



SOC 515: MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY

COURSE SYLLABUS: SUMMER I 2026

6/1-7/2

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Julia Meszaros, Associate Professor

Office Location: Ferguson Social Science Room 230

Office Hours: Online by appointment

Office Fax: 903-886-5330

University Email Address: Julia.Meszaros@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: Email

Communication Response Time: 24-48 Hours; Monday to Friday 8-5

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Books:

1. *Birth of the Clinic* by Michel Foucault (1973)

All books available used on amazon or for free at the university library

Course Description

Medical Sociology. Three semester hours. This course will examine research and theory on the changing concepts of health, illness and medical practice as well as place these understandings in socio-historical and comparative context. Topics will include: social epidemiology, the social construction of health/illness, the experience of illness, health professions, alternative medicine and the health care system. Emphasis on how social factors such as gender, race, social class and sexual preference affect both illness and health care. The course will be applicable for students in sociology, criminal justice, social work, and psychology. This course contributes 3 credit hours

toward students' fulfillment of degree requirements. There is no lab or prerequisite for this course.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interconnectedness of global dynamics. Assessments will test knowledge about concepts like race, ethnicity, and gender across various global cultures and historical time frames.
2. Demonstrate intercultural competencies by comparing issues across cultures. This learning objective will be assessed in the papers that require students to make connections between race in the U.S. and other cultures.
3. Apply sociological lens and knowledge into their daily lives. This learning objective will be assessed in the papers and weekly discussion posts that relate the readings to racial issues occurring in daily life.
4. Apply intersectional analysis to issues of race, linking ideas and discourses of race to gender, sexuality, etc. This learning objective will be assessed in the papers and weekly discussion posts that relate the readings to racial issues occurring in daily life.

Classroom Expectations:

1. Students must be prepared to participate in group work and be prepared to take notes and complete work with their peers.
2. Students must come prepared to learn. That's why it is essential to participate in class discussions online and by reading the chapter ahead of time.
3. Please treat everyone with respect. Disrespectful behavior towards anyone in the virtual classroom will not be tolerated.

Assessments:

Weekly D2L Discussion Posts: (5 posts @ 50 pts: 250 points total)

Each week students will need to post a 500 word summary of the week's readings and how the readings discuss health and healthcare in terms of theme for each week. Students must interact with at least two of your fellow students' post each week. Please refer to specific concepts and theories and examples from the readings and refrain from using anecdotal evidence and stories.

Three Applied Projects (3 papers @ 250, 750 points Total)

Assignment: LinkedIn Article on a Medical Sociology Trend (250 Points)

Objective: Write a concise, engaging LinkedIn article (800–1,200 words) that applies medical sociology concepts to a current health trend, making the content accessible to professionals outside academia.

Steps to Complete:

1. **Choose a Trend** (e.g., AI in diagnostics, racial bias in pain treatment, pandemic vaccine hesitancy).
2. **Hook Readers**
 - Start with a statistic, personal story, or news event.
 - Example: *"Black women in the U.S. are 3x more likely to die postpartum than white women—not because of biology, but systemic failures."*
3. **Apply Theory**

- Use 1–2 medical sociology frameworks (e.g., medicalization, structural violence).
 - Cite 2–3 key sources (studies, reports, or your own research).
4. **Discuss Implications**
- Why should healthcare professionals, policymakers, or employers care?
 - Offer 1–2 practical takeaways (e.g., "Hospitals need implicit bias training for maternal care teams").
5. **Optimize for LinkedIn**
- Use short paragraphs, subheadings, and a bolded key message.
 - Include a relevant hashtag (e.g., #HealthEquity, #MedicalSociology).

Assignment: Grant Proposal for a Community Health Program (250 Points)

Objective: Develop a **2-3 page grant proposal** for a hypothetical (or real) community health intervention, applying medical sociology concepts to address a local health disparity.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Identify a Health Issue & Community

- Choose a specific problem (e.g., diabetes in a Latino neighborhood, opioid misuse in rural Appalachia).
- Use data (e.g., CDC reports, local health department stats) to justify the need.

2. Write Key Sections

A. Executive Summary (1 paragraph)

- Clearly state: **Who** (target population), **What** (program), **Why** (sociological root causes), and **Funding Ask** (e.g., "\$50,000 for a 12-month peer-support program").

B. Problem Statement (1 page)

- Use sociological frameworks (e.g., structural violence, fundamental causes) to explain **why** this disparity exists.
- Cite local data (e.g., "30% of residents lack transportation to clinics").

C. Program Design (1–2 pages)

- **Activities:** Describe interventions (e.g., free mobile clinics, culturally tailored health workshops).
- **Theory of Change:** Explain how your approach tackles systemic barriers (e.g., "Training community health workers reduces medical mistrust").

D. Budget & Evaluation (1 page)

- Provide a simple **itemized budget** (e.g., staff salaries, supplies).
- Outline **metrics for success** (e.g., "50% increase in screening participation").

3. Use Grant-Writing Best Practices

- Write in **clear, jargon-free** language (avoid excessive theory).
- Emphasize **community partnerships** (e.g., "Collaborating with local churches").
- Proofread for professionalism.

Submission Requirements

- 2-3 page proposal (PDF or Word).
- Optional: Add a **1-page cover letter** mimicking a real foundation's requirements.

Grading Criteria

- ✓ **Sociological Rigor** (root causes analyzed using course concepts)
 - ✓ **Feasibility** (realistic budget/timeline)
 - ✓ **Persuasiveness** (compelling case for funding)
-

Why This Matters for Your Career

- Grants are critical for **nonprofits, public health, and research roles**.
- Builds skills in **budgeting, program design, and stakeholder communication**.
- Add this to your **portfolio** for job applications!

Example Topic: *"Reducing Maternal Mortality Among Black Women: A Doula Training Program."*

Need inspiration? Browse real grants at [GrantSpace.org](https://www.grantspace.org) or [NIH Grants](https://www.nih.gov/grants).

Assignment: Health Equity Policy Brief (250 points)

Objective: Produce a **2–3 page policy brief** analyzing a health disparity through a medical sociology lens and proposing actionable recommendations for policymakers.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Select a Health Equity Issue

Choose a specific problem (e.g., racial bias in pain treatment, rural hospital closures, LGBTQ+ youth mental health). Use **current data** (CDC, WHO, or peer-reviewed studies) to define the scope.

2. Structure Your Brief

A. Header (1 paragraph)

- Title: **Clear and solution-focused** (e.g., *"Ending Racial Disparities in Maternal Care: A Policy Roadmap"*).
- Subtitle: Summarize your key recommendation in 1 line.

B. Problem Statement (½ page)

- Describe the disparity using:
 - **Sociological frameworks** (e.g., fundamental causes, intersectionality).
 - **Data** (e.g., *"Black women are 3× more likely to die postpartum than white women in the U.S."*).

C. Key Findings (1 page)

- Summarize **2–3 evidence-based root causes** (e.g., implicit bias in healthcare, lack of insurance).
- Cite **1–2 case studies** (e.g., success stories from other states/countries).

D. Recommendations (½–1 page)

- Propose **2–3 concrete policy actions** (e.g., *"Mandate implicit bias training for OB-GYN staff"*).
- Specify **who should act** (e.g., state legislatures, hospital boards).

E. Visual Element

- Include **1 chart/graph** or **callout box** highlighting key data.

3. Write for Your Audience

- **Tone:** Professional but accessible (avoid jargon).
- **Length:** Max 3 pages (single-spaced, 12-pt font).
- **Citations:** Use APA/AMA style (include 4–6 sources).

Submission Requirements

- PDF or Word document formatted like a real policy brief (see templates from [CDC](#) or [WHO](#)).

Grading Criteria

- ✓ **Analysis Depth** (uses sociological theories + data)
- ✓ **Practicality** (feasible, specific recommendations)
- ✓ **Professionalism** (clear, visually engaging, properly cited)

Why This Matters for Your Career

- Policy briefs are used in **government, nonprofits, and healthcare advocacy**.
- Builds **data visualization, concise writing, and persuasion skills**.
- Add to your **portfolio** or share with stakeholders for real-world impact.

Example Topics:

- *“Addressing Telehealth Gaps in Rural Communities”*
- *“Medicaid Expansion and Mental Health Access”*

Need Help? Review examples from:

- [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)
- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)

Total Class Points: 1000 Points

Grade Scale: A 900-1000

B 800-899

C 700-799

D 600-699

F Below 600

Grade Policies: For incompletes, you must speak with me ahead of time and have completed most of the course work. I do not round grades, and I do not change grades after they have been submitted. Grades are available on D2L so you can track your up to date progress in the course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Brightspace Support

Need Help?

Student Support

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778 or click on the **Live Chat** or click on the words “click here” to submit an issue via email.



System Maintenance

Please note that on the 4th Sunday of each month there will be System Maintenance which means the system will not be available 12 pm-6 am CST.

Interaction with Instructor Statement

I prefer communication via email. I rarely answer my office phone and am much more likely to respond to email. I will respond to email within 24 to 48 hours, between normal business hours of 8am to 5pm. Please be sure that when you email me, you use a proper greeting (Dr. Meszaros Professor Meszaros) an email body, and an appropriate closing. You should never send an email with just an attachment and no email body. Be sure you have an appropriate and informative subject line and include the name and section of the course you are enrolled in. See the attached page for some email expectations that would serve you well in all future communication with any professors or potential employers.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: [Netiquette](#)

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

ADA Statement

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race,

color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week One: Social Construction of Illness and Health

Read Conrad and Bakker's article on D2L "Social Construction of Illness: Key Policy Implications"

Read Armstrong's article on D2L "Rise of Surveillance Media"

Read Rubeis' "Liquid Health: Medicine in the Age of Surveillance Capitalism"

Weekly Discussion Post on D2L due 6/6

Week Two: Biopolitics and Health Governance

Read Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic*

Read Rose's "The Politics of Life Itself"

Weekly Discussion Post on D2L due 6/13

Assignment One Due 6/13

Week Three: Disability Politics

Read Burch and Patterson's "Not just any body: Disability, gender and history"

Read Barbarin's "Death by a 1000 Words: Covid-19 and the Pandemic of Ableist Media"

Weekly Discussion Post on D2L due 6/20

Assignment Two due 6/20

Week Four: Structural Violence and Health Inequalities

Read Gengler and Jerrell's "What Difference Does Difference Make? The Persistence of Inequalities in Healthcare Delivery"

Read Link & Phelan's "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease".

Weekly Discussion Post on D2L due 6/27

Assignment Three Due 6/27

Week Five: Medicalization

Read Brubaker and Dillaway's "Medicalization, Childbirth, and Birthing Experiences"

Read Pederson and Sandberg's "The medicalization of revolt: a sociological analysis of medical cannabis users"

Weekly Discussion Post on D2L due 7/2