

Pandemics and Global Health Policy: A Sociological Perspective

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Class hours: Wednesdays 15.00-18.00, Room A975a

The transmission of a virus and a society's response to halt its spread has a cultural and societal component. How pandemics impact a particular society and the specific strategies adopted to combat it, are related to its health-care system, population density, level of inequality and poverty, and overall social/political structure.

Pandemics, although not unusual from a historical standpoint, are remarkable events that highlight the strengths and weaknesses of societies, opening an opportunity to analyze, reflect, and improve our communities beyond public health. Although the course will present a global and historical perspective, special attention will be given to comparing and contrasting the impact of the COVID-19 virus in the U.S. and in Sweden, and on their different public health strategies to combat the virus.

We will examine the scientific literature to explore the determinants of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, what can be improved, and how to achieve improvements under the framework of sustainable development goals (SDG). Topics to be examined include: the history of epidemics, basic concepts in social medicine and epidemiology, The SARS- CoV2 virus and COVID-19, the role of science in public policy, poverty and social inequalities, urbanization and population changes.

Google Classroom: On the course Classroom page, you will find the readings, assignments with instructions, as well as the lectures. The course platform is also where you will submit your assignments and functions as a discussion forum outside of class. I will use the course platform to post content relevant to the class, as well as reminders. Of course, anything of interest for you can (and should) also be shared here.

Readings: The material for this course include chapters from books, scientific and opinion articles. All required readings will be provided to you.

Class discussion will be a central part of this course, students are expected to take an active part in their learning.

Laptops in the classroom: You are welcome to use a laptop to take notes during lecture. However, please refrain from using the internet for activities not related to the lecture while in class.

Grading: Your grade will be calculated according to the following breakdown:

<i>Attendance:</i>	15%
<i>Participation:</i> - (Google classroom, article seminars and class discussions)	20%
<i>Presentation(s):</i>	25%
<i>Personal assignment, peer review and final presentation:</i>	40%

Attendance (15%): Regular attendance is mandatory. If for any reason you are unable to attend, please get in contact with me or the administration as soon as possible.

Participation (20%): This includes participation in **class discussions** and **lectures**, as well as **online** in the course Google Classroom platform.

Active participation is essential during this course. We are studying a topic for which several opinions exist, all points of view are welcomed! The most important learning tool we have is discussion and critical thinking.

Presentation(s) (25%): At the start of each lecture, we will have “Article seminars”. You will present a summary of the day’s article, prepare questions for discussion and guide the discussion with your classmates. The goal is that you analyze a scientific or opinion article, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and share your conclusions with the class.

The article seminars will be (around) 45 minutes long, the presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes. The number of presentations will be determined by how many students take the course.

Personal assignment, peer review and final presentation (40%): The personal assignment should be around 5 pages long (including references). It will be continually developed during the course, and you will hand in progress reports throughout the semester.

It is a more serious and in-depth analysis of any aspect related to the COVID-19 pandemic that you find interesting and should incorporate what you have learned throughout the course.

the end of the semester, you will present your project to the class and answer to the questions prepared by one of your classmates. Similarly, you will read and evaluate the assignment of one of your classmates, prepare questions for your classmate's final presentation, and hand in a written peer-review.

Here is a summary of the instructions for each delivery, detailed information will be available in the google classroom. As the material might change during the program, please review the contents continuously.

Background and literature review (10%): This is a 1 to 2-page report summarizing the background of the topic, as well as an explanation of why you want to research this topic. The topic might be changed, but the sooner you define what you like, the better.

Aim and intended outcomes (5%): In a brief (0.5-1 pages) statement, you will write about what you expect to find and why.

Conclusions and draft of final project (10%): At this point, you should have a preliminary draft of your project. Focus on discussing your findings and using previous material to create a first complete draft.

Peer review report (5%): You will critically review the project of one of your classmates and provide a **1 to 2 pages report** including comments and suggestions for improvement. You will also prepare questions and act as an "opponent" during the project presentations.

Project presentation (10%): At the end of the course, you will present your project and answer the questions of your opponent and classmates. Presentations should be around 20 minutes in total, with 10 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

Course learning outcomes: At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand basic concepts of Public Health, Epidemiology and Health Economics from a sociological perspective.
- Understand basic scientific aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and their social and cultural implications.
- Evaluate different sources of information critically.
- Assess sources of information as to their merit and generate independent conclusions.
- Prepare and deliver clear and concise presentations.

Date	Lecture	Hour	Activity	Readings
Week 1 Aug 31	Introduction to the course and basic concepts	15:00-16:00	Introduction to the course	-S-Ewen Callaway et al. The coronavirus pandemic in five powerful charts. Nature 579, 482-483 (2020). -Epidemiology by Leon Gordis. Chapter 1. Introduction.
		16:00-16:15	Break	
		16:15-17:00	Introduction to epidemiology and public health	
		17:00-17:15	Break	
		17:15-18:00	Introduction to epidemiology and public health	
Week 2 Sep 7	Theory of scientific thinking. A critical view of the world?	15:00-16:00	An overview of the world's problems- Are we thinking right?	Mandatory: -Factfulness by Hans Rosling. Introduction. -- Lash TL, Rothman KJ, et al. Modern Epidemiology, Chapter 1: The Scope of Epidemiology: Wolters Kluwer; 2020.
		16:00-16:15	Break	
		16:15-17:00	Principles of scientific reasoning	
		17:00-17:15	Break	
		17:15-18:00	Principles of scientific reasoning	
Week 3 Sep 14	Epidemics though history	15:00-16:00	The history of epidemics	-Plagues and peoples by William H McNeill. Preface and introduction. -Epidemics and society by Frank M Snowden. Chapter 22: Dress rehearsals for the 21 st century.
		16:00-16:15	Break	
		16:15-17:00	The history of epidemics	

		17:00-17:15	Break	
		17:15-18:00	continued	
Week 4 Sep 21	Why are we so afraid of infectious diseases?	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (Student presentations)	Fitzpatrick, et al. "Fear of COVID-19 and the mental health consequences in America." Psychological trauma: theory, research, practice, and policy (2020).
		16:00-16:15	Break	
		16:15-17:00	Introduction to COVID-19	Mandatory: -The plague by Albert Camus. chapters 1-3.
		17:00-17:15	Break	
		17:15-18:00	Public Health Interventions against infectious diseases	Optional: -Airhihenbuwa C et al. Culture Matters in Communicating the Global Response to COVID-19. Prev Chronic Dis 2020;17:200245. -David DeSteno. How Fear Distorts Our Thinking About the Coronavirus. The New York Times Feb11 2020. -Emily St. John Mandel. You'll Probably Never Catch Ebola—So Why Is the Disease So Terrifying? The New Republic. August 12, 2014
Week 5 Sep 28	Global preparedness before COVID-19.	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (presentations)	-Halpern SD et al. Cognitive Bias and Public Health Policy During the COVID-19 Pandemic. JAMA. 2020;324(4):337–338.
		16:00-16:15		Mandatory: Managing epidemics. Key factors about major deadly diseases. WHO. Part 1 pages 22-53.
		16:15-17:00	Guidelines for the response to epidemics	Optional: Wu, Joseph T et al. Nowcasting and forecasting the potential domestic and international spread of the 2019-nCoV outbreak originating in Wuhan, China: a modelling study. The Lancet, Volume 395, Issue 10225, 689 – 697.
		17:00-17:15		S. Flaxman, et al. Estimating the effects of non-pharmaceutical interventions on COVID-19 in Europe. Nature; 08-06-2020
		17:15-18:00	Interventions against COVID-19	

Week 6 Oct 5	The Swedish response to COVID-19	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (presentations)	Ludvigsson, J.F. (2020), The first eight months of Sweden’s COVID-19 strategy and the key actions and actors that were involved. Acta Paediatrica.
		16:00-16:15		Mandatory: -“Health Care in Sweden” Sweden.se Fact Sheet: https://sweden.se/society/health-care-in-sweden/
		16:15-17:00	Measuring the impact of COVID-19	-Video: The Swedish Strategy against COVID-19. -
		17:00-17:15		https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/communicable-disease-control/covid-19/covid-19-more-information/covid-19--the-swedish-strategy/
		17:15-18:00	Measuring the impact of COVID-19	Optional: - Ugarte, M.P. et al. Premature mortality attributable to COVID-19: potential years of life lost in 17 countries around the world, January–August 2020. BMC Public Health 22, 54 (2022). -Irwin, R.E. Misinformation and de-contextualization: international media reporting on Sweden and COVID-19. Global Health 16, 62 (2020). -Gretchen Vogel. ‘It’s been so, so surreal.’ Critics of Sweden’s lax pandemic policies face fierce backlash. Science Oct 6 th 2020.
Week 7 Oct 12	The US response to COVID-19	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (student presentations)	Weinberger DM et al. Estimation of Excess Deaths Associated With the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States, March to May 2020. JAMA Intern Med. 2020;180(10):1336–1344.
		16:00-16:15		
		16:15-17:00	Organization of healthcare and Public Health in the US	Mandatory: -The American way: How the world’s most powerful country is handling covid-19. The Economist May 28 th 2020.
		17:00-17:15		Optional:

		17:15-18:00	A closer look to the US response	-Hsiang, S. et al. The effect of large-scale anti-contagion policies on the COVID-19 pandemic. Nature 584, 262–267 (2020). -Nuzzo JB, Bell JA, Cameron EE. Suboptimal US Response to COVID-19 Despite Robust Capabilities and Resources. JAMA. Published online September 16, 2020.
Week 8 Oct 19	Who was more affected by COVID-19?	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (presentations)	Elgar, Frank J et al. "The trouble with trust: Time-series analysis of social capital, income inequality, and COVID-19 deaths in 84 countries." Social Science & Medicine (2020): 113365.
		16:00-16:15		Mandatory: -VanderWeele TJ. Challenges Estimating Total Lives Lost in COVID-19 Decisions: Consideration of Mortality Related to Unemployment, Social Isolation, and Depression. JAMA. 2020;324(5):445–446.
		16:15-17:00	Measuring the impact of COVID-19	-Merlin Chowkwanyun et al. Racial Health Disparities and Covid-19 Caution and Context. N Engl J Med 2020; 383:201-203
		17:00-17:15		Optional: -Bo Burström, et al. Social determinants of health and inequalities in COVID-19, European Journal of Public Health, Volume 30, Issue 4, August 2020, Pages 617–618,
		17:15-18:00	Does COVID-19 affect vulnerable groups more?	
October 25-Nov 7	Fall break			
Week 9 Nov 9	Conspiracy theories and fake news. What is their impact?	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (Student presentations)	-Saitz R, Schwitzer G. Communicating Science in the Time of a Pandemic. JAMA. 2020;324(5):443–444.
		16:00-16:15	Break	
		16:15-17:00	Science communication and public health	-From plandemic to breadcrumbs: conspiracy-theory slang. The Economist. Sep 17 th 2020. -Fisher KA, Bloomstone SJ, Walder J, Crawford S, Fouayzi H, Mazor KM. Attitudes Toward a Potential SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine: A Survey of U.S. Adults. Ann Intern Med. 2020 Sep 4:M20-3569.

		17:00-17:15	Break	
		17:15-18:00	Face masks, travel bans and other “controversial” interventions	-Elaine He and Lionel Laurent. The World Is Masking Up, Some Are Opting Out. Bloomberg July 17 2020. -Gostin LO, Wiley LF. Governmental Public Health Powers During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stay-at-home Orders, Business Closures, and Travel Restrictions. JAMA. 2020;323(21):2137–2138.
Week 10 Nov 16	Governance and COVID-19	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (student presentations)	-Andrew P. Dobson et al. Ecology and Economics for Pandemic Prevention. Science 24 Jul 2020: Vol. 369, Issue 6502, pp. 379-381 - Nancy Krieger. ENOUGH: COVID-19, Structural Racism, Police Brutality, Plutocracy, Climate Change—and Time for Health Justice, Democratic Governance, and an Equitable, Sustainable Future American Journal of Public Health 110, 1620_1623.
		16:00-16:15		
		16:15-17:00	Governments and COVID-19: Why did some countries get affected more?	Mandatory: -David S Jones. History in a Crisis — Lessons for Covid-19. N Engl J Med 2020; 382:1681-1683. -Gregg Gonsalves et al. Political interference in public health science during covid-19. BMJ 2020; 371.
		17:00-17:15		Optional: Stevens, A. Governments cannot just ‘follow the science’ on COVID-19. Nat Hum Behav 4, 560 (2020).
		17:15-18:00	The effects of government in the different COVID-19 responses	
Week 11 Nov 23	Health economics and COVID-19	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (Student presentations)	-Sumner, Andy et al. "Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty." UNU-WIDER, April (2020): 800-9.
		16:00-16:15		

		16:15-17:00	Introduction to health economics- How to put a price on health	<p>Guest Lecturer: Mihretab Gebreslassie M.Sc. Center for Epidemiology and community medicine, Stockholm.</p> <p>Mandatory: -The covid-19 pandemic is forcing a rethink in macroeconomics. The Economist July 25th, 2020.</p> <p>Optional: -Daniel W. Drezner. The Song Remains the Same: International Relations After COVID-19. International Organization 74, Supplement 2020.</p>
		17:00-17:15		
		17:15-18:00	Health economics and decision making. To lock down or not to lock down?	
Week 12 Nov 30	The role of science in society	15:00-16:00	Article Seminar (student presentations)	-Gillens, M et al. (2014). Testing theories of American Politics: Elites, Interests Groups, and Average Citizens. Perspectives on Politics, 12(3), 564-581.
		16:00-16:15		-Kari Lancaster et al. Making evidence and policy in public health emergencies: lessons from COVID-19 for adaptive evidence-making and intervention. Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice, Volume 16, Number 3, August 2020, pp. 477-490(14)
		16:15-17:00	Policy making in times of emergency. Evidence based?	
		17:00-17:15		
		17:15-18:00	Continued	
Week 13 Dec 7		15:00-18:00	Student presentations and peer-reviews	