by social context, culture, social
structure, and social processes. We will also examine the social organization of health care
including health care occupations, the organization of the health care delivery system and related
policy issues.

Evaluation will be based on:
1. attendance
2. active participation in discussions
3. three short written exercises
4. a group project (including a report and class presentation)
5. a term paper

These will be weighted as follows: three exercises (45%); group project (25%); term paper
(30%). Poor attendance can lower your grade, while class participation can raise your grade by
up to a full letter grade. No extra credit will be awarded in the course. (See below for details.)

Required Reading:

3rd edition. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning)

American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures. (New York: Farrar, Straus and
Giroux)

Selected readings are available on reserve in the McWherter Library Reserve Room, on-line (via
the Library’s home page, http://exlibris.memphis.edu, and/or via the course web page†),
and as handouts.

Important Notice of Course Schedule Change:

Our class meeting on Wednesday, November 24th, 2004, will be rescheduled to accommodate the
Thanksgiving break.

† This syllabus and other course materials are posted on the following web site:
http://umpeople.memphis.edu/dshinbrg/4851/SOCI4851.htm
Course Requirements:

1. Attendance: Your regular and punctual attendance in class meetings for this course is required. Students are expected to attend every class, be on time (or even be early), and stay for the entire class period. Students who skip class or are consistently late and/or leave early can find their final course grade lowered up to one whole letter grade. Students who miss class are responsible for the material covered.

2. Participation: Students are expected to participate in classroom discussions and activities. To fully participate in class, you will need to complete the assigned reading before the class meeting, and be prepared to discuss the material (including asking questions about information you did not understand) in a thoughtful and respectful way. Students with excellent and enthusiastic class participation, who contribute constructively to class discussions, can find their final course grade raised up to one whole letter grade.

Some of the material we read and discuss may be challenging, controversial or touch on sensitive topics. Students are expected to approach these ideas and their discussion as mature adults.

3. Written Exercises: There are three (3) exercises due over the course of the semester. These assignments will help prepare you for extensive class discussion on each topic. All exercises should be carefully written, typed, double-spaced with reasonable margins and fonts (margins no greater than 1 ¼ inches; fonts no larger than 12 point), with a separate cover page that includes your name. Written exercises should be thoughtfully organized and carefully proofread. Pages should be numbered. Please use staples rather than paper clips or report covers. Each exercise will be due in class. Late work will be penalized one whole letter grade per week late. Papers that do not conform to these guidelines can be returned to the student ungraded. I will distribute handouts for each exercise with specific details and instructions. These assignments are due in class on:

   - September 15th
   - September 29th
   - October 13th

4. Group Project: Students will be assigned to one of three topical groups based on their interests for a more intensive and collaborative learning experience. Students will be allotted some time to meet as a group during selected class meetings, but you will also need to meet outside of class to work on your group project. Each group will compose and submit a written report and an annotated bibliography. In addition, the groups will prepare classroom presentations, which will begin December 1st (and continue through December 8th). Individually you will submit a short, but detailed, report explaining your role in the group (e.g., what research you conducted and how you went about it), how your group worked out (e.g., any problems your group encountered and any words of praise or complaints you have about your group), and what you learned from the process. Additional details, including suggested readings and research questions, will be distributed by the instructor ahead of time.

The topical groups are:
   a) Madness and Mental Illness (e.g., Weitz pp. 183-219)
   b) Reproductive Health and Technologies (e.g., Weitz pp. 133-137, 383-387, 406-7)
   c) Complementary and Alternative Medicines (e.g., Weitz pp. 167-170, 379-383, 387-395)
5. **Term Paper:** Each student will write a 5 to 7 page paper, based in part on your group’s research, suitable for publication as a short magazine essay or a newspaper op-ed piece. In your paper, you should express a definite point of view and an argument – it should aim to persuade readers on some issue. This is your opportunity to pursue additional sociological aspects of your topic. As with the group project, I will distribute more details on the paper later in the semester. The paper will be due the last day of classes, December 8th, 2004. *I strongly encourage you to submit a draft of your paper by November 23rd (two days before Thanksgiving).*

**Grading:**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. Written Exercises...</td>
<td>A+ = 98-100% C+ = 78-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 exercises (15% each)</td>
<td>A = 92-97%  C = 72-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Group Project........</td>
<td>A- = 90-91% C- = 70-71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Report</td>
<td>B+ = 88-89% D+ = 68-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>B = 82-87%  D = 60-67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual statement</td>
<td>B- = 80-81% F = 0-59%</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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No extra credit assignments will be given in this course. Late assignments will be downgraded. Students who are concerned about their performance in this course should arrange to meet with me as early in the semester as possible. *And, remember that final grades may be raised by up to a full letter grade for excellent classroom participation and/or lowered by up to a full letter grade for poor attendance.*

**Other Issues**

1. **Submitting assignments:** Assignments are due in class on the date designated in the syllabus. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per week late. *Do not slide your paper under (or on) my office door.* It will get stepped on, kicked or otherwise misplaced. If I’m not in my office, take your assignment to the Sociology Office (Clement 231) and ask the secretary to sign and date it and place it in my mail box.

   In extreme circumstances only, I will also accept assignments by U.S. mail, by email, or by fax (901-678-2525). Be certain to correctly address and identify your assignment.

2. **Keeping in touch with me:** The best way to reach me is by email, dshinbrg@memphis.edu, or see me during my office hours. You may also call me in my office and leave a voice message for me if I’m not available. As I may not check my voice mail every day, in urgent circumstances I also strongly encourage you to also contact the Sociology office (901-678-2611). The office staff generally knows my whereabouts and can contact me quickly if the need arises.

   If you are unable to complete an assignment on time or expect to be late or absent or must leave class early, I expect to hear from you, preferably *BEFORE* the deadline, class meeting or office appointment.

3. **Academic Misconduct:** Academic misconduct on the part of students will not be tolerated in this course and may result in one or more of the following: a zero (0) on the assignment, a failing grade in the course (an “F”), expulsion from the University. Academic misconduct
includes acts of cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes (but is not limited to) using any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes or tests; using sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers or other assignments; and misrepresenting assignments as the product of a student’s sole independent effort. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) the use of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgment. This includes paraphrasing or direct quotation without references as well as copying directly off the Internet! Please refer to the University’s Code of Student Conduct in the Student Handbook at http://www.memphis.edu/stuhand2/ for more information.

4. Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office (located in 110 Wilder; Phone 901-678-2880 V/TTY; FAX 901-678-3070) in order to receive appropriate course-related accommodations and services. Students who formally register their disabilities with SDS are entitled to reasonable accommodations, as well as confidentiality with respect to their specific disability. If you have registered with SDS, please be certain that I receive an official memo that outlines your accommodation requirements so that we may maximize your learning experience.

5. Confidentiality: To ensure confidentiality of student information, **under no circumstances** will I send grades over email or discuss your grade over the telephone or voicemail.

6. Classroom conduct: Students are expected to approach controversial and/or sensitive topics as mature adults.

   Food and beverages will be permitted in the classroom, as long as the classroom is left in a clean and tidy state at the end of class and as long as such activity is not disruptive during class time. We will typically take a short break during our 3-hour class meeting. **Cell phones, electronic pagers, and alarms, etc. must be silenced or turned off during class.**

**Summary of Important Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>Exercise #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 29</td>
<td>Exercise #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 6</td>
<td>Group project meeting (first of three in-class meetings)</td>
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<td>October 13</td>
<td>Exercise #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 20</td>
<td>Group project meeting (second of three in-class meetings)</td>
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<td>November 3</td>
<td>Group project meeting (last of three in-class meetings)</td>
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<td>November 23</td>
<td>Last day to submit draft of term paper for comments</td>
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<td>December 1</td>
<td>Group Presentations (continuing on Dec. 8)</td>
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<td>December 8</td>
<td>Term Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 15</td>
<td>Last day to submit late or revised assignments</td>
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**Course Schedule†**

Week 1: September 1  Introduction to Medical Sociology; the Sociological Perspective on Health; Historical and Social Sources of Illness  
*Reading:*  
Weitz Ch. 1: Introduction & Ch. 2: The Social Sources of Illness  

Week 2: September 8  Social Sources of Illness, continued; Who gets sick?  
*Reading:*  
Weitz Ch. 3: The Social Distribution of Illness in the United States.  

Week 3: September 15  International Contexts of Health and Illness  
*Reading:*  
Weitz Ch. 4: Illness in Developing Nations  

**DUE: Exercise #1**

Week 4: September 22  Meanings of Illness: Medicalization, Social Control & the Sick Role  
*Reading:*  
Weitz Ch. 5: The Social Meanings of Illness  

† Schedule and reading are subject to change.
Week 5: September 29  
Disability: Definitions, Distribution and Discrimination

Reading:
Weitz Ch. 6: The Experience of Chronic Illness and Disability

DUE: Exercise #2

Week 6: October 6  
Cross-Cultural Understandings of Health and Illness, Part I

Reading:
Fadiman The Spirit Catches You... Ch. 1-4.

In-Class Group Projects, Part I

Week 7: October 13  
Medicine as a Profession; Doctor-Patient Interactions

Reading:
Weitz Ch. 11: The Profession of Medicine

DUE: Exercise #3

Week 8: October 20  
Cross-Cultural Understandings of Health and Illness, Part II

Reading:
Fadiman The Spirit Catches You... Ch. 5-8.

In-Class Group Projects, Part II

Week 9: October 27  
Nurses and Other Health Care Practitioners

Reading:
Weitz Ch. 12: Other Mainstream and Alternative Health Care Providers
Chambliss, Daniel F. “What It Means to Be a Nurse.” [Reserve]

Week 10: November 3  
Cross-Cultural Understandings of Health and Illness, Part III

Reading:
Fadiman The Spirit Catches You... Ch. 9-14.

In-Class Group Projects, Part III
Week 11: November 10  What’s wrong (and right) about the health care system in the U.S.?
Reading:
Weitz Ch. 8: The U.S. Health Care System and the Need for Reform

Week 12: November 17  Other ways of organizing health care: what do other nations do?
Reading:
Weitz Ch. 9: Alternative Health Care Systems

Week 13: November 24  HAPPY THANKSGIVING  
Meeting To Be Rescheduled! 
The Structure and Organization of Health Care
Reading:
Weitz Ch. 10: Health Care Settings
Recommended Readings – read at least one:

Week 14: December 1  Group Presentations

Week 15: December 8  Group Presentations, continued (if necessary); Social Issues and Medical Debates
Reading:
Weitz Ch 13: Issues in Bioethics

Exam Week  December 15  Final time (5:30 pm – 7:30 pm) for late/revised assignments