

Closing the health/wealth gap? An introduction to the sociology of health and illness

Start date 31 March 2019**End date** 31 March 2019**Venue** Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge**Tutor** Dr Nigel Kettley**Course code** 1819NDX030**Director of Academic Centres** Dr Corinne Boz**For further information on this course, please contact**Zara Kückelhaus, HoACA Lifelong Learning,
zara.kuckelhaus@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746204**To book** See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Nigel has had a wide ranging teaching and research career in the fields of sociology, education studies, research methods and teacher education. Before joining the Institute of Continuing Education in 2007, he was a Research Associate in the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and earlier still an MPhil and PhD student at Wolfson College.

Before returning to study in 1997, he was a lecturer in a Further Education college. He is an active researcher in the areas of widening participation, educational attainment and lifelong learning more generally with a particular focus on issues of gender, social stratification and theory formation. He has a longstanding research interest in issues of social class inequality including inequalities in education, health, illness and healthcare, and the criminal justice system.

Nigel teaches on a variety of courses for the Institute, supervises postgraduate students and is Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for Education and Social Science courses at the Institute. His major publications include *Educational Attainment and Society* (2007, Continuum) and *Theory Building in Educational Research* (2012, Continuum). He is also a Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts. In 2017, Nigel received a Pilkington Prize in recognition of his outstanding teaching at the University of Cambridge.

Course programme

Overview

What is the health/wealth gap? This course explores how lifestyle factors and social class influence health, illness and longevity. You will examine evidence related to the persistence of the health/wealth gap, assess explanations for persistent health inequalities and consider the adequacy of public policy initiatives to tackle health inequalities.

09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	An introduction to the sociology of health, illness and longevity
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	Inequalities in health: The extent of the health/wealth gap
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	Explaining the persistence of the health/wealth gap
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	Closing the gap? Public policy responses to health inequalities
16:45	Day-school ends

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. To promote an understanding of key terms and concepts used in medical sociology including health, illness, morbidity, mortality, social class and the health/wealth gap;
2. To examine and interpret empirical evidence related to the extent and persistence of the health/wealth gap (e.g. differences in mortality rates and lifestyle factors by social class);
3. To evaluate explanations for the persistence of the health/wealth gap and public policy responses to them (e.g. the health policies of New Labour and the Coalition government).

Content:

Medical sociology is concerned with the social contexts and dimensions of health, illness and longevity. Its three interrelated focuses are: exploring the social definition and construction of health and illness (e.g. medical labels and the sick role); measuring and explaining persistent health inequalities (e.g. the health/wealth gap); and examining the effectiveness of public policy responses to health inequalities (e.g. healthcare provision). In this course, you will be introduced to these various aspects of medical sociology drawing upon historic and contemporary research.

Topics covered will include an introduction to the key terms and concepts of medical sociology (e.g. a critical discussion of the World Health Organisation's (1955) definition of health). Emphasis will be placed upon understanding and analysing how health and illness are not simply biological states, but rather culturally defined through, for example, the doctor-patient relationship. Subsequently, you will explore the notion of the health/wealth gap i.e. empirical evidence of persistent inequalities in health and illness by social class in Britain and elsewhere.

Social scientists and medics have tried to explain these inequalities in a variety of ways including by reference to: the unequal distribution of material resources and life chances; different lifestyles by socio-economic background; differential access to and use of healthcare resources; and the impact of modern working practices on health. You will briefly explore explanations for the health/wealth gap provided in, for example, the Black Report (1980), the Independent Inquiry into *Inequalities in Health Report* (1998) and the House of Common's Report *Health Inequalities* (2009). From an international perspective, you will also examine the findings of the WHO (Europe) report *Closing the Health Inequalities Gap: An International Perspective* (2005).

Finally, you will critically evaluate public policy responses to health inequalities ranging from the introduction of the NHS (1948) to the healthcare policies of New Labour (1997-2010) and the Coalition government (2010-2015). In summary, you will consider why one of the richest countries in the world, Britain, has failed to close the health/wealth gap.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be taught using highly interactive seminar-style sessions, which draw on students' knowledge and experience to illustrate key ideas in medical sociology. PowerPoint presentations will be used to guide sessions. Class discussion will be encouraged. Copies of PowerPoint presentations and all resources used in teaching sessions will be made available to students.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Define and explain a range of concepts and methods linked to the study of health and illness;
2. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of a range of explanations for the persistence of the health/wealth gap;
3. Critically evaluate a range of public policy responses which have sought to reduce the health/wealth gap over time.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Abbott, P. & Payne, G.	<i>New Directions in the Sociology of Health.</i>	London: Falmer. (1990)
Barry, A-M & Yuill, C.	<i>Understanding the Sociology of Health.</i>	London: Sage. (2008)
Bury, M. (ed.)	<i>The Sociology of Health and Illness: A Reader.</i>	London: Routledge. (2003)
*Nettleton, S.	<i>The Sociology of Health & Illness.</i>	Cambridge: Polity Press. (2006)
Weiss, G. & Lonnquist, L.	<i>The Sociology of Health, Healing and Illness.</i>	London: Routledge. (2016)
White, K.	<i>An Introduction to the Sociology of Health and Illness.</i>	London: Sage. (2009)

* Recommended reading.

Website addresses:

House of Commons Health Committee (2009) *Health Inequalities: Third Report of Session 2008-2009*. Online at:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhealth/286/286.pdf>

*World Health Organization (WHO) (2018) *Constitution of WHO: principles*. Includes the WHO definition of health (1955). Online at:

<http://www.who.int/about/mission/en/>

World Health Organization (Europe) (2005) *Closing the Health Inequalities Gap: An International Perspective*. Online at:

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/closing_h_inequalities_gap.pdf

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 14 September 2018