Race, Ethnicity, and Health
Sociology 3769
Fall 2010

Instructor: Ryan Birkholz
Office: BEH S 332
Office Hours: By appointment (E-mail works best)
Phone: 262-758-0278
Email: ryan.birkholz@soc.utah.edu
Lectures: TBA

*Thank you to Ming Wen. This syllabus was modified from Ming Wen’s Fall 2007 Race, Ethnicity, and Health syllabus.

Course Objective

To provide students with theoretical and empirical insight into the intersection of race, ethnicity, and health in society.

Course Description

“The success or failure of any government in the final analysis must be measured by the well-being of its citizens. Nothing can be more important to a state than its public health; the state’s paramount concern should be the health of its people.”
~Franklin D. Roosevelt

Health and healthcare remain socially stratified institutions in the United States. Racial and Ethnic disparities expose minority populations to disproportionately high levels of health risks. As a result, people of color experience higher rates of health problems and worse health outcomes than the majority white population. Furthermore, as the demographics of the United States continue to diversify, health problems and disparities will continue to grow in proportion. Heath intersects with race and ethnicity to illuminate historical and structural outcomes of discrimination and social marginalization that persist today.

During the course, we will examine the concepts of race and ethnicity, and distinguish between categories of biological and social constructionist perspectives. Additionally, we’ll explore patterns of United States demography, spatial segregation, systemic racism, environmental injustice, social class, and healthcare inequalities in the context of race, ethnicity, and health. Using a historical and structural perspective, we can critically and empirically analyze the effects of white privilege on minority populations within the United States.
WebCT

Course syllabus and additional materials are available on WebCT.

Required Texts


Grading Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>300 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-class Participation

During the course of the semester, 5 classes will be designated for in-class activities worth 10 points each. The instructor will pick the 5 specific class dates prior to the start of the course. Students may or may not be informed about an upcoming in-class activity date. A missed in-class activity cannot be made-up. In the event of a pre-arranged excused absence, a 2 page (double spaced) summary of information relevant to the topic covered will be accepted up to one week after the date of the in-class activity.

Research Paper

Research papers will explore and critically examine a health disparity phenomenon related to race and ethnicity. The paper should explore possible pathways by which race and ethnicity affect health outcomes. Your arguments should be supported by existing literature and/or your logic reasoning. Simply making claims without evidence or effective reasoning is typically not convincing. In addition, the paper should make a contribution to the ongoing
discussion about the topic. Essentially, the research paper is a critical literature review of a specific topic related to racial/ethnic disparities in health-related outcomes. More about the research paper will be discussed in class.

Research papers should begin with a clear statement of the research question, followed by a discussion of the significance of the question and how it will be examined (e.g., how the articles will be located). After providing the context for your topic, you should provide a thorough and critical literature review. Study designs of each article should also be briefly reviewed in the paper.

A hardcopy of the paper should be submitted on December 10, 2010. Please also send me an electronic version of your paper via email. The paper should be doubled spaced, typed in 12-pt font with margins no less than 1-inch. The length should be no more than 10 pages not including the references. A more detailed description and the grading criteria of this research paper are available at the end of the syllabus. You need to work on this research project.

Course Outline (The instructor reserves the right to modify outline)

SESSION 1
Course overview and organization

SESSION 2
Introduction
Required Reading: Chapter 1 Historical Aspects of Race/Ethnicity and Health

Purpose: This lecture primarily covers historical background of race/ethnicity and health and the issue of terminology (terms used to refer to various racial/ethnic groups). Terminology is closely linked to individual and group identity and typically few lack an opinion on the topic. I expect a vivid discussion on some issues covered in this session.

SESSION 3
Film: “The Deadly Deception” (a film about the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the black Male)

SESSION 4, 5
Lecture Topic: Conceptualizing Race in Health and Healthcare Research
Required Reading: Chapter 2 Conceptual Issues in Race/Ethnicity and Health (Minority Populations and Health)


Purpose: To outline conceptual problems with the “race” concept and expose students to the difficulty with composing a racial classification system that accurately and meaningfully describes human variation.

**SESSION 6**
Lecture: Demographic Profile of the U.S.

Required Reading: Chapter 3 The Demography of American Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Purpose: To provide students with an overview of population change during the 20th century and projections for the 21st century. These patterns suggest that the U.S. will become a “majority-minority” population by the middle of the 21st century. That is, racial minorities will comprise a larger proportion of the U.S. population than white Americans. These changes will have important implications for U.S. society and culture including health status and healthcare.

**SESSION 7, 8**
Lecture Topic: The Epidemiology of Health Disparities

Required Reading: Chapter 4 The Epidemiological Profile of Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Purpose: To provide an overview of the nature and magnitude of racial/ethnic disparities in health status in the United States. These sessions summarize the data on racial/ethnic disparities in health status in the United States. Topics covered include: historical trends in life expectancy, the leading causes of death by race, ethnicity and age, changes in the leading causes of death over time, the mortality cross over (whereby African Americans have a longer life expectancy than Whites at very old ages).

**SESSION 9**
Lecture Topic: Mental Health

Required Reading: Chapter 5 Mental Health
Purpose: To provide an overview of disparities in mental health. This session includes discussion of stigma, utilization of mental health services, availability of mental health services, racial/ethnicity differences in diagnosis and treatment modality, culture-bound syndromes and idioms of distress.

SESSION 10
Film: Episode 1 of “Race the Power of an Illusion.”

Purpose: This episode covers the issue of conceptualizing race and shows the degree to which genetics can and cannot be used to understand race differences in health.

SESSION 11
Lecture Topic: Healthcare Disparities: Healthcare Provider/Health System Factors
Required Reading: Chapter 6 Health Care Services Among Racial/Ethnic Groups

Purpose: To expose students to the ways in which the healthcare system can contribute to health status disparities.

SESSION 12
Lecture Topic: Healthcare Disparities
Required Reading: Chapter 6 Health Care Services Among Racial/Ethnic Groups

Purpose: To define the difference between health status disparities and healthcare disparities and to familiarize students to the research findings related to the role of patient preferences in producing racial and ethnic differences in healthcare.

SESSION 13

Exam I

Exam I covers Sessions 1 through 12.

SESSION 14, 15
Go over Exam I
Lecture Topic: Health Behavior
Required Reading: Chapter 9 Behavior and Health
Purpose: To provide an overview of disparities in health behavior. The health behaviors addressed in this session include, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and illegal drug use. Obesity will also be discussed. These sessions discuss patterns and prevalence rates, racial/ethnic differences in prevalence rates and theories and hypotheses that explain these differences.

SESSION 16
Class Topic: Are Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health Really Just Socioeconomic Differences?
Required Reading: Chapter 8 Socioeconomic Status and Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health

Purpose: To expose students to the evidence regarding the role of socioeconomic status in producing health disparities. Many people think that racial/ethnic differences in health status are merely socioeconomic status differences, since African Americans and Hispanics generally are lower than Asians and whites in socioeconomic status and also have worse health status. This session presents data showing that racial/ethnic differences in health status exist at all income levels and that socioeconomic status does not fully account for race differences in health status.

SESSION 17, 18, 19
Lecture Topic: Why Health Status Disparities Exist: Socio-environmental factors
Required Reading: Chapter 8 Socioeconomic Status and Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health


Purpose: To expose students to the theory of excess risk exposure as an explanation for health status disparities. The U.S is a highly racially segregated society. Segregation and systematic racism can lead to radically different levels of exposure to health risks. These three sessions discuss these issues.
SESSION 20
Film: Episode 3 of “Race the Power of an Illusion.”

Purpose: This episode covers the social and economic policies that contributed to the pattern of structural (particularly economic) inequality that we see among racial/ethnic groups today. This episode brings out the points made in Chapter 8.

SESSION 21, 22
Lecture Topic: Why Health Disparities Exist: Psychosocial Factors
Required Reading: Chapter 7 Theories of Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health

Purpose: To exposure students to differences in psychosocial factors that contribute to health status disparities. Here we discuss how psychosocial factors contribute to health disparities.

SESSION 23
Lecture Topic: Special Issues in African American Health
Required Reading: Chapter 10 African American Health Issues

Purpose: To expose students to special issues related to the health of the African American population. The sessions reinforce some points that have been brought out previously, but the lecture is focused on African American health exclusively. This session includes a discussion of historical factors that have resulted in contemporary social and economic conditions, mistrust of medical care, racism and discrimination.
SESSION 24
Lecture Topic: Special Issues in American Indian and Alaska Native Health
Required Reading: Chapter 11 American Indian and Alaska Native Health Issues

Purpose: To expose students to special issues related to the health of the American Indians and Alaska Natives. The session reinforces some points that have been brought out previously, but the lecture is focused on American Indians and Alaska Natives health exclusively. This session includes historical factors that lead to contemporary conditions, the role of the Indian Health Service in improving population health, healthcare assess problems within the Indian Health Service, environmental justice and health concerns of “urban American Indians.

SESSION 25
Lecture Topic: Special Issues in Asian and Pacific Islander Health
Required Reading: Chapter 12 Asian and Pacific Islander Health Issues

Purpose: To expose students to special issues related to the health of the Asian and Pacific Islanders. The session reinforces some points that have been brought out previously, but the lecture is focused on Asian and Pacific Islander health exclusively. This session includes discussions of complementary and alternative medicine, culture-bound syndromes, idioms of distress, and language barriers in obtaining quality care.

SESSION 26
Lecture Topic: Special Issues in Hispanic Health
Required Reading: Chapter 13 Hispanic/Latino Health Issues

Purpose: To expose students to special issues related to the health of the Hispanic population. The session reinforces some points that have been brought out previously, but the lecture is focused on Hispanics health exclusively. This session includes discussions of complementary and alternative medicine, culture-bound syndromes, idioms of distress, and language barriers in obtaining quality care.

SESSION 27

Exam II

Exam II covers Sessions 13 through 26.
AMERICAN WITH DISABILITY ACT (ADA)

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

It is assumed that all work submitted for evaluation will be your own work. Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresenting one’s work, and falsification of information are serious offenses that warrant severe sanctions. Students should be familiar with the formal definitions of academic misconduct, as outlined in the University of Utah Student Code at http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html.
Race, Ethnicity, and Health Research Project

I. Topics

You should select one of the following topics as the focus of your research paper:

1) Literature review of segregation and health – several studies have demonstrated that racial segregation is associated with differences in health outcomes among racial/ethnic groups. What is the quality of the evidence?

2) Literature review of how immigrant status contributes to and interacts with race/ethnicity in their impact on health. For example, it is possible that the observed association between race/ethnicity and health can be, at least in part, attributed to higher levels of concentration of first- and second-generation immigrants among some ethnic minority groups. Some evidence has also shown that race or ethnicity does not matter once immigrant background is controlled for in some subgroups of ethnic minority in America. This project reviews this literature.

3) Literature review on language interpreters – with the increasing Hispanic and Asian population in the US, language has become an increasing barrier in the doctor/patient encounter. Some health facilities have employed language interpreters to reduce the language gap. What has been the efficacy of language interpreters in healthcare? What are the problems? What are the alternatives?

4) Literature review of cultural competency training programs – as the US becomes increasingly ethnically diverse, cultural differences will play an increasingly salient role in the doctor/patient encounter. Some medical and nursing schools have initiated cultural competency programs to better prepare healthcare providers to serve the increasingly diverse population. This project will review the literature to determine if these training programs are effective.

5) Literature review on studies of doctor/patient race concordance – several studies have examined the question of whether patient outcomes are different when the doctor and the patient are of the same ethnic group compared with cases where they are not of the same ethnic group. This project will review that literature.

7) Literature review on “the minority crossover” – The minority crossover refers to the fact that among persons over age 80, African Americans have a greater life
expectancy than white Americans. This is a reversal from all age groups below 80. Thus, mortality rates are said to “crossover”. The reason for this is not well understood. This project will review the studies of the minority crossover.

8) Literature review of education effects on racial/ethnic disparities in health. This project will review the studies that examine the role of education in contributing to racial/ethnic disparities in health status, behavior, and care.

9) Literature review of the relative strengths of the associations between race/ethnicity and health across the life course. This project will review the literature that addresses how racial/ethnic disparities in health vary according to different stages of the life course. For example, do the harmful effects of perceived racism or discrimination become stronger or weaker in later life compared to middle-aged stage?

10) Some argue that the amount of stress experienced by people of color is a significant explanatory factor underlying racial/ethnic disparities in health. This project reviews evidence on the role of stress in explaining the persistent link between race/ethnicity and health.

Additional material on the selected topics can be found in online databases such as MEDLINE or PubMed. Go to www.lib.utah.edu, find these databases, and then search for the published articles on the related topics. Prominent journals that publish articles addressing racial/ethnic disparities in health include but are not limited to Social Science & Medicine, Sociology of Health and Illness, Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Health Services Research, Ethnicity and Disease, Ethnicity and Health, Journal of Adolescent Health, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Journal of Gerontology Social Sciences, and Gerontology. You can search relevant articles in these journals as well. A useful strategy is to search abstracts under the topic you choose, skim the abstracts, select studies you will include in your review, get and read the full papers of these studies, and write a critical review of these studies.
II. The Paper (20%)

A. The paper should be no more than 10 pages in length (typed, double spaced, one side of the page).

B. It will have a minimum of 10 references (no more than 3 of the required 10 can be internet references).


D. Do not plagiarize

1. Any material where an author’s words are used verbatim should be enclosed in quotation marks and the appropriate reference cited.

2. Any ideas that are taken from the works of others (books, periodicals, etc.) should be cited by using appropriate references.

III. You should work alone on this paper.

IV. The research papers are due on **July 29 2010 (Thursday)**. Late papers are not accepted.

V. Presentations (5%)

Powerpoint presentations are required. Do not read your paper to the class. You will be presenting to your classmates, be prepared to talk to them and tell them about the exciting things you have discovered from your research. Expect questions from the class.
Criteria for Grading the Research Paper

Organization and Coherence (25%): Your research problem should be clearly introduced in the very beginning. Discussions on why the problem is important and worthy of research should follow the introduction of the problem. Next, you need to explain the research method you used to do research on the problem. Then in the result section, you should present and critically assess the evidence you find with regard to the research problem. The last section of the paper should consist of conclusions drawn from your own research.

Literature review (25%): Literature review is the essential part of this paper. You ought to have a critical review of the relevant literature. Evaluate what they have said, discuss what they have left unanswered, and point out what should be further explored in the future.

Your personal opinions (20%): I will look for your own words describing and analyzing the problem and your reaction to the evidence accumulated in the literature and presented by you.

Writing (20%): Clear and coherent writing is essential for a good paper. Grammar, spelling, and rhetoric will all be considered.

Format (10%): Formatting citations and bibliography consistently is important. All borrowed words should be cited and references should be listed alphabetically in the bibliography separately put in the end of the paper. No reference that is not cited in the text should appear in the bibliography and vice versa. At least ten references with no more than three online references are required for the paper. The text should be 12 points, double-spaced, and single-sided. The paper should be no more than 10 pages. Page numbers should be inserted.

Please submit a hard copy of the paper to the instructor in class on December 10, 2010 and submit an electronic version of the paper in WORD file via WebCT no later than 5pm on December 10, 2010.