



MODULE SPECIFICATION

Academic Year (student cohort covered by specification)	2026-27
Module Code	1803
Module Title	Sociological Approaches to Health
Module Organiser(s)	Nicki Thorogood and Tim Rhodes
Faculty	Public Health & Policy
FHEQ Level	Level 7
Credit Value	CATS: 15 ECTS: 7.5
Term of Delivery	Term 3
Mode of Delivery	This module will be delivered by predominantly face-to-face teaching modes. There will be a combination of live and interactive activities (synchronous learning, through lectures, seminars, and small group work/discussion), as well as recorded or self-directed study (asynchronous learning).
Mode of Study	Full-time
Language of Study	English
Pre-Requisites	It is desirable, but not essential, that students have some previous experience of social science, social research, or the social aspects of health.
Accreditation by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body	None
Module Cap (Indicative number of students)	30
Target Audience	This module is intended for students on all MScs, particularly those with interests in the social and cultural dimensions of health (especially sociology of health).
Module Description	This module provides an introduction to sociological perspectives on health, including the theoretical and empirical study of how social and cultural structures and processes shape health and illness. The module will involve applying and critiquing key concepts in sociology as applied to the study of health and illness. Key topics include thinking sociologically about: illness experiences; inequalities;



	disabilities; madness; gender; risk; health technologies; and discourse and policy.
Duration	5 weeks at 2.5 days per week
Timetabling slot	E
Last Revised (e.g. year changes approved)	August 2026

Programme(s)	Status
This module is linked to the following programme(s)	
MSc Public Health	Recommended
MSc Health Policy, Planning & Finance	Recommended

Module Aim and Intended Learning Outcomes

Overall aim of the module
The overall module aim is to: introduce students to sociological perspectives on health, involving the theoretical and empirical study of social and cultural structures and processes that influence health and illness.

Module Intended Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the module a student should be able to: - Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in sociology as applied to the study of health and illness; - Apply these concepts at an empirical level; - Demonstrate a critical awareness of the main conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues raised by research in the sociology of health.

Indicative Syllabus

Session Content

The module is expected to cover the following:

- An introduction to different sociological ways of thinking and how they can have relevance in relation to health.
- The critical appraisal of how knowledge in relation to health is produced, including how evidence and ideas are made, represented and used in public health responses.
- The social production of health and ill health, including critiques of biomedicine and appreciating how social and cultural processes shape health and illness experiences as well as health responses.
- Exploring inequalities and variations in health, including tracing how social and material factors, such as social class, ethnicity, gender and disability shape differential health experiences and outcomes.
- Understanding key concepts, such as medicalisation, stigma, and risk, including in relation to ideas of mental health and illness among other empirical examples.
- Exploring concepts of 'decolonising' and 'orientalism' as they relate to health.
- Engaging critically with the concepts and methods of sociological empirical research in health.

Teaching and Learning

Notional Learning Hours

Type of Learning Time	Number of Hours	Expressed as Percentage (%)
Contact time	40	27%
Directed self-study	30	20%
Self-directed learning	30	20%
Assessment, review and revision	50	33%
Total	150	100%

Student contact time refers to the tutor-mediated time allocated to teaching, provision of guidance and feedback to students. This time includes activities that take place in face-to-face (or online) contexts such as lectures, seminars, demonstrations, tutorials, supervised laboratory workshops, practical classes, project supervision as well as where tutors are available for one-to-one discussions and interaction by email.

The division of notional learning hours listed above is indicative and is designed to inform students as to the relative split between interactive and self-directed study.



Teaching and Learning Strategy

Around twenty sessions spread over the duration of the module provide overviews of the material listed above. These are generally lectures by subject area specialists followed by seminars and small group work in which students are encouraged to discuss and explore their own views, ideas and responses to the case studies from the topics covered.

There are also documentary films shown to support the topics being discussed. The remainder of the time will be spent in private study. Students will be expected to read and discuss relatively large volumes of material. The private study time must therefore be considered an integral part of the module.

Assessment

Assessment Strategy

The assessment for this module has been designed to measure student learning against the module intended learning outcomes (ILOs) as listed above. Formative assessment methods may be used to measure students' progress. The grade for summative assessment(s) only will go towards the overall award GPA.

The assessment for this module will be online.

Formal assessment is by an individual essay of 1,500 words. One question to be selected from a list of questions based on the lecture/seminar topics.

Summative Assessment

Assessment Type	Assessment Length (i.e. Word Count, Length of presentation in minutes)	Weighting (%)	Intended Module Learning Outcomes Tested
Coursework Essay	1500 word	100%	1, 2 and 3

Resitting assessment

Resits will accord with [Chapter 8a](#) of the LSHTM Academic Manual

Resources

Indicative reading list

Basic introductions to sociology of health and illness:

Nettleton, S & Gustafsson, U (2002) The sociology of health and illness reader. Cambridge: Polity Press

Gabe, J, Bury, M and Elston, M (eds) (2004) Key concepts in medical sociology. London: Sage

Scambler, G (ed) (2008) Sociology as applied to medicine. London: (6th edition) WB Saunders.

Armstrong, D (2003) An outline of sociology as applied to medicine. (5th Edition) Oxford: Arnold

Nettleton, S (2006) The sociology of health and illness. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Teaching for Disabilities and Learning Differences

The module-specific site on Moodle gives students access to lecture notes and copies of the slides used during the lecture. Where appropriate, lectures are recorded and made available on Moodle. All materials posted on Moodle, including computer-based sessions, have been made accessible where possible.

LSHTM Moodle is accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of specific needs or disabilities. More detail can be found in the [Moodle Accessibility Statement](#) which can also be found within the footer of the Moodle pages. All students have access to "[SensusAccess](#)" software which allows conversion of files into alternative formats.

Student Support Services can arrange learning or assessment adjustments for students where needed. Details and how to request support can be found on the [LSHTM Disability Support pages](#).