Health Issues in West Africa

Course number:  
Language of instruction: English  
U.S. Semester Credits: 3  
Contact Hours: 42  
Faculty: Dr Isaac Boafo (PhD), University of Ghana, Legon  
http://www.ug.edu.gh/sociology/staff/isaac-boafo

Course Description

Health as per the World Health Organization is viewed from a bio-psychosocial perspective. This course, which concerns itself with health issues in Africa with special reference to Ghana focuses largely on the social aspects of health. It uses sociological lenses to examine mental disorder. It introduces the student to the major health issues and discourses in Africa with particular emphasis on Ghana. It introduces the student to the ways social theories inform our understanding of health. The course examines how socio-cultural factors contribute to the development of health and ill-health in Ghana and Africa as a whole. This course is suitable for students in Pre-Med, Public Health, Social Work and students in International Development.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify some of the major health issues confronting Ghana and other African countries.  
2. Discuss how socio-cultural issues contribute to morbidity and mortality in Ghana.  
3. Discuss health and illness using different social theories.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

Learning will involve in-class exercises, active reflection, discussion, readings, field reports, short lectures, and out-of-class activities that help you engage in the local culture on a deeper level.

Class Schedule

Following is the course schedule for the semester, subject to change.

Class 1: Key concepts in healthcare delivery
The field of health and healthcare organisation involves a myriad of concepts and constructs. The first session of this course explains some of these concepts, looking at the various perspectives that can be brought to them. The aim of the session is to set stage for subsequent discussions in the sessions that follow. Concepts such as health, illness, ‘access to health’, universal healthcare among others are discussed.

**Key text:**


Class 2: Social theories of health

The discipline of sociology is characterised by two main aspects, namely, the capacity to take an individual’s experience or behaviour and place it within a wider socio-cultural milieu; and the ability to view a phenomenon from different theoretical perspectives. In this session, we look at how the major sociological theories help us explain different aspects of health, illness and illness experience. Some of the theories that are discussed in relation to health are Functionalism, Conflict Theory and Symbolic Interactionism.

**Key texts:**


Class 3: The Medical systems in Ghana:

a. Allopathic and Complementary/Alternative Medicine

**Key text:**


Class 4: Ghana: Traditional medicines and Faith Healing (history, practices, challenges)

**Key texts:**

Barimah, K. B. (2016). Traditional healers in Ghana: So near to the people, yet so far away from basic health care system. *TANG, 6*(2), 3-8.


**Class 5:**  **Out of Class Activity:** A visit to CSRPM, Mampong (modern traditional), or a Herbalist *(Students write a minimum 5-page reflective paper on this activity to submit on the next class meeting)*

**Class 6:** Structure of Biomedical Healthcare Delivery in Ghana

**Key text:**

**Class 7:** Care and caregiving in Ghana: Orphanages

**Key Texts:**


Class 8: Care and caregiving in Ghana: Social Welfare

**Key texts:**


Class 9: Care and caregiving in Ghana: Care for the Aged

**Key texts:**


Class 10:  *Group presentations on assigned topics by professor.*

Class 11 and 12:  Gender and Health

**Key texts:**


Class 13:  Social Class and Health

**Key Texts:**


Age and Health

Overview:

Age is arguably one of the important factors in the formation of personal identity. It can be an important source of self-esteem as well as social categorization and discrimination. The link between age and health is a complex one. Like other social determinants of health, age may interact in complex ways with many other factors to produce particular health outcomes. While studying age and health is often taken to mean studying the elderly, this session on age and health is divided into three main sub-sessions to take care of in fact and children’s health, adolescent health and the health of the elderly. The first sub-session discusses infant and child mortality and the socio-cultural factors that influence these in developing countries in general and Ghana in particular. The second sub-session looks at adolescents’ health, especially their sexual reproductive health and discusses the factors that promote and those inhibit this. Issues of sexual and reproductive health needs and access to services and stigmatization are discussed under this sub-session.

Class 14: Infant Mortality and Childhood Killer Diseases

Key texts:


**Class 15:** Out of Class Activity-Visit a health centre and interact with Paediatricians and Paediatric Nurses

**Class 16:** Adolescent Reproductive Health and STI’S including HIV/AIDS

**Key texts:**


**Class 17:** Age and Health: Health of the aged in Ghana

**Key texts:**


in China, Ghana, Mexico, India, Russia and South Africa: the study on global AGEing and adult health (SAGE) wave 1. *BMC Public Health, 15*(1), 88.

**Class 18: Maternal Mortality**

**Overview:**

All over the developing world, maternal mortality remains one difficult health problems that has defied several solutions. The difficulty lies in the fact that maternal mortality is the result of a combination of cultural, social, economic and political factors. In this session, we discuss the clinical causes and maternal mortality and the socio-cultural factors that fuel maternal mortality in Ghana. The session also reviews some of the governmental interventions that have been set in place to deal with the phenomenon.

**Key texts:**


**Class 19: Malaria: Governments and NGO’S in Malaria Prevention**

**Key texts:**


Class 20: Mental Health Issues in Ghana Class 24

**Key texts:**


Class 21: Final Exams