This course will take a broad look at differences in health status and health care access for racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S., and for those from lower socioeconomic classes. There is an extensive literature documenting lower health status for those in lower socioeconomic classes, independent of race or ethnicity. There is also substantial literature documenting lower health status for ethnic minorities independent of socioeconomic status. Students will be introduced to this literature and will become familiar with the many different ways these differences in health status are manifested.

Students will also consider the intersection of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status in predicting health outcomes. The issue of how racial categorizations are constructed (biological vs. social) will be considered, as well as whether differences in health status between groups that differ both racially and socio-economically are better explained by the latter or the former.

More recently there has been a growing literature that documents both lower quality of medical care and lower access to care for racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. Students will review this literature for a variety of settings and medical conditions. A number of explanations have been offered to explain these differences, from patients’ distrust of the medical care system to racial bias on the part of providers. Students will consider these alternative explanations for the documented difference.

All assigned readings are available through the course web page on CourseWork.
expected to prepare a 10-12 page term paper. There will be more details provided in the second week of class regarding the term paper assignment.
Week 1 - January 10, 12  Introduction; Understanding health as a social issue

Week 2 - January 17, 19  Defining health and the factors that affect it; measuring health
Ware, John E., Jr. and Cathy Donald Sherbourne. "The MOS 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36)." Medical Care 1992; 30: 473-483.

Week 3 – January 24, 26  Social class as a determinant of health
Week 4 - January 31, February 2  
Mechanisms that contribute to social class differences in health status


Week 5 - February 7, 9  
Race and ethnicity – what are they?


**Note: the following reading is optional:**

Week 6 - February 14, 16  
Race and health

Week 7 - February 21, 23

The interaction of social class and race in affecting health


Week 8 - February 28, March 2

Racial and ethnic disparities in access to health care


Kaiser Family Foundation Doctors on Disparities in Medical Care 2002

Kaiser Family Foundation Race, Ethnicity & Medical Care - A Survey of Public Perceptions and Experiences 1999


Week 9 - March 7, 9

The role of discrimination in affecting access to care – is it conscious or unconscious?


Optional

Davidson RC, Lewis EL. Affirmative Action and Other Special Consideration Admissions at the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine. JAMA 1997; 278: 1153-1158
Week 10 - March 14, 16  Summary – How to decrease disparities in health status and health care access

Geiger HJ. Racial stereotyping and medicine: the need for cultural competence *CMAJ* 2001; 164 (12): 1699-70.
Barr DA, Williams DR. Legal and Policy Responses to Racial Disparities in Medical Care