

# MCS 2 Selective Sociology of Medicine

Sociology is a social science that uses systematic methods of qualitative and quantitative investigation, and critical analysis, to develop a body of knowledge about human social structure and activity, often with the goal of applying such knowledge to improve social welfare. This Selective will explore selected topics in sociology of medicine.

## Instructors



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## Syllabus

Sociology is a social science that uses systematic methods of qualitative and quantitative investigation, and critical analysis, to develop a body of knowledge about human social structure and activity, often with the goal of applying such knowledge to improve social welfare. This Selective will explore selected topics in sociology of medicine. Topics include: medical professionalism and training of physicians; the culture of nursing; and institutional structures within medicine. Examples of such institutional structures are the emergence of the modern hospital, and the origins and transformation of the health care delivery and financing system in the United States. To provide a foundation of understanding for students, the course will also briefly explore qualitative methods utilized by sociologists to conduct field work. The format of the Selective will be six 2-hour discussion sessions which will be facilitated by individual (or teams of) students. Careful reading of assigned materials in advance of class discussion is required for all students.

## Educational Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe qualitative methods used by sociologists
2. Discuss and compare contemporary cultures of training for physicians and nurses
3. Recognize the origins and evolution of modern hospitals and the US health care system
4. Appraise newly proposed changes to the US health care system based on students' recognition of the history of the system

## Topics and Dates

### **Week 1- What do qualitative sociologists do?**

Bosk, Charles L. "The Fieldworker as Watcher and Witness," *Hastings Center Report*, June, 1985; 15 (3): 10-14.

Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus*, 1972; 101 (1): 1-38.

Bosk, Charles L. *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. For this week, read Appendix 1, "The Field Worker and the Surgeon," pp. 193-213.

### **Week 2- Medical Professionalism: Training of Physicians**

Bosk, Charles L. *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Read remainder of entire book in sequence. Pay special attention to “An Amended Appendix—An Ethnographer’s Apology . . . .” on pp. 215-235.

**Week 3- Medical Professionalism: Culture of Nursing**

Chambliss, Daniel. “Nurses’ Role: Caring, Professionalism and Subordination,” in Brown, Phil. *Perspectives in Medical Sociology* (4th ed.). Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2008.

**Week 4- Institutional Structures: Origins and Transformation of the US Health Care Delivery and Financing System**

“Precis of Paul Starr’s ‘The Social Transformation of American Medicine’,” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, Vol. 29, No. 4-5 (August/October 2004), pp. 575-620.

**Week 5- Institutional Structures: The Modern Hospital**

Rosenberg, Charles. “The Rise of the Modern Hospital,” in Brown, Phil. *Perspectives in Medical Sociology* (4th ed.). Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2008.

**Evaluation**

1. Attendance at all discussion sessions is mandatory
2. Each student will facilitate one discussion session
3. All students will participate regularly in discussions in which they are not facilitating
4. Each student will write a 3-4 page essay reflecting on the most influential aspects of sociology to the student’s anticipated future field of medical practice (due on the last day of class for the Selective).

**Class Size**

10 (maximum)  
6 (minimum)