

# HTS 3086 Syllabus

Sociology of Medicine and Health, Section A, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

## Instructor Information

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**Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Singh**

**Email: [jsingh43@gatech.edu](mailto:jsingh43@gatech.edu)**

## General Course Information

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### Description

This course will introduce the sociology of medicine and health (also known as medical sociology or sociology of health and illness), a broad field that examines the social production of health, wellness, illness, and mortality. This sub-discipline of sociology starts from the assumption that we cannot understand health and illness simply by examining biological phenomena and medical knowledge; instead, we must also consider a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural forces.

This course will explore health, illness, and health care from a sociological perspective by surveying the central topics in the field with an emphasis on the following themes:

- 1) The social production and distribution of disease and illness, which will focus on how social structure influences the occurrence of illness and why some social groups suffer more sickness and disease than others.
- 2) The meaning and experience of illness, which will explore different models of illness and how people decide when they are sick, respond, and cope with the symptoms of various diseases, and make decisions about when and from whom to seek help.
- 3) The profession of medicine and social organization of medical care, which will analyze the professionalization of medicine and identify the challenges facing the US health care system, health care reform, and alternative global systems.

In sum, this course will explore each of these issues and help you better understand the many ways in which society, politics, and economics affect health and illness.

## **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**This is a Core IMPACTS course in the Social Sciences area.**

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master the material and support their broader academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change. Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate that they have met the Core IMPACTS social science learning outcome by writing three critical analyses based on weekly assigned readings; completing two short assignments; taking one mid-term exam; writing a paper on health inequalities; participating in a group project to create a short documentary, presentation, and paper based on illness experience.

Course content, activities, and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

### **Course-specific learning outcomes**

As a result of taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify sociological dimensions of health and illness-related phenomena in society;
2. Compare and contrast the sociological perspective with biomedical models of disease and understand how social and structural factors together affect who gets sick and who stays healthy.
3. Explain the major concepts, methods, and theories that medical sociologists use to understand the distribution of health and illness in society.
4. Describe how race, ethnicity, social class, and other social factors influence the likelihood that a person will become ill and how individuals manage their health and respond to and experience illnesses.
5. Recognize the processes that shaped the rise of the professionalization of medicine and the threats to medical dominance.

6. Compare and contrast the social organization of the US health care system with other models across the globe, including how it developed and operates, the roles of major stakeholders in the system, and the health care-related challenges we face as a society, including health care reform and the Affordable Care Act.
7. Develop individual critical thinking, analytical, reading, and writing skills.
8. Design and create a documentary that integrates various theories and/or concepts learned in class on illness experience with a focus on brain health, illness, disease, and/or injury.

Required Course Materials

The following book is required for the course. Available at the Georgia Tech Bookstore. A copy has also been provided on reserve at the GT Library.

Conrad, P. and V. Leiter (Eds.) *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives 10<sup>th</sup> edition*. SAGE, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Grading Policy:

A>90; B>80; C>70; D>60

<u>COURSE EVALUATION</u>		<u>Calculate your grade</u>
Class Participation	5%	(your grade)(.05) = a
Reading Responses (3 total)	15%	(your grade)(.15) = b
Short Assignments (3 total)	15%	(your grade)(.15) = c
Group Project (Group)	35%	(your grade)(.35) = d
Mid Term Exam	15%	(your grade)(.15) = e
Final Exam	15%	(your grade)(.15) = f
Total	100 %	(a+b+c+d+e+f) = grade

Description of Graded Components

Class participation includes attending class, keeping up on assigned readings, and contributing effectively to in-class discussions and activities. Students are expected to complete all assigned reading thoroughly before coming to class and to be prepared to participate actively in class discussions. Most class meetings will involve class discussion of the readings and/or activity. The reading responses will be based on required course readings. Responses should include: 1) citation of the assigned reading; 2) major concepts and/or theories addressed; 3) a summary; 4) a critique of the reading; and 5) one or two thoughtful questions for the class. The short assignments will consist of short written material and/or responses. Students will have a choice of group project: a mini

documentary, a podcast, or another creative expression based on an illness experience. The exams are in-class and closed-book, with no notes.

**Extra Credit** – Students can earn up to 5 points each toward the midterm and final exam by attending a recommended event on or off campus. In addition to attending the event, you must provide proof of attendance (a selfie in front of the speaker/registration confirmation/screenshot with your name in the attendance list, etc.) and a 2-page reflection (Due 48 hours after the event). One event = 5 points for the exam. See instructions in Canvas/Assignment/Extra Credit for details. Additional options include watching a documentary focused on a health issue:  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/topic/health/>

## Course Policies

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### Attendance and/or Participation

In-person attendance is required. I will take attendance each day of class. If you miss four days of class (two weeks of instruction) without an excused absence, your grade will be dropped by 1%. Any additional days will result in a 1% deduction from your final grade. You will be excused for institute-approved absences or personal emergencies. Please refer to these forms if you have an excused absence:

<https://studentlife.gatech.edu/resources/class-attendance> or consult the Catalog for more information on Institute-approved absences and for other guidance on class attendance, including absences for medical emergencies, religious observances, and voting in elections: <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>.

### Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act in accordance with the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

## Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.