Seminar in Medical Sociology: Minority Health
Syllabus, Fall 2012, Purdue University (SOC 67400)

Course Description
This seminar examines the health status and health behavior of minority Americans. A life course perspective is emphasized, from gestation to death, to examine disparities between African, Asian, Hispanic, Native, and White Americans. Readings are drawn from medical sociology, epidemiology, and health services research. Class Meetings: Tuesday 6:00-8:50 in Stone Hall 215.

Professor
Kenneth F. Ferraro, PhD  ferraro@purdue.edu  765-494-2180 (fax)
Distinguished Professor of Sociology  Stone Hall 335 (T-Th)
Director, Center on Aging and the Life Course  Hanley Hall 310J (MWF)
Office Hours:  Schedule appointments directly with Ann Howell
Monday, 10:30-11:15 in Hanley Hall 310J  (howelle@purdue.edu [765-494-9692]).
Tuesday, 1:45-2:30 in Stone Hall 335

Required Readings
Journal articles and chapters as outlined in syllabus are available electronically via Purdue Libraries.

Course Content and Educational Philosophy
My educational philosophy emphasizes learning by doing rather than just learning by absorbing lectures. Some assignments are structured in the classical “problem solving” pedagogical approach advanced by John Dewey. In addition, I invite students to help structure the course—this is our seminar, not my seminar. Please draw to our attention any campus speakers discussing related topics.

Course Requirements
All documents should be prepared with margins of at least 1” and fonts of at least 11. Include a “word count” at the end of each document identifying what is counted (e.g., title, text, references). Documents should be submitted both in paper and electronically by the required date. If paper submission presents a hardship at certain times (e.g., travel), electronic submission (only) is acceptable. When due dates apply to course requirements, five percent point deductions transpire each weekday that an assignment is late.

Students are responsible to learn what plagiarism is and to not engage in it; plagiarism will result in a course grade of F. To learn about plagiarism, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/plag.html.

1. Attendance and class participation: Complete the readings prior to each day's class. This is a seminar, and class discussion is vital. Behavioral expectations include maintenance and leadership roles.
   Maintenance roles: (1) attend; (2) share reasoning; (3) support group discussion; (4) confirm experiences and hunches; (5) acknowledge diverse viewpoints; (6) illustrate concepts with observations; (7) pose questions to challenge or clarify a statement.
   Leadership roles: (1) supplement required readings with other readings; (2) take intellectual risks to integrate and synthesize ideas; (3) build on other's contributions with theoretical or empirical information; (4) challenge/critique arguments or analyses presented by authors, classmates, or professor.
   40 points possible.
2. **Discussion Facilitator**: Be prepared to facilitate a class discussion (typically ½ of our weekly meeting) with answers to the following questions for each day’s reading. I will give you a choice as to assignment: aforementioned dates or “jack of spades.”

   1) What insight does the reading provide into the core questions for this part of the course?
   2) What are the main points from the readings?
   3) What did you find most interesting?
   4) List at least one question or criticism that you have about the reading.

15 points possible.

3. **Comment and reply**: Some journals publish “commentary” which usually takes the form of critical assessments of published works. While there may be praise, the comments are more often critical in a serious but respectful tone. You are to write a comment and reply to be submitted no later than 4:00 pm the day before the assigned reading. There are two parts to this assignment.

   **Comment.** First, select one full-length *empirical* article and critique it as though you were submitting commentary to the Editor. Select an article on our schedule that is to be discussed before November 10. There are a few brief articles that are not suited for this assignment. Select an article that is at least 4-5 pages. If uncertain, please see the instructor.

   Prepare your comments to discuss what detracts from the scientific merit of the published paper. Attempt to be even-handed in your comments and cite appropriate references to justify your criticism. The comment should be no longer than 1,200 words plus references.

   **Reply.** Second, imagine that you are the first author of the paper being critiqued. Prepare a brief pseudo-reply (no longer than 2 pages: about 700 words). Again, show respect for the person critiquing your work, but rebut or acknowledge their criticism of your work. 30 points possible.

4. **Research paper**: Students will write a research paper that will be reviewed by fellow students and the professor. Papers previously or simultaneously submitted to other classes are not acceptable; this is to be original work. Co-authored papers are not permitted (but you are free to add co-authors after you have completed the course). Ideas, models, and/or hypotheses developed directly in conjunction with your major professor are inappropriate for the focus of this paper.

   a. **Purpose and Bibliography** – Each student should prepare a brief statement of purpose (i.e., research question, approach) and a preliminary bibliography on a subject of interest. The Purpose should not exceed two double-spaced pages (700 words). Submit no later than Tuesday, October 2, 2012.

   b. **Complete Paper** – Students have two options for the final paper: (1) empirical report and (2) analytic review of the literature.

      (1) **Empirical report**: Several data sets are available from ICPSR or your major professor or perhaps you have data from which an original research paper may be developed. Empirical reports are not to duplicate other research you are doing. Empirical reports are the building blocks of science. Craft the paper to resemble an article for the journal to which it would be an appropriate submission.

      (2) **Analytic review of the literature**: This is the typical "research paper" derived from library materials. Although it does not involve data analysis in the strictest use of the phrase, research papers should be analytic endeavors. Do not simply summarize research; rather, critique and analyze it, then synthesize and integrate from it in an attempt to extend the literature. For an exemplar of this type of
paper, see Idler and Benyamini (1997) *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. I also recommend creating a table to organize your review of the literature, which can be appended to the manuscript.

A complete draft of the paper for student pre-review is due 11.6.12. Papers will be presented to the class near the end of the semester. Complete papers are due at 4:00pm on 12.11.12. Identify the target journal on the cover page of your manuscript.

5. **Peer review of student papers.** Each student will write brief reviews of drafts of two papers submitted on 11.6.12. Reviews are due 11.20.12. 20 points.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Method</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attendance &amp; class participation</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>class meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Discussion facilitator</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>class meetings</td>
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<td>3. Comment and reply (before 11.10)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1 day before class discussion</td>
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<td>4. Research paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Purpose and Bibliography</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/2</td>
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<td>b. Complete draft</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Final paper</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12/11 (4:00pm)</td>
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<td>5.Peer review of student papers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11/20</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
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I use the + / - grading system. The percent of total points needed for letter grades is as follows: A, 93-100; A-, 90-92; B+, 88-89; B, 83-87; B-, 80-82; C+, 78-79, etc.

6. **Emergency planning.** In the event of a campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to change. Think safety first; then contact me by email or phone about the course.

**Books and Reports of Interest**
Schedule of Topics and Readings

8.21
Introduction

8.28
In the Beginning: Infancy and Youth

Aging and the Life Course

9.4
Mortality


**Hispanic Paradox**


**9.11 Socioeconomic Status and Financial Strain**


**Beyond “SES or Race” Explanations**


**9.18 Disability and Functional Limitations**


**Other Dimensions of Functioning**


### 9.21 Annual Symposium, Center on Aging and the Life Course, 1:00-5:00pm

**Health and Aging in Diverse Contexts: From Research to Policy, STEW 218-A-D**

1:10  *Aging and Health among Hispanics/Latinos in the US: Selected Findings from the Hispanic EPESE*  

**Kyriakos S. Markides, PhD**, Distinguished Professor of Aging Studies, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston and Editor, *Journal of Aging and Health*

2:05  *Cues for Reducing African American Disability Disparities*  

**Douglas K. Miller, MD**, Professor of Medicine; Richard M. Fairbanks Chair in Aging Research, Indiana University School of Medicine

3:10  *Health Care as a Context: Policy and Unmet Need*  

**Toni P. Miles, MD, PhD**, Director, Institute on Aging and Professor, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of Georgia

### 9.25 Conceptual and Methodological Issues


**Measurement Matters**


### 10.2 Discrimination


### 10.9 No class (October Break)

### 10.16 Colorism and Skin Tones


### Biomarkers of Aging


10.23

Cancer

Heart Disease

10.30

Health Behavior

Seeking Care

11.6 The Power of Place


Segregation and Health


11.13 No class (Annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America)

11.20 Access to and Use of Health Services


Physician/Practitioner Relationships


11.22 Thanksgiving

11.27 Interventions and Health Policy


12.4

Student Presentations

12.11 Final Research Paper Due (4:00pm)