
HS 378 (30020)
SEMINAR IN HEALTH AND SOCIETY
Topic: "HEALTH AT THE CROSSROADS OF SOCIAL CHANGE"
Fall 2022
TTH 9:30-11
BUR 214

Professor

Steph Osbakken, Ph.D.

Email: osbakken@utexas.edu

Office Hours: Individual appointments, sign up at
osbakken.as.me

Pronouns: she/her/hers



Office Hours

I will hold weekly individual office hours via Zoom each week. You can access on my online scheduling system at **osbakken.as.me**. I encourage everyone to meet with me during office hours via Zoom!

What is this course about?

This upper-level research seminar fulfills part of the requirement for the Health and Society major. We will begin the semester working together to explore various topics in health and healthcare, exploring social, cultural, and economic factors that shape health problems in the U.S. and elsewhere around the world. Students will develop their own research interests through many writing projects throughout the term, design and lead a discussion on a topic of their own choosing, and provide professional feedback to their peers in their writing groups. Students will complete the semester working in small groups to develop a professional portfolio of solutions that offer practical and policy-based solutions to a contemporary health-related problem of their choice.

This class holds central the process of inquiry. We will work as a group to develop our analytical skills and ask tough questions as we think critically about the world around us. We will rigorously incorporate discovery, teaching, and assessment in our projects throughout the term, individually and in teams, as we turn our own research interests into answerable research questions, hone our presentation skills, and work as a team to generate solutions to important health-related challenges. By the end of the

semester, students will have gained confidence in their writing abilities, learned how to work collaboratively and constructively on shared projects with their peers, and ultimately produce several significant pieces of original writing they will be proud of.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the class students will be able to:

- Explore questions of interest in various independent research and writing projects during the term.
- Become a critical reader of social scientific scholarly research examining the role of social forces on health and illness.
- Develop and refine academic writing skills.
- Cultivate a sense of teamwork and camaraderie with classmates as you work to develop individual and shared projects.
- Critically evaluate health research and communicate findings in a variety of written assignments, discussions, and presentations during the term.

What will I need for this class?

Many materials will be made available on Canvas, but the following books will need to be purchased:

Murthy, Vivek. 2020. *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*. Harper Collins. New York, NY.

EITHER:

1. Ensel, Thomas. 2022. *Healing: Our Path from Mental Illness to Mental Health*. Penguin Press. New York, NY.

OR

2. Makary, Marty. 2021. *The Price We Pay: What Broke American Health Care*. Bloomsbury Publishing. New York, NY.

AND

EITHER:

1. Brewer, Judson. 2021. *Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal your Mind*. Penguin Random House. New York, NY.

OR

2. Damour, Lisa. 2019. *Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls*. Ballantine Books. New York, NY.

How can I best succeed in this class?

To succeed in this course, I recommend that you read all assigned texts before our shared class meetings, attend every (or almost every) class, and participate regularly

in our in-class discussions. In addition, constructively working with class group members in our varied assignments is important for your success in this class. Participation and active engagement in the class let me know that you are working hard and learning in this class! Another way to be successful is to take the writing process seriously by proofreading your work before submitting your assignments on time!

Perhaps most importantly, I applaud students who cultivate an active learning approach. I love supporting you as we keep our minds open to explore big questions and craft solutions to seemingly intractable problems related to health. I don't mind mistakes, in fact, I hope you make them! That's how we all learn best. In all honesty, I really want to see you take some risks and work hard. That is what I am hoping for you all!

Assignments and Grading

Description	Percent of Final Grade
Introductory Survey	1%
Active Participation (Attendance is REQUIRED except when ill as participation points accrue daily)	20%
Discussion Blog Posts– 5/6 required	5%
Self-care project	5%
Collaborative Critical Reflection: Murthy’s “Together”	5%
Critical Reflection Paper: Anxiety Book Damour or Brewer	5%
Critical Reflection Paper: Health Challenge Ensel or Makary	5%
Group Project	
○ Group’s Statement of Purpose	5%
○ Introduction/Background research to problem	10%
○ 2 Peer Reviews of independent proposal – one internal and one external	4%
○ Independent proposal within collaborative project	20%
○ Conclusion	5%
○ Group Presentation	10%
Total	100%

Assignment and Grading Details

Introductory Survey (1%)

Filling out a beginning of the term survey will help me get to know you, and will count 1% toward your final grade.

Participation (20%)

Attendance is mandatory in a discussion-based, writing intensive class. You can miss three classes without penalty during the term. Please attend class every day; it facilitates your learning and engagement in our class, but **it’s essential** for our learning community. Moreover, you have to attend to participate in our capstone seminar. That said, I recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has created difficult

circumstances for many of us. If at any point in the semester you are unable to attend due to infection or COVID symptoms, please be in touch with me immediately.

I expect that you will have read all assigned readings before each class period. In class, active participation is essential for our shared learning. Since this is a discussion-based seminar, I will not lecture—you will be the ones who bring the content of this class to life. To prepare, please write your own questions as you take notes on readings and come to class ready to contribute in groups and individually to our shared conversation!

Self-care project (5%)

In this class, I hope you adopt some self-care regimen. For this assignment, you will describe your journey of self-care as you work hard this semester. Are you planning to adopt a new habit, hobby, practice? It's totally up to you. Document it carefully though, so you can reflect on it by the end of the term.

Discussion Posts (5%)

Throughout the term you will be asked to write short response posts on our daily class readings and discussion topics. There will be 6 writing prompts in all, and 5 are required for full credit. You will receive a grade of 100, 90, 80, 70 or 0 for each prompt. Please be thoughtful with these and check your spelling, grammar and punctuation before submitting them.

Group problem analysis: Critical Book Review: Murthy (5%)

After reading this book, you will work in a group to write a short 2-3 page paper outlining the problem at hand, evaluating the book, and integrating 3 additional research citations related to this recent work.

Problem analysis: Critical Book Review: Ensel or Makary (5%)

After reading one of these two books you will write a short 2-3 page paper outlining the problem at hand, evaluating the book, and integrating 3 additional research citations related to this recent publication.

Self-reflection on Anxiety Book: Damour or Brewer (5%)

After reading one of these two books you will write a short 2-3 page paper outlining the problem at hand and reflecting on your own thoughts about the author's proposals and suggestions.

Group Project with Independent Proposal (54% total)

Throughout the semester you will work together to adopt a professional approach to problem solving. You and your team members will collaborate around a shared problem of interest and work as either a health consulting firm advising the private

sector, consultants advancing an innovative non-profit, or a policy-oriented lobbying firm working to change legislation on a problem of interest. You'll collaboratively identify a shared problem, ask answerable question(s) to sustain your inquiry, and produce a well-organized portfolio full of independent solutions designed to address the problem at hand. Detailed assignments for each component will be posted on Canvas.

Components include:

Group's Statement of Purpose	5%
Introduction/Background Research	10%
Independent project proposal within group (4-5 pages)	20%
Conclusion	5%
Presentation	10%
Two reviews of your peers' sole-authored proposals	4%

Overall semester averages will earn the following letter grades:

93-100: A	90-92.9: A-		
87-89.9: B+	83-86.9: B	80-82.9: B-	
77-79.9: C+	73-76.9: C	70-72.9: C-	
67-69.9: D+	63-66.9: D	60-62.9: D-	0-59.9: F

Course grades will be assigned according to this scale, with no rounding guaranteed (so 92.7 earns an A-, not an A; 89.9 earns a B+, not an A-).

Resources and Other Important Information

Names and pronoun use

I encourage all students to participate in class, and I want our classroom community to refer to you by your preferred name. While the roster indicates your “official” name according to UT’s records, I prefer to learn the name you wish to be called. So please let me know on our introductory survey so our internal class records and rosters can reflect your preference. I use she/her pronouns and I also want to know the pronouns you use too. I aspire to create an inclusive classroom environment for all students, and pronoun use is an essential step towards this goal. Please note your pronouns on the introductory survey, and include them on your name tag in class.

Preparation, participation, and professional development

This seminar is a capstone seminar for the Health and Society major and you should consider it a professional development seminar as well. I advise you to take this class as seriously you would your first job out of college. Consider our classroom table like a conference room at a place of employment. Your classmates are your division or team at work. In every way you can, force yourself NOT to be a student, but a professional who is being evaluated and paid for your contribution. In the spirit of this environment, I hope you choose to network with other students, bring interesting news articles or tidbits from social media to the group, and broach new ideas in class. Share what you know and help each other succeed! This approach will not only serve you well in terms of your grade, but more importantly, in terms of preparing you for your next step: either graduate/professional school or collaborative work out in the paid labor force.

Late work

Please try to avoid late work. The nature of our research in this class requires that you consistently meet deadlines so you can keep on track to finish your work. If, however, you find you are unable to meet a specific deadline, please contact me immediately.

Academic accommodations

The University of Texas provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Disability and Access (D&A) office at <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you already receive special accommodations, please bring these to my attention by Friday, September 2nd. If you are pursuing accommodations but don’t yet have them, please let me and your TA know this as soon as possible. Please note that I am mindful of accessibility, however, and try to anticipate many of the accommodations that are routinely offered at UT. We all have different needs and I’m happy to help you utilize your accommodations so you can succeed in my class.

COVID-19 considerations

Many of us are still affected by the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are experiencing difficulties, please let me know. Attendance and participation are critical to your success in this course, but if you are experiencing symptoms and especially if you are testing positive for the coronavirus, please remain at home and have a peer catch you up on what you've missed in our discussion. If I become ill during the semester, I will move our class to Zoom until I test negative and am well enough to return to our physical classroom. These details, should they arise, will all be communicated on Canvas.

Independent inquiry designation

This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of questions, problems, and projects related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

Writing flag designation

This course carries a writing flag. Writing flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in the academy. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, give and receive feedback to/from your peers, and complete substantial group writing projects on significant projects related to health in society. You will also have the opportunity to pursue writing assignments that matter to you, revise your work, and polish your writing style as you develop your professional interests and persona. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and a substantial portion of your grade come from your written work.

The University Writing Center

A significant part of your grade in this course is based on your writing. An excellent resource that you have at your disposal as a student is the University Writing Center. They are offering online consultations to help students with their writing at any stage of the process, whether you are struggling to begin, would like a second pair of eyes on the a nearly finished product, or something in between. You can book an appointment for a **consultation** at **uwc.utexas.edu**.

Academic integrity and misconduct

All work for this course must be your own, and yours alone, except when you collaborating with your peers on a group project. Academic dishonesty and misconduct will not be tolerated. We will be using a plagiarism detection software on Canvas for our writing assignments this term. This will help you and I both detect plagiarism, but is not fail-safe. As a UT student, you are responsible for knowing what constitutes cheating, unauthorized collaboration, and plagiarism, and you have agreed to uphold UT's policies on scholastic dishonesty which is outlined at the following address: <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php> We will talk about plagiarism in class early in the term, but it is ultimately your responsibility to know how to give appropriate credit to authors for their ideas. If you have any questions about the UT's policy regarding academic integrity, please see me before you begin your first written assignments. I hate to even write this, but any incident of plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment, as well as a 10-point deduction from your **final course grade**. So please, PLEASE do not engage in academic dishonesty.

Sharing of course materials is prohibited

No materials used in this class may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials that were authored by others in our class, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Title IX

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu.

For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419. Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of

behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

Religious holiday accommodations

If you must miss class or coursework to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after your absence. UT-Austin policy states that you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day for any accommodations.

The University Writing Center

A significant part of your grade in this course is based on your writing. The University Writing Center is an excellent resource available to you. The UWC offers one-on-one consultations to help students with their writing at any stage of the process, whether you are struggling to begin, would like a second pair of eyes on a nearly finished product, or something in between. You can book an appointment for at **uwc.utexas.edu**.

Course Calendar

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
Part 1: Finding your voice		
Tuesday, August 23	Introduction to the course	
Thursday, August 25	Introductions continued Thinking about health - Writing as thinking	Complete Intro Survey by 8/26
Tuesday, August 30	Entering the Conversation Allan Johnson; Brooks	Discussion post #1 due by 9:30
Thursday, September 1	Culture Wars; Public vs. Private Problems	Discussion post #2 due by 9:30
Tuesday, September 6	Poverty and Social Mobility; Biological vs. Social arguments	Discussion post #3 due by 9:30
Thursday, September 8	Abortion: Politics and Health in 2022	Discussion post #4 due by 9:30
Tuesday, September 13	Murthy- Together Book club day #1	
Thursday, September 15	Murthy- Together Book club day #2	
Tuesday, September 20	Mindfulness and self-care	Discussion post #5 due by 9:30
Thursday, September 22	Self-care: a practice-based approach	Collaborative Paper- Murthy Critical Book Review: due 9/22
Tuesday, September 27	Librarian Visit – Attendance mandatory Learning to use the library resources <i>Guest speaker: Carolyn Cunningham</i>	
Thursday, September 29	Book club: Novice/Expert- Ensel or Makary	
Tuesday, October 4	The Private Sector: Life as a Consultant <i>Guest speaker: Divya Satish</i>	
Thursday, October 6	Your group project- an introduction	Submit topic preferences on Canvas by 10/8
Tuesday, October 11	Charitable Foundations Solve Social Problems <i>Guest speaker: Kurt Lockhart</i>	Ensel or Makary Critical Book Review: due 10/11
Thursday, October 13	History of health policy; Medicare/Medicaid	Discussion post #6 due by 9:30 Group assignments announced today
Tuesday, October 18	Meet at LBJ Library	
Thursday, October 20	Anxiety Book club: Novice/Expert- Damour or Brewer	Group's statement of purpose due today
Tuesday, October 25	Reproductive Health Policy and Research <i>Guest speaker: Dana Johnson</i>	
Thursday, October 27	Non-profit work to combat homelessness <i>Guest speaker: Chris Baker, founder of TOOF</i>	Anxiety Book Self-Reflection: due 10/27
Part 2: Research Projects		
Tuesday, November 1	Group Work Day – Meet with group	Draft of Introduction and Background Research should be coming along; can be submitted for my feedback by 11/8
Thursday, November 3	Group Work Day – Meet with group	
Tuesday, November 8	Individual Work Day	First draft of Individual proposal should be almost done

Thursday, November 10	Group Work Day	Independent proposal drafts submitted to Canvas for peer review 11/10
Tuesday, November 15	In-class Work Day- Attendance Mandatory	Peer Reviews due on Canvas by 11/14
Thursday, November 17	Group Presentations (Groups 1 &2)	Slides due before your group's presentation
Tuesday, November 22	THANKSGIVING BREAK: ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAY	
Thursday, November 24	THANKSGIVING BREAK: ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAY	
Tuesday, November 29	Group Presentations (Groups 3 & 4)	Slides due before presentation
Thursday, December 1	Group Presentations (Groups 5 &6)	Slides due before presentation
		Self-care reflection papers due 12/2
		Final Group Projects due 12/5