

**UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**Sociology 077.354**  
**The Sociology of Health Care Systems**  
**Winter 2006, 3 credit hours**

*“I am merely emphasizing that the fact of “health” is a cultural fact in the broadest sense of the word, a fact that is political, economic, and social as well, a fact that is tied to a certain state of individual and collective consciousness”.*

*- Michel Foucault – “The Risks of Security”, in J. Faubion, ed., Power, 2000 -*

**Instructor:** Professor Christopher J. Fries  
**Time & Place:** Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays: 1:30pm - 2:20pm, 301 Tier Building  
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## **1. Nature and Scope of the Course**

How do aspects of social location such as ethnicity, socio-economic circumstance, gender, and education work together to produce a sense of legitimacy in people’s everyday health care practices? What accounts for the increasing popularity of Complementary / Alternative Medical (CAM) practices? In what ways, if at all, are biomedical and complementary / alternative health care systems compatible? How is it that particular practices, such as the balancing of ‘chi-energy’ through acupuncture, come to be socially constructed as a ‘cure’ by some in our society and ineffective, illegitimate or even charlatanism by others? What role does the postmodern, transnational character of contemporary social life play in the resurgence of medical pluralism? How are “medical consumerism” and the “marketing of ethnicity” implicated in the resurgence of medical pluralism? These questions and debates among others will be examined in this course through readings, lectures, films, group discussions, and with guest speakers. In analysis of the social organization of formal and informal health care this course will draw upon numerous sociological perspectives such as social demography, ethnic studies, postmodern social theory, the sociology of knowledge, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies, to understand the social forces which shape peoples’ health care beliefs and behaviour.

Importation of Foucault’s insights into the sociology of health have allowed health sociologists to adopt as the starting point for their analyses the relationship of medical knowledge to social power and control and the culturally contested nature of medical knowledge and practice. In the West, “biomedicine” has come to be accepted as the dominant health care system. And yet, globally and historically there are a diverse range of beliefs and systems of thought regarding health, illness, and disease. Similarly, on a global level, there are numerous healing traditions and systems of health care that have been used for centuries to prevent and treat illness. The objective of this course is to develop an understanding of how social location acts to socially construct health care beliefs and the pursuit of health. Realizing that health care systems are socially constructed will allow us to explore the social dynamics whereby those with differing social locations negotiate differing meanings of health care. As definitions of health are socially constructed, so too is it possible to understand health care as culturally conditioned.

## **2. Objectives of the Course**

- ✓ Students will develop their own sociological imaginations which will help them to think about health care systems sociologically; examining and understanding this aspect of their own lives.
- ✓ Students will learn about neo-liberalism and its affects on social reform and health care policy.
- ✓ Students will become familiar with the social organization of formal and informal health care systems.
- ✓ Students will learn how to produce a scholarly book review.
- ✓ Students will learn how to identify and analyse discourses present in contemporary culture and media, which impact upon the delivery of health care.

### 3. Required Texts

- ⇒ R.C. Lewontin. *Biology as Ideology: The Doctrine of DNA*. (Concord: Anansi Press, 1991).
- ⇒ M. Angell. *The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It*. (Toronto: Random House, 2005).
- ⇒ In addition to the required textbook (available at the University of Manitoba Bookstore), a number of supplementary readings have been selected from various sources (i.e., published journal articles and chapters). These readings have been duplicated and placed on 2 HOUR RESERVE in the Elizabeth Dafoe Library. These readings are also available on Eres - the Electronic Reserves System at University of Manitoba Libraries. This service provides remote access to reserve course material. The readings are listed by course number (SOC77.249), as well as course title and instructor's name and are available at: <http://reserves.lib.umanitoba.ca>

### 4. Organization of the Course

This class will meet in the place and at the times indicated in the timetable. Basically, the course will consist of informal lectures - consequently, students are encouraged to participate in the class by making points and asking questions. From time to time, there may be guest lecturers, films may be shown, and we may do some group work.

### 5. My Expectations

☛ **Collegiality:** Together, we can create and maintain a collegial learning environment; one in which we all develop as individuals and scholars and in which the free and respectful exchange of ideas occurs. Please be polite and respectful of your fellow students and myself!

☛ **Participation:** This is **YOUR** class so I expect you to take ownership of it through your contribution. Questions and discussion are as much a part of the class as are the lectures. As critical sociological theorist, Theodor Adorno said, "what is vaguely put is poorly thought". Your participation will be evaluated on the quality of your research, communication, writing, and presentation skills.

☛ **Independent Scholarship:** You will be held responsible for all required readings and course materials, such as films and study guides, whether discussed further in class or not. Please do your homework!

☛ **Attendance and Missed Exams / Assignments:** If it is necessary for you to miss a lecture please inform me by email prior to your absence so that you may find out what material you will miss. Exams and assignments missed due to unexcused absences will result in a grade of zero, except under documented reasons for missing an exam or assignment, i.e., a biomedical practitioner's note.

☛ **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will be subject to a penalty. In exceptional circumstances (illness, etc.) an extension may be granted, provided you receive the instructor's permission beforehand. If an extension is granted, a new due date will be set. Work missing this date will be subject to penalty.

☛ **Academic Integrity:** I encourage collaborative and cooperative work ethics. Feel free to discuss your thoughts with other members of the class and thereby develop your comprehension and critical analysis. But remember, when it is time to prepare your exams and assignments, do your own work. Please don't be a cheat!

☛ **Instructor Availability:** I appreciate that sociology may be a relatively new area of study for you and you may feel overwhelmed by the material. Anxiety over one's performance on, and preparation for, lectures and exams is normal. If you are unclear about the material, my lectures or my expectations, please ask for clarification during class, or if you prefer, make an appointment to meet with me individually.

☛ **Sociological Engagement:** As the central learning objective of this course is the development of your own sociological imagination, I expect you to think about and discuss course material with others outside class. That is, you are to be a "sociologist of life"!

☛ **Roadmap:** Read and use this outline as your roadmap for the course: It will be your course reference throughout the term. Most of the questions students ask are answered on it. Further copies are downloadable on the course website.

## 6. Student Expectations

☛ Students are encouraged to review the University of Manitoba's "Responsibilities of Academic Staff with regard to Students" document, which can be found online at:  
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/rulebook/roass.html>

☛ As supplement to the above policies, by the second full week of classes, I will collect, summarize, and attach as an addendum to this syllabus your expectations of myself; your instructor.

## 7. University Policies and Resources

☛ **Religious Holidays:** The University recognizes the right of all students to observe recognized holidays of their faith, which fall within the academic year. With instructor discretion, necessary arrangements can be made to ensure studies are not jeopardized. The instructor should be notified of a student's intended absence in advance and at least three weeks notice of absence should normally be given where special arrangements are sought.

☛ **Class attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. Students who persistently miss class will not be permitted to write the term exam (see University of Manitoba, Undergraduate Calendar 2005-2006, p. 27). Because class attendance is mandatory, the professor will not provide students with lecture notes under any circumstance. Students who miss class are expected to obtain course notes from another classmate.

☛ **Missed Films:** If you miss a film, you will need to arrange to view it at an alternate time. Making this arrangement is a student responsibility, and must be undertaken in ways that do not inconvenience Educational Support Services or the instructor. To view a missed film, you will need a form which is available from 123 Fletcher Argue and which requires the instructor's signature. It is your job to bring the form to the instructor for signing.

☛ **Disruptions:** Disruptions due to excessive talking or early departures from the classroom are especially distracting to large classes. Please be considerate and respectful of the needs and rights of others in the class. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in disbarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the beginning of class.

☛ **Voluntary Withdrawal:** Last day for voluntary withdrawal from the course without academic penalty is March 17, 2006.

☛ **Academic Integrity:** Acts of academic dishonesty or plagiarism are serious offenses and are subject to

academic discipline. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on 'Examinations: Personations' (p. 26) and "Plagiarism and Cheating" (p. 27) found in the Undergraduate Calendar. The Faculty of Arts reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

☛ **Special Learning Needs:** Students with special learning needs (who for legitimate reasons require extra time to write a test, or who require aids or other supports) should identify themselves to the instructor at the beginning of the term in order to arrange suitable accommodation. Disability Services is located at: 155 University Centre, Phone: 204 474-6213, TTY: 204 474-9790, Fax: 261-7732, Email: disability\_services@umanitoba.ca

☛ **Safewalk:** The Safewalk Program was created by utilizing the theory that there is safety in numbers. It is available on both the Fort Garry and Bannatyne campuses. The Student Patrols, under the supervision of the Security Services, walk/escort individuals to any destination within the campus boundaries. The Safewalk service is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, all year round. A Safewalk escort can be initiated by calling 474-9312 or an individual may want to approach the Student Patrol when seeing them on campus to request an escort.

## 8. Course Requirements

*There is no final exam in this course!*

➔ **Exams:** Forty percent of your grade will be based upon two in class exams covering readings, lectures, films, film study guides, and class discussions. Additional specific information will be provided in class regarding the format and the material to be covered on each of these exams. **Purpose:** To encourage you keep up with lecture and reading material (so please come to class prepared) and to provide you with ongoing feedback as to your performance in class.

➔ **Scholarly Book Review** - Thirty-five percent (35%) of your final grade will be based on a Scholarly / Analytical Book Review assignment. You are to review and critically evaluate Angell's, *The Truth About the Drug Companies* (2005). Reviews should be 7 to 8 typewritten, double-spaced pages. You are to use format, grammar, style, gender neutral language, and diction suitable to an academic paper. The sources you utilize must be properly referenced using the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* Citation Style. **You are to submit a detailed outline of your proposed review no later than January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Your proposal will be graded out of 10.** Your proposal will identify: 1) the book you have selected for review, 2) secondary sources / reviews you plan to consult, and 3) a brief outline of each of the sections of your review (Enticement, Examination, Elucidation, and Evaluation). **Purpose:** To allow you to demonstrate your sociological imagination by developing a critical awareness of how sociocultural factors influence health care and to teach you how to produce a scholarly book review, demonstrating your competency in writing.

➔ **Culture / Media Watch File Assignment** - During the semester you are to keep an ongoing file of items relating to "medical consumerism". Items for your file can be gathered from newspapers, magazines, journals etc. However, you need not limit yourself to the print media. Any current cultural representation of medical consumerism is acceptable for inclusion in your file. To this end, your file can also include short descriptions of non-print items such as radio / television shows and commercials, movies, news reports, web sites etc. You are to identify the source and date of each item you collect. Each item should be accompanied by a short description indicating how it is an instance of medical consumerism. You should also file the items into a few broad categories so that the presentation of your file is easily accessible. For example, you may wish to categorize the items according to the type of cultural medium you found them in (i.e. daily newspaper, news report, popular television show etc.) Alternatively, you may wish to group your file items according to an "interpretive-type" thematic categorization, which arises out of the items you collect (i.e. health promotion, healthy eating, beauty and health). The main thing is that your presentation be creative, makes sense, and that you can justify whatever categorization scheme you choose to employ. Your file will be graded according to the following criteria: Number and Variety of File Items, Proper Sourcing, Item Description Indicating

Relevance, Categorization Scheme Including Justification, Overall Presentation.

**Purpose:** To stimulate your sociological imagination and awareness of “medical consumerism” as pervasive features of your social world, which influence health care delivery.

**9. Composition of Final Grade**

| Requirement                           | Mark | Date Due          |
|---------------------------------------|------|-------------------|
| Scholarly Book Review Proposal        | 10%  | January 20, 2006  |
| Term Exam 1                           | 20%  | February 10, 2006 |
| Scholarly Book Review                 | 25%  | February 20, 2006 |
| Culture / Media Watch File Assignment | 25%  | April 3, 2006     |
| Term Exam 2                           | 20%  | April 7, 2006     |

Voluntary withdrawal date without academic penalty is March 17, 2006.

**10. Letter Grade Assignment**

The following percentage / letter / GPA / descriptive scale will be used:

|          |    |       |             |         |    |       |              |
|----------|----|-------|-------------|---------|----|-------|--------------|
| 90 – 100 | A+ | (4.5) | Exceptional | 66 – 69 | C+ | (2.5) | Satisfactory |
| 80 – 89  | A  | (4.0) | Excellent   | 60 – 65 | C  | (2.0) | Adequate     |
| 76 – 79  | B+ | (3.5) | Very Good   | 50 – 59 | D  | (1.0) | Marginal     |
| 70 – 75  | B  | (3.0) | Good        | 0 – 49  | F  | (0)   | Failure      |

**11. Proposed Course Topics and Readings**

**Note:** - This proposed outline is subject to change. Changes announced in class will take precedence over the written schedule.

- You are expected to read about 50 pages per week, though in some weeks it will be less and in several weeks it will be more, particularly when the readings are relatively accessible.
- Additional readings may be assigned for topics. (I will provide you with plenty of advanced warning.)

**(i) Introduction**

- ☛ Miner, H. (1956). “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”, *American Anthropologist*, 58(3), pp. 503-507.
- ☛ Johnson, W.A. (1998). “Book Reviews”, *The Sociology Student Writer’s Manual*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

**(ii) Medical Consumerism**

- ☛ Sointu, E. (2005). “The rise of an ideal: tracing changing discourses of wellbeing”, *The Sociological Review*, 53(2), pp. 255-274.
- ☛ Kirkman, A. (2001). “Productive Readings: The Portrayal of Health “Experts” in Women’s Magazines”, *Qualitative Health Research*, 11, pp.751-765.
- ☛ Lupton, D. (1997). “Consumerism, Reflexivity and the Medical Encounter”, *Social Science Medicine*, 45(3), pp. 373-381.

### (iii) Understanding Health Belief Systems

- Turner, B. S. (1995). "Medical Sociology", *Medical Power and Social Knowledge*. London: Sage.
- O'Conner, B.(1995). "Defining and Understanding Health Care Belief Systems", *Healing Traditions: Alternative Medicine and the Health Professions*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

### (iv) The Sociology of Biomedicine

- Lewontin, R.C. (1991). *Biology as Ideology: The Doctrine of DNA*. Concord: Anansi Press.
- Nye, R. (2003). "The Evolution of the Concept of Medicalization in the Late Twentieth Century", *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 39, pp. 115-129.
- Rose, N. (2003). "Neurochemical Selves", *Society*, November / December 2003, pp. 46-59.

### (v) The Sociology of Complementary / Alternative Medicine

- Frohock, F.M.(2002). "Moving Lines and Variable Criteria: Differences/Connections Between Allopathic and Alternative Medicine", *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 583.
- Jonas, W. B.(2002). "Policy, the Public, and Priorities in Alternative Medicine Research" *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 583, pp. 29-43.
- Siahpush, M., (1999). "A Critical Review of the Sociology of Alternative Medicine", *Health*, 4, pp. 159-178.
- Fries, C.J. and Menzies, K.S. (2000). "Gullible Fools or Desperate Pragmatists? A Profile of People Who Use Rejected Alternative Health Care Providers", *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 91, pp. 21-219.
- Fries, C.J. (2005). "Ethnocultural Space and the Symbolic Negotiation of Alternative as 'Cure'", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 37, pp. 87-100.

### (vi) Healthy Futures: Governing the Health of the Hybrid Self

- Coburn, D. (2001). "Health, Health Care, and Neo-Liberalism", in P. Armstrong, H. Armstrong, and D. Coburn (Eds.), *Unhealthy Times: Political Economy Perspectives on Health and Care*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Burchell, G. (1993). "Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self", *Economy and Society*, 22(3), pp. 267-282.
- Petersen, A. (2003). "Governmentality, Critical Scholarship, and the Medical Humanities" *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 24(3-4), pp. 187-201.
- Chappell, N.L. (1993). "The Future of Health Care in Canada", *Journal of Social Policy*. 22(4), pp. 487-505.

