

Introduction to Health and Society

HS 301 (29985) | SOC 308S (44545)

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Professor

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Teaching Assistant names and office hours TBA

Welcome to HS 301/SOC 308S: Introduction to Health and Society!

What is the course about?

The primary objective of this course is to offer students a broad overview of health and illness in society from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. We will begin by considering different theoretical frameworks as we explore how social forces shape the very definitions of health and illness in U.S. society. We will spend considerable time examining how economic, cultural, and social-structural features of society influence patterns of health and disease in the U.S. Why do low-income people in the U.S. have poorer health outcomes than those with more resources? What is a food desert, and how does it predict obesity and poor health? Why do African-American women die in childbirth at much higher rates than other women in the U.S.? We will also explore how ingrained cultural beliefs and power relations influence health outcomes through myriad pathways. For example, how do politics shape our conversations about women's reproductive health and mask-wearing during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic? By the end of the semester, you will be able to confidently recognize and explain how social and cultural forces shape health and illness in U.S. society.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze contemporary health issues from a variety of disciplinary and professional perspectives.
- Explain how geographic location, social status, and economic forces shape health behaviors and health outcomes.
- Explain how social and cultural factors shape contemporary understandings and experiences of health and illness (and death and dying) in the U.S.
- Critically evaluate the assumptions, motives, and evidence that individuals and groups use to make specific claims about health and illness that shape health policy and individual behaviors (and everything in between).

How is the course structured?

This course consists of three units: 1) Theoretical frameworks for understanding health and the U.S. health care system, 2) Social determinants of health, and 3) Health and illness in context.

The class will be organized by date using Modules on Canvas. I'll publish the module a week in advance. Here, you'll find a weekly to-do list, links to readings, videos, podcasts and other course materials, as well as links to any assignments that are due. I expect that you will prepare for class by reading/watching/reviewing these materials **before** class. This will help you better understand the lecture and participate in our in-class discussions. After each class (probably by the next day) our recorded class lectures and PowerPoint slides will be added to the week's module. Volunteer notetakers are appreciated, and your teaching assistants will upload any notes provided by your peers to Canvas for your use as well.

I would love see everyone in our class meetings, and we're going to have fun in class, but you **are NOT required to attend class**. However, I will say this: students who attend in real time perform better and have more opportunities to be seen by me, your TA, and our guest speakers. Our class is a large one, and members of our community will sometimes disagree. Which is okay, necessary even, for us to really learn! But if you do choose to attend our class sessions in person, I expect that we will treat each other with respect and kindness. Meanspirited behavior is incompatible with learning and does not belong in my classroom.

Lectures Online Recording System

This class uses the Lectures Online recording system. This system records the audio and video material presented in class for you to review after class. Links for the recordings will appear in the Lectures Online tab on the Canvas page for this class. You will find this tab along the left side navigation in Canvas.

To review a recording, simply click on the Lectures Online navigation tab and follow the instructions presented to you on the page. You can learn more about how to use the Lectures Online system at <http://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/students/how-to-access-recordings/>. You can find additional information about Lectures Online at: <https://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/>.

How do you contact us?

After the 4th class day, everyone will be assigned a teaching assistant. This teaching assistant is your go-to person during the semester and he/she/they will be an advocate for you in answering your questions and helping you understand the material. Teaching assistants will hold weekly office hours including a mix of group sessions and one-on-one appointments. These sessions will be communicated to you via Canvas after TA assignments are made.

I also will hold a group office hours session on Zoom each week, and will post the Zoom link in Canvas. During these sessions, I will address any lingering questions you may have about the week's content and lectures, or consider connections to other topics that interest you. I also love meeting with students one-on-one, so in addition to these group office hours, I am happy to meet with you individually throughout term. I encourage everyone to attend office hours and get to know me and your TA this term!

You can also email us by messaging us on Canvas or directly with our UT email address. We all check our email regularly, but our other commitments might affect our response time. During evening hours, weekends, and holidays you may experience even longer delays. If you have a true emergency and need to be in touch with us immediately, please make sure your subject heading reflects that you are having an emergency.

The very best way to reach us is to come to class! Most members of our team will be in class from 12:30-1:45 every Tuesday and Thursday.

What will I need for this course?

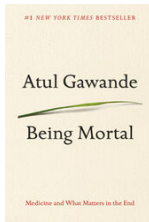
Most required readings and course materials will be available on Canvas in the week's module. Here are the things you need to purchase.



We will be using an online learning platform called Kritik this semester. You must register for Kritik in order to submit essay assignments. I will give you more information in class, and send you an invitation to register during the second week of class. **Cost: \$20 for a semester subscription for our class**



We will be watching *Food, Inc.* mid semester. The film will let us apply our analytical tools to examine individual agency and the social systems that shape our food choices. You may find it available free online, but if not, **Cost: is approximately \$3 to rent**



Atul Gawande's *Being Mortal* is required reading for the course. We will read this book toward the end of the semester, so pick up an inexpensive copy before then. **Cost: Approximately \$10**

Assignments and Grading

Description	Percent of Final Grade
Introductory Survey	1%
Canvas discussion posts (10 opportunities to post, 8 count)	7%
Kritik Writing Assignments- 3 total	
○ 3 Essay assignments (submitted on Kritik)	15%
○ 3 Evaluation cycles (you'll complete 5 peer reviews for each Kritik essay assignment)	9%
○ 3 Feedback cycles (you'll give all 5 reviewers feedback for each Kritik essay assignment)	3%
Canvas Quizzes	
○ Quiz 1	15%
○ Quiz 2	15%
○ Quiz 3	15%
Social Analysis Essay	10%
Group project	10%
Total	100%
EXTRA CREDIT: <i>Being Mortal</i> project	Up to 2 points
EXTRA CREDIT: Completed (documented) Course Evaluation	.5 points

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 strictly 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-).

Assignment and Grading Details

Introductory Survey

The first week of class I'll ask you to fill out an introductory survey so your TA and I can get to know you better. It counts for 1% of your grade. Please fill it out on time.

Canvas discussion posts

There will be regular questions posted to our Canvas discussion board throughout the term. You will need to complete eight of the 10 offered for full credit. Your TA will assess your answers and award you a grade of either 100, 70 or 0 for your response. Please be sure to leave enough time so you can offer a thoughtful and well-edited response to the discussion prompt to maximize your chances of receiving full credit. These are always due before class begins.

Canvas quizzes

We will have three objective quizzes on Canvas that will assess your comprehension of course material. Quizzes will "go live" starting at 12:00AM on Friday and must be submitted by 11:59PM on Saturday. You can take your quiz in any three-hour window during the 48 hours it is "open" on Canvas. Questions will be drawn from lectures, readings, other assigned class materials like podcasts and videos, and guest speakers who visit our class. Since you will only have three hours to complete each quiz once you begin the testing session, be sure to start each quiz by 8:59PM on Saturday to ensure you have all the full time available to you.

Quizzes are open note and open book. You may consult **any resources** from class that you want (books, notes, videos, etc.), **except other people**, including classmates, friends, roommates, family members, and any other human. Just to be clear, let me say this one more time: Once the quiz window has opened, you are not permitted to speak with anyone in our class about the quiz, share screenshots of the quiz, text about the quiz, or communicate about the quiz or class content in any way. With anyone. Period. **Failing to do so constitutes a violation of UT's academic integrity policy and will result in your earning a zero for the quiz.** Even after you've completed the quiz and the quiz window has closed, please refrain from discussing the quiz with your peers as other students may be planning on taking a late quiz due to illness.

Kritik essays

In the second week of class, you will receive an invitation to join Kritik. The cost for a one-semester subscription for our class is \$20. Kritik is a peer-to-peer learning platform that allows you to submit short essays and then review the work submitted by your fellow students. Kritik's format requires a deeper level of engagement with the material than simply writing an essay. There are three steps involved in each Kritik assignment:

Step 1 Creation: Write and submit a short essay, between 350-500 words long, to Kritik. Two essay prompts will be provided for each assignment. You will choose **one** of these questions to answer.

Step 2 Evaluation: After the Kritik deadline, you will be assigned five peer essays to evaluate. All evaluations will be completely anonymous, so you will not know whose paper you are assessing or who is grading yours. You will be asked to provide both numerical evaluations and written evaluations. I will give you a detailed grading rubric to use, specifying what type of feedback and comments you'll need to make on your peers' papers.

Step 3 Feedback: The final step in the Kritik process is to assess the quality of the written feedback that you received from each peer reviewer. Here you provide each reviewer feedback on the comments/assessment they gave your essay. You will be asked to rate each reviewer's feedback based on how **motivational** their commentary was and how **critical/helpful** it was. Motivational refers to how encouraging the feedback is, and critical refers to how helpful a review was in offering suggestions to improve your essay.

Your grade using Kritik: Your grade for each essay will have three components reflecting the three steps in the process. **First**, your essay will be given a creation score based on the average score assigned by your peer evaluators. This is your creation grade for your essay. **Second**, you will earn points for evaluating the work of your peers. A written evaluation score for each essay is an average of how well your 5 peers think you assessed their work. **Third**, you will get a feedback grade for giving feedback to your peer reviewers, essentially helping them become more thoughtful and constructive evaluators. **Before** submitting each essay to Kritik, you will also submit your work to Canvas so it can be evaluated by Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software accessible on Canvas. The software, while useful, is not perfect, so your teaching assistant and I will ultimately determine if flagged text constitutes plagiarism. Failure to upload your essay to Canvas before the submission deadline on Kritik will result in a 10-point deduction on your Creation score.

What if I disagree with my essay grade? If you believe your essay's creation grade does not fairly reflect the quality of your submission, you can use Kritik's "dispute grade" feature. You will be prompted to provide the reason you are disputing the grade. Your TA will then regrade the submission and change your grade only if they believe there is a reason to do so. Keep in mind that your TA will regrade your entire paper against the criteria on the rubric, not merely adjudicate the matter you've flagged. As a result, your grade might move up or down after the grade dispute. If history is any guide, grades stay the same about 70% of the time, are raised 5% of the time, and go down 25% of the time when a TA addresses a grade dispute. If you believe your peer evaluator was unfair or unkind, remember that you can evaluate them as such during the feedback portion of Kritik's process, as long as you substantiate your claims in writing. Given the nature of Kritik, it is in **everyone's interest** to follow the rubric when evaluating your peers' essays, and also offer constructive feedback to

your peers. If your TA or I find that some evaluators are not providing high-quality and/or constructive feedback, we will lower your evaluation grades accordingly.

Late essays

Because Kritik essays are sent out for review soon after they are due, submitting late assignments on Kritik is not possible. Late assignments effectively disrupt the peer review process. However, I understand that emergencies and complications sometimes arise. If you find that you cannot submit a Kritik writing assignment on time, **email me and your TA for approval of a late submission**. If we give you permission **before** the Kritik deadline to submit your essay late, you will submit an assignment for your TA to grade instead on the "Make-up essays" portal on Canvas. Please note, however, if you miss the Kritik deadline you will need to answer **both of the essay prompts** instead of just the one required for an on-time submission to Kritik. The extra essay will essentially make up for what is lost by participating in the peer review process. The grade for the first essay prompt will count in lieu of your Creation score and the second will count in lieu of the Evaluation and Feedback scores.

Social analysis paper

This assignment will give you a chance to engage in the social analysis skills you've been learning and receive feedback on your comprehension and writing from a member of our team. A more detailed assignment will be posted in late September. Late submissions will receive a 10-point deduction every 24-hour period after the deadline.

Group project

In early November, I will divide the class into small groups so you can better explore some of our class topics in a creative group project. A more specific assignment will be distributed at that time. This project will require that you meet with group members outside of class to plan and complete your group's project by the end of the semester. Since this project is due at the end of the semester, no late work is permitted.

Resources and Other Important Information

Names and pronoun use

I encourage all students to participate in class, and I love learning students' names. While the roster indicates your "official" name according to UT's records, I am happy (and prefer) to use the name you wish to be called. So please let me and your TA know so our internal spreadsheets and rosters can reflect your preference. Also, please indicate the pronouns you use on your introductory survey. I aspire to create an inclusive classroom environment for all students and knowing your pronouns is important to me.

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 and your TA know. Please keep in mind that this course does not require attendance. I would love nothing more to see your smiling faces in class every day when you are well, but if you are experiencing symptoms and especially if you are testing positive for the coronavirus, please remain at home and watch video recordings of our class session that will be available on Canvas. If I become ill during the semester, either I or a colleague will hold our class via Zoom until I am well enough to return to our physical classroom. These details, should they arise, will all be communicated on Canvas.

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**.

Academic integrity and misconduct

All work for this course must be your own, and yours alone, except for the group project. Academic dishonesty and misconduct go against the UT honor code, and will not be tolerated. Any unauthorized collaboration with your peers on quizzes, or plagiarism of another person's work (even with his/her/their consent) on quizzes or writing assignments, is **strictly prohibited**. Any written work you submit for essay assignments, quizzes, and discussion posts should be in your own words. If you are borrowing ideas from someone, or quoting from an author or website, you must properly attribute credit. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Our class will use Turnitin for our writing assignments, which is plagiarism detection software on Canvas. The software, while useful, is not perfect. The teaching assistants and I will determine if any detected text constitute plagiarism.

Any incident of cheating, plagiarism, or unauthorized collaboration will result in a zero on the assignment for all parties involved, **as well as a 10-point deduction** from your **final course grade**. So please, do not engage in academic dishonesty. 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 here: <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php> If you have any questions about UT's academic integrity policies, please contact me or your TA before you begin preparing any assignments for this class.

A word of caution about GroupMe

I encourage students to use GroupMe to connect with your peers. However, be careful. Any evidence of scholastic dishonesty using GroupMe will affect your permanent record and your grade in the class. And if you think I won't hear what's posted on our class GroupMe, think again! I hear and see it all...

Sharing of course materials is prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture notes, lecture slides, videos, quizzes, assignments, Kritik writing assignments, review sheets, 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, 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. Similarly, Lecture capture class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under

FERPA. These recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

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.

Course Calendar

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
Part 1: Social Frameworks for Thinking about Health		
Tuesday, August 23	Introduction to the course	
Thursday, August 25	Sociology of health and illness	Complete Intro Survey by 8/26
Tuesday, August 30	Social burden of disease and the limits of medicine	Discussion post #1 due by 12:30PM Sign up for Kritik by 9/2
Thursday, September 1	Population health: Epidemiological transition theory	Discussion post #2 due by 12:30PM
Tuesday, September 6	Public health: Upstream/Downstream approaches	Discussion post #3 due by 12:30PM
Thursday, September 8	Inequality, stress, and health	Kritik Essay #1 due Friday 9/9
Tuesday, September 13	Politics and health: Part 1 Theory, Culture, Impacts	Kritik Evaluations due
Thursday, September 15	Politics and health: Part 2 Who “deserves” health? Compassion and self-compassion	Discussion post #4 due by 12:30PM Kritik Feedback due
Tuesday, September 20	U.S. healthcare: origins and reform	Kritik Essay #2 due Friday 9/23
Thursday, September 22	The U.S. health disadvantage	Discussion post #5 due by 12:30PM
Tuesday, September 27	Social constructionism/medicalization What is health? What is illness? Who decides?	Kritik Evaluations due Social analysis paper posted
Thursday, September 29	Finish medicalization lecture – In-class review session	Kritik Feedback due Canvas Quiz #1 available Friday 9/30 at 12:00AM, due by Saturday, 10/1 at 11:59PM
Part 2: Social Determinants of Health		
Tuesday, October 4	SES and health: income, wealth & poverty	
Thursday, October 6	SES and health: education and status	Discussion post #6 due by 12:30PM
Tuesday, October 11	Race, ethnicity and health	
Thursday, October 13	Race, ethnicity and health	Discussion post #7 due by 12:30PM
Tuesday, October 18	Gender, sexuality and health	Social Analysis Paper due 10/18
Thursday, October 20	Social relationships and health	Discussion post #8 due by 12:30PM Canvas Quiz #2 available Friday 10/21 at 12:00AM, due by Saturday, 10/22 at 11:59PM
Part 3: Health and Illness in Context		
Tuesday, October 25	The COVID-19 Pandemic	
Thursday, October 27	The Social context of food and obesity in the U.S.	Discussion post #9 due by 12:30PM

Tuesday, November 1	The Opioid Crisis	Kritik Essay #3 due Friday 11/4 Group project posted
Thursday, November 3	Homelessness <i>Guest Speaker: Chris Baker, Founder of TOOF</i>	
Tuesday, November 8	Civic participation and a healthy democracy	Kritik Evaluations due
Thursday, November 10	Bridging the gap between intergenerational healing and neuropsychology <i>Guest Speaker: Bella Rockman, LPC</i>	Kritik Feedback due
Tuesday, November 15	Mental health and illness <i>Guest Speaker: Ali Houshmand M.A., LMFT, LPC</i>	Discussion post #10 due by 12:30PM
Thursday, November 17	Aging in the U.S.	Canvas Quiz #3 available Friday, 11/18 at 12:00AM, due by Saturday, 11/19 at 11:59PM
Tuesday, November 22	Thanksgiving Holiday – safe travels!	NO CLASS – enjoy your break!
Thursday, November 24	Thanksgiving Holiday – safe travels!	NO CLASS – enjoy your break!
Tuesday, November 29	Negotiating the end of life <i>Guest Speaker: Nancy McCranie, Director of Bereavement and Volunteer Services, Hospice Austin</i>	
Thursday, December 1	Death and dying in the U.S.	Group Projects due 12/2 by 11:59PM Being Mortal extra credit due 12/5 Course Evaluation extra credit due 12/5

Important final points

Quizzes are due by 11:59pm on the dates indicated.

Kritik essays, evaluations, and feedback are all due by 11:59pm on the dates indicated.

Discussion posts are due by the beginning of class time, so 12:30pm on the dates indicated to receive full credit. Late discussion posts will receive only partial credit.

I reserve the right to rearrange the order of topics or tentative readings.

There is no final exam in the course. Your last assignment, your group project, is due on 12/2.