

**SOCI X STS 252: Health Inequalities & Activism
Syllabus for Spring 2024**

Professor Catherine Tan
(She/Her/Hers)

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Class meeting:
Location TBD
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:30pm to 2:45pm

Office Hours:
Blodgett 304D
Tuesdays and Thursdays between 3:00pm-4:00pm
*And by appointment

Course Description

When comparing the 36 countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States spends twice the average on healthcare. However, the US ranks 28 in life expectancy, 33 in infant mortality, and last in obesity. In other words, Americans spend more on healthcare but live shorter and unhealthier lives. When examining US healthcare up close, there are significant disparities between sub-populations. Socioeconomic status (SES) is inversely associated with risk of disease, which means that having higher SES correlates with lower risk of disease. Racial/ethnic minority groups tend to experience poorer health compared to their white counterparts. For instance, scholars like David Williams have pointed to systemic racism as an important contributor to African American health outcomes. The US has one of the worst rates of maternal mortality compared to other advanced industrialized countries; in particular, African America women are disproportionately impacted. In the first half of this course, students will investigate how race, gender, socio-economic status, and their intersections impact health disparities and inequalities. In the second half of this course, students will examine collective responses to health inequalities and representation.

Pandemic Policies

The COVID-19 pandemic has created multiple uncertainties, which demands flexibility and patience from faculty, students, and staff. Per Department of Sociology policy, professors may move classes online at any given moment, as they see fit. While it is my personal hope that we continue to share in-person class for as long as possible, it is my top priority to keep students safe. At any time, if you ever have any safety concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Course Structure and Assignments

Required Books

If for any reason you are not able to access these books, please contact me.

Almeling, Rene. 2020. *Guynecology: The Missing Science of Men's Reproductive Health*: University of California Press.

Blum, Linda. 2015. *Raising Generation Rx: Mothering Kids with Invisible Disabilities in an Age of Inequality*: NYU Press.

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*: The University of Chicago Press.

Luna, Zakiya. 2020. *Reproductive Rights as Human Rights: Women of Color and the Fight for Reproductive Justice*: NYU Press.

Raudenbush, Danielle T. 2020. *Health Care Off the Books: Poverty, Illness, and Strategies for Survival in Urban America*: Univ of California Press.

Roberts, Dorothy E. 1999. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*: Vintage.

Office Hours

“Office hours” are times reserved outside of our usual class meetings for students to discuss and/or ask questions about the course materials and concepts with me 1:1. While you are not *required* to attend office hours, I strongly encourage students to see me *at least twice* during the semester even if you do not have a specific question (I will start the conversation. It will not be awkward, I promise). You may also make an appointment to meet with me outside of the set hours.

Assignments and Points

Class Participation*	25
Memos One	25
Memo Two	25
Memo Three	25
Memo Four	25
Total	125

*Class participation includes engaging in discussions, asking questions, and attending classes.

Memos

Instead of a midterm and final, I will have four memos due throughout the semester. Each memo will be 1.5 to 2.5 pages (roughly, 975 to 1625 words) following formatting expectations (see below). Memos will ask students to reflect on the themes/concepts of the previous weeks, engage with the readings, offer their analysis, and demonstrate their understanding of the materials. Because memos are short, students are expected to write efficiently AND effectively—these are important skills to learn and practice.

Formatting

Please give yourself enough time to make sure that your assignments are in compliance with the formatting expectations before turning in your work. When in doubt, use THIS syllabus as a model. If you have trouble making this format changes on your word processing program, please consult with the college tech services.

- Font: Times New Roman
- Size: 11
- Margins: 1-inch all around
- Left alignment
- Single-spaced

- Consistent in-text references and bibliography (I prefer ASA or Harvard citation styles)
- Upload at .docx or .doc

Classroom Etiquette for In-Person and Online

Engagement

Maintaining an academic, respectful, and honest classroom environment is a collective effort. I am relying on you to please:

- Be respectful of others’ ideas and arguments. This means providing space for fruitful debate.
- Not interrupt each other. You do not have to raise your hand to speak, but please allow the current speaker to complete their thoughts before sharing.
- Arrive to class on time.
- Complete and submit your assignments on the days they are due.
- You are allowed to use your laptop for taking notes.
- Improper use of laptops and cellphones will impact your participation grade.

Email Policy

You may email me any time/day, but please do not expect an immediate response. I try to respond to emails within 24 hours. I only reply to emails Monday-Friday (so, I might not respond to emails received on Friday until the next Monday). In your email subject line, include the name of the course (i.e., SOCI 252). In the body of your email, please use a proper address (e.g., Dear Prof. Tan) and signature.

College Resources & Policies

Title IX Reporting Responsibility and Resources

Vassar College is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students that is free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. Vassar College has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware all Vassar faculty members are “responsible employees,” which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone privately, you can contact any of the following on-campus resources:

- Counseling Service (counselingservice.vassar.edu, 845-437-5700)
- Health Service (healthservice.vassar.edu, 845-437-5800)
- Charlotte Strauss-Swanson, SAVP (Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention) director (savp.vassar.edu, 845-437-7863)
- SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) advocate, available 24/7 by calling the CRC at 845-437-7333

The SAVP website and the Title IX section of the EOAA website (eoaa.vassar.edu/title-ix/) have more information, as well as links to both on- and off-campus resources.”

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a very serious matter (cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, etc.) and will be dealt with accordingly. Students should expect a failing grade for the assignment/exam. The incident will also be reported to the Department Chair and the Dean. For more information on academic honesty, please refer to this link: <https://deanofthecollege.vassar.edu/documents/college-regulations/j/>

Academic Accommodations

Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO). Students in need of disability (ADA/504) accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, as indicated in your AEO accommodation letter.

Course Schedule

This schedule indicates the themes and readings of each week and any assignments due. This schedule is tentative and may change to reflect our progress as a class. Each week’s assigned readings must be completed *before* class. Please be prepared to discuss the assigned readings in class/online.

*NOTE: Readings may change (except for the books)

Week One Introduction

Jan 18 *Thursday:*
Review syllabus.

Week Two Health disparities

Jan 23 & 25 *Tuesday:*
Carter-Pokras, Olivia and Claudia Baquet. 2002. "What Is a ‘Health Disparity’?". *Public Health Reports* 117(5):426-34.

Link, Bruce G. and Jo Phelan. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35:80-94.

Socioeconomic status

Thursday:
Pampel, Fred C., Patrick M. Krueger and Justin T. Denney. 2010. "Socioeconomic Disparities in Health Behaviors." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36(1):349-70.

Daniel, Caitlin. 2016. "Economic Constraints on Taste Formation and the True Cost of Healthy Eating." *Social Science & Medicine* 148:34-41.

[Professor Tan hands out Memo One Prompt; covers weeks 1 to 3]

Week Three Health care off the books

Jan 30 & Feb 1 *Tuesday:*
 Raudenbush, Danielle T. 2020. *Health Care Off the Books: Poverty, Illness, and Strategies for Survival in Urban America*: Univ of California Press. [Chapters 1-4]

Thursday:
 Raudenbush, Danielle T. 2020. *Health Care Off the Books: Poverty, Illness, and Strategies for Survival in Urban America*: Univ of California Press. [Chapters 5-7]

Week Four **Gender, sex, and medical research**

Feb 6 & 8 *Tuesday:*
 McGregor, Alyson J. 2020. "Chapter four: Drugs for different bodies." *Sex Matters: How Male-Centric Medicine Endangers Women's Health and What We Can Do About It*: Hachette Go.

Annandale, Ellen and Anne Hammarström. 2011. "Constructing the 'Gender-Specific Body': A Critical Discourse Analysis of Publications in the Field of Gender-Specific Medicine." *Health* 15(6):571-87.

Thursday:
 Almeling, Rene. 2020. *Guynecology: The Missing Science of Men's Reproductive Health*: University of California Press. [Part 3: Chapters 5, 6, and conclusion]

**DUE: Memo 1 by Feb 8th at 11:59pm on Moodle
 [Covers weeks 1 to 3]**

Week Five **Immigration**

Feb 13 & 15 *Tuesday:*
 Castañeda, Heide, Seth M. Holmes, Daniel S. Madrigal, Maria-Elena DeTrinidad Young, Naomi Beyeler and James Quesada. 2015. "Immigration as a Social Determinant of Health." *Annual Review of Public Health* 36(1):375-92.

Tuohy, Brian. 2019. "Health without Papers: Immigrants, Citizenship, and Health in the 21st Century." *Social Forces* 98(3):1052-73.

Thursday:
 Holmes, Seth M. 2012. "The Clinical Gaze in the Practice of Migrant Health: Mexican Migrants in the United States." *Social Science & Medicine* 74(6):873-81.

Munyikwa, Michelle. 2020. "(De)racializing refugee medicine." *Science, Technology & Human Values* 45(5):829-847.

Park, Lisa Sun-Hee and David Naguib Pellow. 2005. "Making the Invisible Visible: Asian American/Pacific Islander Workers in Silicon Valley." *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Nexus* 3(2):45-65.

Week Six **Disability & Ableism**

Feb 20 & 22 *Tuesday:*

Blum, Linda. 2015. *Raising Generation Rx: Mothering Kids with Invisible Disabilities in an Age of Inequality*: NYU Press. [Chapters 1, 2, and 3]

Thursday:

Brown, Lydia XZ. 2017. "Ableist Shame and Disruptive Bodies: Survivorship at the Intersection of Queer, Trans, and Disabled Existence." Pp. 163-78 in *Religion, Disability, and Interpersonal Violence*: Springer.

Carey, Allison C, Pamela Block and Richard Scotch. 2020. *Allies and Obstacles: Disability Activism and Parents of Children with Disabilities*: Temple University Press. (Chapter TBD)

Janz, Heidi L. 2019. "Ableism: The Undiagnosed Malady Afflicting Medicine." *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association journal = journal de l'Association medicale canadienne* 191(17):E478-E79.

[Prof. Tan returns Memo One and passes out Memo Two, covering weeks 4 to 7]

Week Seven

LGBT+ health/healthcare

**Feb 27 &
Feb 29**

Tuesday:

Giffort, Danielle M. and Kelly Underman. 2016. "The Relationship between Medical Education and Trans Health Disparities: A Call to Research." *Sociology Compass* 10(11):999-1013.

Paine, Emily Allen. 2018. "Embodied Disruption: "Sorting out" Gender and Nonconformity in the Doctor's Office." *Social Science & Medicine* 211:352.

Thursday:

Ghabrial, Monica A. 2017. "'Trying to Figure out Where We Belong": Narratives of Racialized Sexual Minorities on Community, Identity, Discrimination, and Health." *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 14(1):42-55.

Carrillo, Héctor. 2004. "Sexual Migration, Cross-Cultural Sexual Encounters, and Sexual Health." *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 1(3):58-70.

[Mid-semester questionnaire]

Week --

SPRING BREAK

March 1-17

Week Eight

Environmental exposure

March 19 & 21

Tuesday:

Adams, Crystal, Phil Brown, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Julia Green Brody, Ruthann Rudel, Ami Zota, Sarah Dunagan, Jessica Tovar and Sharyle Patton. 2011. "Disentangling the Exposure Experience: The Roles of Community Context and Report-Back of Environmental Exposure Data." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52(2):180-96.

Shriver, Thomas E. and Gary R. Webb. 2009. "Rethinking the Scope of Environmental Injustice: Perceptions of Health Hazards in a Rural Native American Community Exposed to Carbon Black." *Rural Sociology* 74(2):270-92.

Thursday:

MacKendrick, Norah and Kate Cairns. 2019. "The Polluted Child and Maternal Responsibility in the Us Environmental Health Movement." *Signs* 44(2):307.

Szasz, Andrew. 2007. "Inverted Quarantine." *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Change from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*: University of Minnesota Press.

**DUE: Memo 2 by March 21st at 11:59pm on Moodle
[Covers 4 to 7]**

Week Nine Social ecology

March 26 & 28

Tuesday:

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*: The University of Chicago Press. [Prologue, introduction, Chapter 1]

Thursday:

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*: The University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 2, 3, and conclusion]

Podcast: <https://www.vox.com/podcasts/2020/4/3/21204412/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-social-distancing-social-solidarity-the-ezra-klein-show>

[Professor Tan hands out Memo Three Prompt; covers weeks 8 to 10]

Week Ten Racial/ethnic health disparities and injustice

April 2 & 4

Tuesday:

Williams, David R. and Michelle Sternthal. 2010. "Understanding Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions." in *The Sociology of Health and Illness*, edited by P. Conrad and V. Leiter. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Roberts, Dorothy E. 1999. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*: Vintage. [Introduction, Chapter 2]

Thursday:

Roberts, Dorothy E. 1999. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*: Vintage. [Chapters 4 and 6]

Week Eleven Health activism for racial justice

April 9 & 11

Tuesday:

Luna, Zakiya. 2020. *Reproductive Rights as Human Rights: Women of Color and the Fight for Reproductive Justice*: NYU Press. [Introduction; Chapter 1 and 2]

Thursday:

Luna, Zakiya. 2020. *Reproductive Rights as Human Rights: Women of Color and the Fight for Reproductive Justice*: NYU Press. [Chapters 3, 4, 5]

**DUE: Memo 3 by April 11th at 11:59pm on Moodle
[Covers weeks 8 to 10]**

Week Twelve Challenging the Dominant Epidemiological Paradigm

April 16 & 18

*Tuesday: *I AM AWAY AT A CONFERENCE**

Underman, Kelly and Paige L. Sweet. 2021. "Counter-Clinical Spaces." *Sociological forum (Randolph, N.J.)*. doi: 10.1111/socf.12783.

Brown, Phil, Stephen Zavestoski, Sabrina McCormick, Brian Mayer, Rachel Morello-Frosch and Rebecca Gaisor Altman. 2004. "Embodied Health Movements: New Approaches to Social Movements in Health." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 26(1):50-80.

Thursday:

Corburn, Jason. 2005. *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice*: The MIT Press. [Chapters 1, 2, and 3]

[Prof. Tan passes out Memo 4 prompt; covers weeks 11 to 14]

Week Thirteen DIY Drugs

April 23 & 25

Tuesday:

Tan, Catherine. 2024. *Spaces on the Spectrum: How Autism Movements Resist Experts and Create Knowledge*. Columbia University Press. [Chapters 1, 5]

Thursday:

Bailey, John and Joanna Kempner. 2022. "Standards without Labs: Drug Development in the Psychedelic Underground." *Citizen Science: Theory & Practice* 7(1).

Giffort, Danielle. 2020. *Acid Revival: The Psychedelic Renaissance and the Quest for Medical Legitimacy*: U of Minnesota Press. [Chapters TBD]

Week Fourteen Wellness and Self-Care Movements

April 30

Kirkland, Anna. 2014. "What Is Wellness Now?" Pp. 957-70, Vol. 39: Duke University Press.

Spurgas, A. and Zoe Meleo-Erwin. 2023. *Decolonize Self-Care*. [Chapters TBD]

**DUE: Memo 4 by May 3rd (Friday) at 11:59pm on Moodle
[Covering weeks 11 to 14]**