Professor:
Johanna Schoen (johanna.schoen@rutgers.edu)
Department of History and Institute for Health, Health Care Policy & Aging Research
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 p.m., and by appointment, 213A Van Dyck (CAC)

Course Summary: The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Yet the ways in which we understand, define, and experience health and well-being vary widely across history, cultures, and populations. Although health is often viewed as a condition of biology and the body, scholars have documented the powerful ways that economic, cultural, historical, and social forces shape health. In this course, we bring together perspectives from sociology, history, public health, medicine, and the humanities to: (a) define health; (b) understand the diverse ways that scholars study health; (c) identify the social, economic, historical, and cultural factors that influence the prevalence, distribution, and experience of four health conditions: body weight (including obesity and excessive slenderness); mental health (e.g., depression); cancer; and HIV/AIDS. We conclude with discussions of the ways that scholarship might inform medical practice, medical ethics, and public policies to enhance health in the United States and globally. Course materials include scholarly articles and books, articles from popular media, statistical reports on disease prevalence, cultural portrayals (e.g., film, literature) of health conditions and health care, first-person illness narratives, and brief recordings of expert lectures provided by Rutgers faculty from Newark, New Brunswick, Camden and Biomedical & Health Sciences.

Course Format: Students are required to attend the two class sessions each week. Active participation is encouraged. Lecture slides will be posted on our class Sakai site within 24 hours prior to each lecture. Assigned readings should be read prior to each lecture. Lectures will be supplemented with video clips, movie selections, and guest video lectures. Students are encouraged to visit the professors during office hours to discuss and clarify course material.

Course Requirements: This three-credit course will have two exams, one in-class (Thursday March 10) and one final exam (Friday May 6, noon to 3 p.m.). Each exam accounts for 20% of the overall course grade. Students will also complete three short writing assignments (3-5 pages), each accounting for 15% of the final grade. These short-essay topics and guidelines will be posted on Sakai two weeks prior to the due date. Students are required to write one essay on theories/methods and one on ethics; for the third paper, you may choose to write on one of three possible diseases (mental health, cancer, HIV/AIDS). Attendance and active participation in class discussion will account for 15% of your overall course grade.

Grading Summary:

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<td>Midterm Exam (Thursday March 10)</td>
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<td>Paper 1</td>
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<td>Final Exam (Friday May 6)</td>
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ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

E-mail etiquette and requirements: We will happily and promptly reply to all student email. However, you must follow two simple rules. First, you must put the course name (e.g., Soc 220, History 227) in the subject line. Second, you must sign your email with your name; your email addresses often do not tell us who you are.

Sakai site: The class Sakai site includes our syllabus, course readings, homework assignments, outlines, exam study guides, occasional supplemental and/or “current event” readings, and other important announcements pertaining to class. Please check the website regularly, to keep up to date with class information.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

Academic misconduct: Rutgers University policies state that academic misconduct may involve: cheating; fabrication; facilitating academic dishonesty; plagiarism; denying others access to information or material. Any instances of academic misconduct will be reported to your dean. Plagiarism is using someone else's words without giving the author proper attribution. For further information on plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty see the University's academic integrity policy: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml

Class conduct: The History and Sociology Departments encourage the free exchange of ideas in a safe and productive classroom environment. Students and faculty must act with mutual respect and courtesy. Behaviors that distract students and faculty are not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by the instructor. Courteous expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, the instructor, following the University Code of Student Conduct, may direct the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings. The University Code of Student Conduct http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml.
TOPICS & READING SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction and Understanding Health

Welcome and Introduction

Sociological Perspectives: An Overview


Week 2: Studying and Understanding Health

Sociological and Epidemiological Research Methods


Historical and Cultural Perspectives: An Overview


Week 3. Studying and Understanding Health (cont’d)

Historical and Cultural Perspectives (cont’d)


Ethical Issues in Research

**Week 4: Body Weight and Obesity**

**Historical and Cultural Perspectives**


**Historical and Cultural Perspectives (Cont’d)**


**Week 5: Body Weight and Obesity (Cont’d)**

**Epidemiologic Approaches**


**Sociological Approaches**


**Week 6: Mental Health and Illness**

**Historical and Cultural Perspectives**


**Historical and Cultural Perspectives (cont’d)**

Week 7: Mental Health and Illness (Cont’d)

Epidemiological Approaches


Sociological Approaches


Week 8: Cancer

Historical & Cultural Perspectives

EXAM 1

Week 9: Cancer (Cont’d).

Epidemiological Approaches


Sociological Approaches
Week 10: HIV/AIDS

Historical Approaches

Film: *And the Band Played On* (1993)

Cultural Approaches


Week 11: HIV/AIDS (Cont’d)

Epidemiological Approaches


Sociological Approaches


Week 12: Medical Ethics

Historical Approaches


Sociological Approaches

Week 13: Medical Ethics (Cont’d)

Contemporary Challenges: Abortion Debates

Chapter 7: Rocks & Hard Places.

Selection of primary source writings from Lambs of Christ.

Contemporary Challenges (cont’d): End-of-Life Care Debates


http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/opinion/maynard-assisted-suicide-cancer-dignity/

Week 14: Improving Health in Contemporary Society: Multiple Perspectives

Can an Understanding of Society & Culture Improve Global Health?


Wrap-Up and Review

Final Exam (Noon to 3 p.m.).