SOC 977: SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

Wednesdays 9-12 A 131 Fee Hall
2nd Semester, Jan-May 2005
Harry Perlstadt, Ph.D. M.P.H.
M W C-218 E Fee 432-2691
e-mail: perlstad@msu.edu

Syllabus

Goal:
To increase awareness and understanding that societies respond to epidemics, disease and disasters in terms of collective behavior and collective action such as panic, hysteria, isolation, migration, and social movements.

Learning Objectives:
• Ability to identify the social, cultural, and political factors involved in social responses to epidemics and disasters.
• Ability to apply sociological theories, constructs and models to epidemiological phenomena.
• Ability to synthesize historical, epidemiological and sociological information - compiling information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

Required Texts:
Terence Ranger and Paul Slack, Epidemics and Ideas: Historical Perception of Pestilence
J. N. Hayes, The Burdens of Disease: Epidemics and Human Response in Western History
David L. Miller, Introduction to Collective Behavior and Collective Action

Learning Assessments:

Grades will be based on a combination of written work and participation in class discussions. You cannot do well in this class unless you are actively engaged in the seminar.

One way to master something is to be able to present it to others. You will have three types of assignments. Some students in this class come from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines ranging from epidemiology to social/behavioral sciences to the humanities. I would like each person to prepare a brief paper of not more than 5 pages explaining what you think are the most important things one should know about the methods in your discipline–You may focus on definitions, variables, scales, instrument construction (survey or interview). Email me the papers and I will distribute them to everyone by 5pm Fri Jan 28th. I will ask you to make a brief 5-7 minute presentation of your paper on Feb 2nd.

You should look over the sets of readings and decide for which four sets of readings you are willing to provide a critical review of 3-4 pages. You will be assigned two topics for critical review and two topics for responses to a review. The reviews will be e-mailed by 5pm on Fridays. The responses are to be e-mailed by 5pm Mondays. This will provide a basis for beginning our seminar on Wednesdays.

Third, each student will prepare a term paper (8-15 pages) dealing with an approved topic. The purpose of these papers is to examine the social and political contexts and constraints in epidemiology and public health. Suggested topics include the works of Paul Brodeur–the Great Power-Line Cover-Up or The Zapping of America, Jonathan Harr, A Civil Action, or a case like Mad-Cow, anthrax outbreak, SARS, etc that has social and political implications. You can also do more extended work on one of the historical cases discussed in class. Topic and bibliography should be submitted by Mar 1st. Students will make presentations the last two weeks of class.