Communication policy

Please use MyCourses for all e-mail communications, keeping the original subject line intact [Winter 2016 - SOCI-588-001 - Biosociology/Biodemography]: Append your topic after the colon. E-mails sent directly to the McGill general e-mail address will not be answered. I will make every attempt to answer e-mail in a timely fashion within 36 hours of receipt. Please see me during office hours for urgent issues.

Overview

A growing body of sociological and epidemiological literature crosses disciplinary boundaries to examine the interaction of social and biological systems, in influencing life-course trajectories. The approach also has deep roots in social theory, counting Max Scheler and Talcott Parsons as progenitors. It is increasingly apparent that physiological states are deeply rooted in social processes and disparities—from race and socioeconomic “stratification,” to deficits in social-network connections in late life, to toxic neighborhood ecologies. Accordingly, this course will explore linkages between social and biological processes, their influence on health and well being over the life course, and on health disparities. Topics include classical sociological approaches to bio-social processes, sociobiology (reductionist, but population-based), and newer biomedical as well as biodemographic studies on gene-environment, epigenetic, and stress-metabolic/allostatic processes.

Course requirements:

1) Weekly Readings:
It goes without saying that all assigned readings must be completed before class. Participation in classroom discussions will be monitored, and will count toward the final grade.

2) Participation: 30%
This is a seminar course, and therefore works differently than a lecture. Specifically, class discussions are absolutely crucial. No discussion, no class. Many of the readings are technical—in either a statistical or/and a biomedical sense. These specifics are not crucial to discussions. Rather, the focus needs to be substantive—on actual (demonstrated) or potential (yet to be
explored) linkages between the human body and its social ecology. Students’ contributions to class discussion will be evaluated on the basis of:

2.1) Discussions: All students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions. Such participation will count for **10%** of the final course grade.

2.2) Reactions: All students are required to prepare two comments and two discussion questions each week. Comments/questions can either focus exclusively on a specific reading, or compare multiple readings and draw parallels. Reactions should be about **150 words long** and self-posted on MyCourses (Discussions > REACTIONS > REACTIONS WEEK X) by **6 PM Sunday at the latest**. All students are expected to read everybody else’s Reaction before class. The first Reaction will be due on **Sunday January 17th**. You will be exempted from posting a Reaction on the week that you are scheduled to moderate the class discussion. Reactions will not be graded. Simply by posting your Reactions on time, you will get **10%** of the final course grade.

2.3) Moderation: Each student will have to participate in moderating class discussions **for at least two weekly sessions**. Specifically, each session will have four moderators. Moderation does not mean lecturing. Nor does it involve formal presentations of any kind. It simply entails raising issues and questions, and facilitating the discussion. You will be allowed to use people’s Reactions to lead the discussion. Volunteering is encouraged, with randomization as the backup option. Moderation will count for **10%** of the final course grade. This grade will be based on diligence and enthusiasm – not performance or “getting it right.”

3) Final paper: **60%**

All students are expected to write one term paper. Ideally, this would be an empirical paper involving analysis of actual data. Since bio-social datasets are still rare, and access requires an extensive REB process, it is expected that most papers will be reviews. These should be structured and written like a review article that one can read in the Annual Review of Sociology (Library website > Journals > Find an eJournal > Annual Review of Sociology). Papers should be a minimum of 20 pages long, double-spaced, plus references.

- Topics should be discussed with me in January.
- The deadline for final topics is February 1.
- A tentative bibliography (20 references) is due February 22.
- Final papers are due April 11.

4) Paper presentations: **10%**

The last two sessions of the semester will be devoted to informal presentations of term papers (10 minutes per student). As with session-moderations, grades will be based on diligence and enthusiasm – not performance.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>(30%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>60%   Due April 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper presentation</td>
<td>10%   April 4, 11</td>
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Policy on late submissions

Late submissions of the grant proposal will incur a penalty of 20% of the assignment’s grade. Each additional 24-hour delay (including over the week-end) will incur an extra 20%. Please e-mail any late submissions through MyCourses to the professor as soon as possible.
“Students’ rights and responsibilities”

Attendance and participation in class discussions.
You are responsible for all announcements made in class and on MyCourses, as well as for all course materials given out in class. You should also check for new announcements or material on MyCourses at least weekly.

Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities
If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 398-6009 before you do this.

Remise des travaux en français
Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).
Les étudiants de ce cours peuvent rédiger tous leurs travaux (incluant les examens) en français, mais doivent pour ce faire obtenir la permission préalable de la professeure. Aucune permission rétroactive ne sera accordée.

Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Holy Days
1. Students will not be penalized if they cannot write examinations or be otherwise evaluated on their religious holy days where such activities conflict with their religious observances.
2. Students who because of religious commitment cannot meet academic obligations, other than final examinations, on certain holy days are responsible for informing their instructor, with two weeks’ notice of each conflict.
3. When the requested accommodation concerns a final examination, students are responsible for advising their faculty office as soon as possible and not later than the deadline for reporting conflicts. Additional documentation confirming their religious affiliation may be requested.

Statement on academic integrity at McGill
“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).”
“L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).”

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"In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change."
SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: January 7
Course overview, expectations

WEEK 2: January 11
General sensitizing concepts

WEEK 3: January 18
Sociobiology

WEEK 4: January 25
Evolutionary psychology

WEEK 5: February 1
Hormones

WEEK 6: February 8
Gene-Environment

Suggested reading:

WEEK 7: February 15
Epigenetics

WEEK 8: February 22
Allostatic load

Suggested reading:

WEEK 9: March 7
Weathering

**WEEK 10: March 14**  
**Stress, inflammation, morbidity-1**  

**WEEK 11: March 21**  
**Stress, inflammation, morbidity-2**  

**APRIL 4: Presentations 1**  
**APRIL 11: Presentations 2**