

SOC 2520: Inequality by Design: Understanding Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities

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Instructor

Savannah Larimore, PhD
Office: Siegle Hall, 228

savannahlarimore@wustl.edu
Office Hours: T/Th 12:30-1:30 PM

Assistants to the Instructor

Cheryl Mensah
Eliza Antonowich
Jasmine Trotter
Amaya Wallace

cmensah@wustl.edu
eliza.antonowich@wustl.edu
jasminetrotter@wustl.edu
aowallace@wustl.edu

Land Acknowledgement:

“We respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage Nation. The process of knowing and acknowledging the land we stand on is a way of honoring and expressing gratitude for the ancestral Osage people who were on this land before us.” – *Osage Land Acknowledgement, June 2019*

Course Objectives:

How and when we die or become sick should be so equally dispersed across social groups that it is nearly impossible to predict, but this is not the reality in the United States, where there are large, persistent, and sometimes growing inequalities in health status and care between social groups. This is particularly true for health inequalities among racial and ethnic groups. This course critically examines these health gaps using sociological, demographic, social epidemiological, and social psychological concepts. This course takes a holistic and intersectional approach to racial and ethnic health disparities in the U.S. and intends to provide students with a broad introduction to the topic. We will focus on what will collectively be called the social determinants of health and will examine how these factors influence health at various levels of social organization. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Talk about key concepts in health in a clear, succinct, and approachable way.
- Describe the US epidemiological profile in broad terms.
- Talk about the structure of the US healthcare system.
- Explain how social processes at the societal level affect biological processes inside our bodies.
- Apply theoretical strategies used to understand health disparities.

Guidelines for Classroom Conduct and Accommodations:

Course Organization and Expectations

Given the breadth of the social determinants of health (SDoH for short), we are going to cover **A LOT** of material (although regrettably we won't be able to cover everything in the SDoH umbrella). As such, I intend to use the entire allotted course time for every lecture. Therefore, it is imperative that you come to class prepared to engage with lecture materials and to discuss assigned readings and relevant topics. You are encouraged to bring in outside resources—current events, videos, topics from other courses, personal experiences—as well to help facilitate discussion, particularly during in-class exercises. When you think of questions and/or comments, please try to think of how your input is related to one of the topics or theories we have discussed in the class. Or, if your comment does not relate to one of the issues we have discussed, think of how you can build upon a certain analytic point. **In other words:** please make sure that your contributions to our discussions are rooted in the topics we are covering.

Expectations for Behavior

I am committed to making this classroom a safe and enjoyable learning environment for all students. Here are my ground rules to make sure that happens:

- No talking over or interrupting others.
- No derogatory language (to be clear, this includes but is certainly not limited to any racist, anti-immigrant, sexist, ableist, and anti-LGBTQIA+ language).
- No distracting behavior that will disrupt the learning environment for others (to be clear, this includes but may not be limited to listening to music, watching TV or movies, using your computers for non-course activities, and conversing loudly during lecture). Myself, your AIs, and your fellow students have the discretion to ask you to disengage from any of these behaviors.

Violating these ground rules will result in an initial request to stop, followed by a request to remove yourself from the classroom if I feel that your behavior is hostile or is disrupting others from learning.

Electronic Policy:

I acknowledge that many students prefer to take notes or engage with the course material electronically and I don't wish to hinder this learning style. In addition, I find software such as Poll Everywhere incredibly useful in large lecture settings such as ours and intend to use this tool often. However, using electronic devices for activities not related to class is strictly prohibited. The AIs will monitor your activities on your devices and if you are on Facebook, Twitter, Netflix, or any other site that is not related to our class, they have the discretion to ask you to exit from those sites.

How to Address Me:

Please address me as Dr. Larimore or Professor Larimore. I personally prefer the latter, but this is only a minor preference. Unless I have given you consent to do so, please do not refer to me by my first name. Lastly, please do not refer to me as Miss, Ms., or Mrs. Larimore.

E-mail Policy:

Please only email with questions that can be answered in 3 sentences or less. Questions that require a more detailed response should be addressed during class or office hours. Please direct electronic correspondence to me via email (savannahlarimore@wustl.edu). Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. Please also be sure to do the following in all messages: a) begin the email with a greeting (e.g., “Dear Professor Larimore,”), b) provide context for the email (e.g., “I am a student in SOC 2520 and I have a brief question about a concept discussed in class today.”), and c) close your email with a signature (e.g., “Best regards, Madison”). I will not respond to any e-mails regarding material that can be found in this syllabus nor will I respond to any e-mails that do not address me properly (see previous section).

Inclusive Learning Environment Statement

The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources are available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. If possible, we encourage students to speak directly with their instructor about any suggestions or concerns they have regarding a particular instructional space or situation. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department chair, or dean). All classroom participants—including faculty, staff, and students—who observe a bias incident affecting a student may also file a report (whether personally or anonymously) utilizing the online Bias Report and Support System.

Ethics/Violations of Academic Integrity

Ethical behavior is an essential component of learning and scholarship. Students are expected to understand, and adhere to, the [University’s academic integrity policy](#). Students who violate this policy will be referred to the Academic Integrity Policy Committee. Penalties for violating the policy will be determined by the Academic Integrity Policy committee, and can include failure of the assignment, failure of the course, suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any doubts about what constitutes a violation of the Academic Integrity policy, or any other issue related to academic integrity, please ask your instructor.

Resources for Students:

I am not ignorant to that fact that your life does not stop or make exceptions because you are in school. If there is something in your life that will prevent you from participating fully in this class, please let me know as soon as possible. It is far easier to make accommodations in Week 2 than after finals, when grades have been submitted to the University. Additionally, I want to make sure that all students are equipped with the resources necessary to be as productive, happy, and healthy as possible. Here are some resources to help you achieve that goal. If there is a resource not listed here that you would like me to add, please e-mail me privately.

Disability Resources: If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please speak with the instructor and consult the [Disability Resource Center at Cornerstone](#). Cornerstone staff will determine appropriate accommodations and will work with your instructor to make sure these are available to you. If you already have accommodation, please make me aware of what resources you need to make the classroom as accessible for you and others as possible.

Writing Assistance: For additional help on your writing, consult the expert staff of The [Writing Center in Olin Library](#) (first floor). It can be enormously helpful to ask someone outside a course to read your essays and to provide feedback on strength of argument, clarity, organization, etc. The [Engineering Communication Center](#) offers students in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences help with oral presentations, writing assignments, and other communications projects, as well as job-search documents such as resumes and cover letters.

Wash U's Preferred Name Policy, with additional resources and information, may be found [here](#).

Sexual Assault: The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center](#). Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

Sexual Assault Reporting: If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University's Title IX Director. If you would like to speak with Ms. Kennedy, she can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jwkennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting her office in the Women's Building. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to Tamara King, Associate Dean for Students and Director of Student Conduct, or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law

enforcement agency. You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall.

Bias Reporting: The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the [University's Bias Report and Support System \(BRSS\) team](#).

Mental Health: [Mental Health Services](#)' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression.

Food Assistance: There are [numerous resources](#) on and off campus to help students who need safe and reliable access to food.

LGBTQIA* Students: There are [many resources](#) at Washington University that exist in order to create space for you to navigate your identities, question openly, and be your authentic self, including peer mentorship, a free LGBTQIA* retreat, student groups, and regular programming and events. In addition, there are many online resources and books that can be helpful to you. Also feel free to reach out to Travis Tucker, the assistant director for Campus Life and LGBTQIA* organizations advisor (travis.tucker@wustl.edu).

Veterans: The [Office of Military and Veteran Services](#) is Washington University's focal point for military and veteran matters, to include facilitating the transition of military and veteran students into higher education, increasing student recruitment, engagement, tracking and support programs and services, and developing partnerships with campus services, community-based organizations, and federal, state and local government agencies.

Help Amongst Classmates

I encourage you to use your fellow classmates as a resource throughout the semester.

Please turn to the person seated to your right and left, exchange names and e-mail addresses here. Contact one another when you need clarification about assignments, missed class and need notes, want to study before exams, etc. Help one another!

- 1) Name: _____ E-mail: _____
2) Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

An assessment of your understanding of the course material will be based on participation in lecture and your performance on three exams.

Exams (60% of your final grade)

You will complete three exams in this course. Exam format will be multiple choice and short answer. Exams are cumulative in the sense that this course is designed to build upon itself. In other words, what you learn in Week 2 will inform what you learn in Week 14. As such, you should expect to see material from the first third of the course on your second exam, and material from first two-thirds of the course on your final exam. Therefore, exam three is worth more points than exam two, which is worth more points than exam one.

- *Exam 1: 15% of your final grade*
- *Exam 2: 20% of your final grade*
- *Exam 3: 25% of your final grade*

You will need to bring a scantron to each exam as well as a pencil. You will not need a blue book for the short answer questions.

Exams are shown in **RED** in your course schedule.

Participation (40% of your final grade)

Regular participation in the course ensures that you not only walk away from this course with a crystalized understanding of concepts but that you will be able to perform well on your exams. Participation in this course is divided into 3 parts:

- *Reading Notes (18% of your final grade)*

You are required to complete the 6 reading notes assignments listed on your syllabus. Reading notes are due during lecture and must follow the template provided on your Canvas page. In your reading notes, you must comment on each assigned “reading” (or video, podcast, etc.) for the whole week. You must hand in a hard copy of your reading notes, preferably typed. The purpose of the reading notes is to generate meaningful and worthwhile discussions during small group activities in class. Of the 6 reading notes assignments, 4 will be marked for completion (i.e., you do what is required and you get credit) and 2 will be graded for comprehensive (i.e., 3 points for excellent work, 2 points for good work, 1 point for fair work, and 0 points for poor work; please see the rubric on Canvas for further details). **This choice will be made randomly.** Reading notes are worth 3 points each.

Reading Notes are shown in **ORANGE** in your course schedule.

- *Miscellaneous Assignments (12% of final grade)*

Throughout the semester you will also complete other assignments in class or in section as listed on your syllabus. The purpose of these assignments is to gauge your understanding of course concepts and engage you in the material in different ways. You currently have 6 miscellaneous

assignments listed on your syllabus, **but I may add more**, so it would be a good idea to attend lecture just in case. These assignments are worth equal points and may be graded for completion or comprehension.

Miscellaneous assignments are shown in **BLUE** on your course schedule.

- *Poll Everywhere Questions* (10% of final grade)

I will randomly and regularly use the polling software, “[Poll Everywhere](#)”, in lecture. The purpose of these polls is to gauge your understanding of course concepts and generate discussion. We will discuss setting up Poll Everywhere on the first day of class and can revisit the set-up during the first few weeks of the semester. Poll Everywhere requires that you use a mobile device of some sort. If this is not available to you, either for the duration of the class or for a brief part of the class (e.g., if you drop your phone and break it), please let me and your AIs know. You can always hand in poll items on paper to your AIs and I after lecture. **Participation is tracked by item, rather than day, and will be summed over the duration of the term.** So, for an illustration, if you complete 9 out of 10 total items, you will receive 90% of the points possible for this item.

Opportunities for Extra Credit (Worth up to 2 points on your FINAL grade)

I will offer one opportunity to receive extra credit in the form of an academic book review. I have provided a list of books that are suitable, but I am open to other suggestions as well as long as I approve them. I have also provided a template for writing and a rubric for grading this extra credit assignment. You can complete this assignment at any point during the semester and if your work is exceptional (i.e., you receive full credit), I would **HIGHLY** suggest you submit the book review to an academic journal. I am happy to provide guidance in this endeavor if it is something you would like to pursue.

Grading

Grading will be completed by both the instructor and the assistants to the instructor. We will review assignments together to ensure our grading patterns are consistent. In the event you think there might be a grading discrepancy, please contact the assistant to the instructor before bringing the paper to Professor Larimore. Please note that reviewing your work does not guarantee that your grade will be changed and, in some rare occasions, can lead to a lower grade. Please notify us within five business days of receiving your grade if you want us to consider a grading discrepancy. The grading scale for this course is posted on Canvas.

Late Policy

It is my expectation that you turn in all assignments on the day and at the time they are due as stated on this syllabus. In addition, this course is primarily comprised of “high-stakes” (e.g., exams) and “low-stakes” (e.g., Poll Everywhere) assignments. Therefore, it is my policy not to accept late work unless under exceptional circumstances and with appropriate documentation if necessary. I will handle these appeals on a case by case basis.

Schedule of Course Topics and Assigned or Suggested Readings

Required Text

You have one required text that you will need to purchase or secure in some way:

Reid, T.R., 2010. *The healing of America: A global quest for better, cheaper, and fairer health care*. Penguin.

We will read *The Healing of America* in the third section of the course, so you have time to purchase the book used if you wish or you can purchase a new book from the WUSTL bookstore whenever is convenient for you. The book is also available on [Amazon for \\$8.00](#).

The remainder of your assigned materials will come in the format of electronic versions of journal articles, scanned copies of book chapters, YouTube videos, podcasts, and popular media articles (NPR, NYT, etc.). You will find links to electronic materials in the course schedule shown below. For items not found there, please look in the "Files" section of this website. There should also be PDF versions of most readings in the "Files" section, please alert myself and your AIs if this is not the case. Please also search for readings through the library if need be. If you have tried all of these methods and are still unable to access a file, please let me or your AIs know but also consider posting on the [course discussion board](#), as one of your classmates might be able to help you more quickly.

Date	Topic	Pre-Class Materials	Assignment
Topic 1: Defining Health, Talking About Health, and the Determinants of Health Equity			
8/27	Welcome to the Course!	None	
8/29	Defining and Talking about Health like a Sociologist	Schwartz and Diez-Roux 2001 Books (The Lancet) 2009 Braveman 2014	In Class: Health Equity Quiz (NOTE: This quiz is graded on completion, not comprehension)
9/3	Overview of the Social Determinants of Health and Epidemiological Thought	Krieger 1994 Link and Phelan 1995	
9/5	Determinants of Health Equity: Social Class/Socioeconomic Status	Crash Course Sociology #24 Braveman et al. 2010 Lowrey 2014	
9/10	Determinants of Health Equity: Race/Racism	Hicken et al. 2018 Jones 2000 Levels of Racism	In Class: Syllabus Quiz

		Code Switch Podcast. 2016. Episode 1: Can We Talk About Whiteness	
9/12	Determinants of Health Equity: Gender/Sexism	NBC News 2018 Homan 2019 Gilbert et al. 2016	Due in Class: Reading Notes & Discussion of Topics
9/17	Determinants of Health Equity: Cissexism & Heteronormativity	Kim et al. 2017 C. Sara 2017 *SKIM EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REPORTS – Focus on the Summary & Health Section* USTS Report on Black Respondents USTS Report on Latinx Respondents USTS Report on AIAN Respondents USTS Report on ANHPI Respondents	
9/19	Determinants of Health Equity: Ableism/The Social Construction of Disease	Evans 2018 Brown 1995 At the Intersection Podcast 2019. Episode 22 - Talila Lewis and Disability Justice (Transcript)	Due in Class: Reading Notes & Discussion of Topics
9/24	Exam #1 Review Session		In-Class: Exam Review Exercise NEMS Assignment Handed Out
9/26	Exam #1		

10/1	Savannah at IAPHS - NO CLASS		
10/3	***COMPLETE NEMS ASSIGNMENT BEFORE CLASS ON 10/8***		
Topic 2: Risks, Resources, and Stress			
10/8	Risks and Resources: The Natural & Built Environments (Focus on Indigenous Health Issues)	Bad Sugar 2008 Walters and Simoni 2002 Kaholokula et al. 2008	In Class: NEMS Survey & Discussion of Results
10/10	Risks and Resources: The Social & Economic Environment (Focus on Asian American Health Issues)	Zhou 2004 Walton 2015 Lee et al. 2009	Due in Class: Reading Notes & Discussion of Topics
10/15	University Holiday – NO CLASS		
10/17	Savannah out of town – NO CLASS		
10/22	Risks and Resources: Health Behaviors (Focus on Hispanic/Latinx Health Issues)	Markiedas and Coriel 1986 Viruell-Fuentes 2011 Holmes 2006	
10/24	The Stress Paradigm: Reactions to Stress (Focus on White American Health Issues)	Malat et al. 2018 Boddy 2017 Rolheiser 2018	Due in Class: Reading Notes & Discussion of Topics
10/29	The Stress Paradigm: Embodiment (Focus on Black/African American Health Issues)	Stevenson 2019 Lee and Wilderman 2013 Martin 2017 Eichelberger et al. 2016 BLM	
10/31	Exam #2 Review Session		In-Class: Exam Review Exercise
11/5	Exam #2		
Topic 3: The Causes and Consequences of Health Care Disparities			
11/7	Introduction to the US Healthcare System	Reid: Prologue, Chapters 1-3, Afterword	

		Interlandi 2019	
11/12	Bismarck Models	Reid: Chapters 4-6 Rice et al. 2018	
11/14	Beveridge Models	Reid: Chapter 7 Whitney 2017 Zukerman et al. 2004	Due in Class: Reading Notes & Discussion of Topics
11/19	National Health Insurance Models	Reid: Chapters 8 & 10 Gornick 2000	
11/21	Out of Pocket Models	Reid: Chapter 9 Zibulewsky 2001 Cervantes et al. 2018	Due in Class: Reading Notes & Discussion of Topics
11/26	The Clinical Setting: Patient-Provider Interactions	Heritage and Maynard 2006 Villarosa 2019 Machado 2014	
11/28	University Holiday – NO CLASS		
12/3	Moving Forward: Is Health and/or Health Care a Human Right?	Reid: Chapters 11-13, Appendix	
12/5	Final Exam Review		In-Class: Exam Review Exercise
12/17	FINAL EXAM/EXAM #3 IN [ROOM TBD] 6 – 8 PM		

Final Disclaimer

The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to this information throughout the semester. Consult the course webpage frequently.