Current Sociology Students

Berty Arreguin

Key words: social inequalities in health, type II diabetes; socioeconomic status, race, sex/gender, and aging; theory, mixed research methods.

Read Bio

Berty Arreguin is a Mexican-American woman, a first-generation college graduate, and the first in her family to gain acceptance into a doctoral program. In past research, she analyzed variations in how people in California self-rate their health based on their socioeconomic status, education, race, sex, and age. She wants to expand this research to include chronic disease, specifically type II diabetes, in the San Joaquin Central Valley where she grew up. Although type II diabetes can affect many people, some groups face a higher risk?specifically Mexican-Americans women. She wants to investigate how this chronic disease affects the way Mexican-Americans women self-rate their health condition, and to understand whether they practice self-care after a diagnosis. If not, what prevents them from participating in self-care behaviors? She can be contacted at berty.arreguin@ucsf.edu [1].

Chuck Cloniger
Jennifer Templeton Dunn, JD

Keywords: reproductive justice, abortion, contraception, respectful maternity care, health disparities, race/class/gender, intersectionality, and ethics.

Read Bio

Jennifer Dunn, JD, is a doctoral student in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, with a concurrent faculty appointment in UCSF's Department of Family Health Care Nursing. Jennifer's research and advocacy focus on contraception, abortion, and respectful maternity care. She is teaching faculty in the UCSF Global Health Sciences program, affiliated-faculty with the UCSF/UC Hastings Consortium, and serves as the UC Hastings Faculty Ambassador to the UC Center on Women's Health, Gender & Empowerment. Jennifer also serves as the Director of the California Alliance for Abortion Care. She can be contacted at Jennifer.Dunn@ucsf.edu [2].
Thais Forneret

Keywords: qualitative methods, theory, race/class/gender, mental health

Read Bio

Thais /ty-EES/ is a doctoral student in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco. Her research focuses on how social forces affect the mental health of various social groups, particularly that of mixed-race individuals. Thais is interested in qualitative methods of research, especially ethnography and in-depth interviews, and sociological theory. Thais earned her Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, and her Master's degree also in Sociology from the California State University, Sacramento
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Nicole Foti

Keywords: politics of bioscience; sociology of scientific knowledge; gender/race/class; feminist theory; science, technology & medicine

Read Bio

Nicole is a PhD candidate interested in research that focuses on bioscience within the context of social, political and cultural structures. She is interested in the relationship between biomedical research and interlocking systems of power, including gender, race, class and sexuality. Her work is informed by the understanding that scientific knowledge both influences and is influenced by systems of power and oppression. Her current research focuses on health social movements and counter-hegemonic biomedical projects. Nicole has bachelor's degrees in Biology from Oregon State University and in Women's and Gender Studies from University of Oregon. Prior to UCSF, she worked at a HIV/AIDS nonprofit organization serving nonmetropolitan areas in Oregon. Email: nicole.foti@ucsf.edu
Carmen Green

Keywords: Birth equity, Black femme theory, Reproductive Justice applications, sexual & reproductive health, gerontology & aging, social policy

Read Bio

Carmen Green is Vice President of Research & Strategy at National Birth Equity Collaborative (NBEC), creating solutions that optimize Black maternal and infant health through training, research, policy advocacy and community-centered collaboration. Her research priorities are in operationalizing anti-racist frameworks and Black feminist theory in healthcare, policy, and culture. She is also interested in gerontology and access to long term care and end of life services. She is a former Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, State Policy Fellow. Then, based at Louisiana Budget Project in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Carmen focused on health policy, long-term care support and predatory lending protections for low and moderate-income families. She created Hazel Green, LLC in 2017 to provide grant writing assistance for Black-owned community-based programs and family serving nonprofits. She has earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Wake Forest University, and master’s degrees in maternal and child health and community health education from Tulane Universities. Carmen is a writer, reproductive justice activist and doula in training, whose continued commitment is to Black families experiencing wellness and joy.

Luis Gutierrez-Mock
Jessica Harrison

keywords: reproductive health, mental health, gender, biomedical ethics, qualitative methods

Read Bio

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Abou Ibrahim-Biangoro

Keywords: Immigration, second-generation immigration, identity, race, social medicine, public health, mental health

Read Bio

Abou Ibrahim-Biangoro is a PhD candidate at UCSF in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She identifies as a Cameroonian American, and her research focus is on the health (mental and physical) outcomes of second-generation immigrants. Her goal after finishing her doctoral degree is to utilize her research to build the foundation of improved healthcare for immigrants through a lens of social medicine. Her previous work was in nonprofit, educational program management, as well as coaching. Many of her experiences shaped her interest in mental health, mindfulness, and public health. She has done talks and lectures on these subjects and is always eager to learn more. Abou received her Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from UC Davis, and completed her Master's in Public Health from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. She can be reached at abou.ibrahim-biangoro@ucsf.edu [8]. Her personal website is www.abouibrahim-biangoro.com [9]
Jhia Jackson

Keywords: youth, aging, chronic illness, communication practices, body politics

Read Bio

Jhia’s research interests stem from her experiences as a professional dance artist, a commitment to life-long learning, and her personal experiences. Her work routinely addresses questions such as: How do we know what we know? How do we communicate what we know? How are we understood by others? She enjoys hands-on opportunities to work with and among the very populations that inspire her, and she looks forward to delving deeper into research and program development for these communities.

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Cristin Kearns, DDS, MBA

Key words: Commercial determinants of health, sociology of health professions, surveillance studies

Read Bio

For the last decade, Cristin Kearns, DDS, MBA has been working to establish food industry documents research as a new area of investigation that transforms the way people think about sugar and the sugar industry’s role in promoting health inequities related to dental caries, obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. In 2018, her research and document collecting efforts culminated in the launch of the UCSF Food Industry Documents Archive (FIDA), a collection of more than 600,000 sugar-industry related documents, which is part of the UCSF Industry Documents Library (IDL). The IDL is a digital archive of documents created by industries that influence public health. Originally established in 2002 to house the millions of documents publicly disclosed in litigation between US States and the seven major tobacco industry organizations, the collections have been expanded to include documents from the food, drug, chemical, and fossil fuel industries. UCSF has a long and continuing history of excellence in research on the commercial determinants of health built around the IDL. Dr. Kearns is part of a core group of faculty engaged in innovative documents-based analyses that have been influential in the public, academic, and policymaking spheres. As a PhD candidate in the UCSF Sociology program, Dr. Kearns will be exploring sugar industry influence on the health professions. She can be contacted at cristin.kearns@ucsf.edu

Natalie Keller
Situated at the intersection of sociology of medicine and science and technology studies, Melanie's research has focused on how developments in science, medicine, and technology shape the ways we come to know and understand our social identities, beliefs about human difference, and experiences of health and illness. Her research critically examines the social, political, and economic drivers of emergent technologies and knowledge systems. Mel's work has been published in BioSocieties, Social Science and Medicine, and Engaging Science, Technology and Society.

Erin Johnson is a PhD candidate at the University of California San Francisco, where she has been a Cota-Robles and Rosenberg Hill Fellow. She specializes in mixed methods research and evaluation, with a particular focus on increasing access to care for disadvantaged populations. Erin earned her Masters of Public Health from Emory University?s Rollins School of Public Health, where she worked on several community-based HIV prevention projects. Since that time, Erin has worked at American Institutes for Research as a Research Associate and at Behavioral Health Concepts, Inc., as a Data Analyst. Erin?s research seeks to understand how our social construction of the ?female? body as fertile and the valorization of motherhood as the ultimate feminine virtue affects health policy, medical practice, and personal experience around menstruation, contraception, and abortion. She is particularly interested in the ways socio-political systems punish individuals assigned female at birth who reject (or even appear to reject) motherhood, how they prioritize the health of potential future children over the health of patients capable of becoming pregnant, and how individuals and communities work to resist these oppressive systems.
Selam Kidane

Keywords: race/ethnicity, immigrant mental health & health disparity, global health systems, qualitative methods

Read Bio

Selam Kidane is an Eritrean-American, she is interested in further analyzing issues related to mental and physical health amongst the East African diaspora and communities of color. Her interests draw upon her work as a licensed clinical social worker. Selam currently works with dialysis patients who live with chronic kidney disease. Her work with patients of color and immigrants has helped her recognize the significant barriers that exist with navigating the healthcare system. She hopes her work can guide future policy and program development to better understand and serve immigrant populations and communities of color. Selam earned her bachelor’s degree in sociology with a minor in ethnic studies from Saint Mary’s College of California and her master’s degree in social work from the University of Southern California. She can be reached at selam.kidane@ucsf.edu [15].

Kate LaForge
Maya Manian

Keywords: reproductive health care, health disparities, race/class/gender, intersectionality, law and society

Read Bio

Maya Manian is a PhD student at the University of California San Francisco where she is pursuing a degree in Sociology. Prior to joining UCSF, she received a JD from Harvard Law School. She has been a Visiting Professor at American University Washington College of Law, Howard University School of Law, and University of California Berkeley School of Law, as well as a Professor at the University of San Francisco School of Law. Her legal research investigates the relationship between constitutional law, family law, and health care law, with a particular focus on access to reproductive health care. Her current research interest applies sociological theories to the study of laws regulating access to abortion. Her dissertation aims to understand how laws restricting access to abortion might constrain a wider range of women’s medical care. Through in-depth interviews with prenatal genetic counselors and physicians, she seeks to understand how reason-based abortion bans for genetic anomalies and gestational limits on abortion care might be reshaping prenatal care. The primary objective is to create a more nuanced understanding of whether and how abortion laws and policies impact women’s health care beyond the very significant harms of denying abortion care itself. A fuller understanding of the wider impact of abortion regulations could be used to encourage policymakers and the public to protect women’s health by rejecting further restrictions on access to abortion care.

Amina Massey
Tessa Nápoles, MS

Keywords: residential instability, gentrification and displacement, homelessness, food insecurity, chronic illness and comorbidity, structural violence, race/class/gender, US urban health safety net, qualitative methods

Read Bio

Tessa Napoles, MS is a Doctoral Student and Research Analyst in the Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences. Since completing an MS at UCSF, Tessa has worked with over ten interdisciplinary, mixed methods studies examining chronic illness and comorbidity (HIV, HCV, diabetes, breast cancer), food and housing insecurity, and poverty in the San Francisco Bay Area. She currently supports the UCSF SocNet study (PI: Janet K. Shim) which is exploring the social network dynamics of chronic care management program patients in the US urban health safety net. Email: tessa.napoles@ucsf.edu

Kourtney Nham
Keywords: Politics of storytelling, mental health, game studies, sociology of knowledge, ethnography, qualitative methods, science & technology studies

Read Bio

Jeff Nicklas earned his Master of Science in Medical Anthropology from the Boston University School of Medicine where he conducted ethnographic research on forced migration and healthcare in the United States. Prior to joining UCSF, Jeff supported multiple studies examining eHealth and chronic care management at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Broadly, Jeff’s research interests focus on the politics of storytelling and how biomedical and scientific mental health knowledge is conveyed and taken up within emerging and existing forms of media. He is especially interested in the social and cultural implications of how mental health knowledge and stories are constructed, narrated, and responded to within video games. He currently supports the UCSF SocNet study (PI: Janet K. Shim) which is examining social networks and chronic care management within the US urban health safety net. Email: jeff.nicklas@ucsf.edu [17]
Dimpho Orionzi

Keywords: Health equity and inequities, community based research methods and approaches, community institutional partnerships, systems change in healthcare, healthcare policy, data collection methods, mixed methods

Read Bio

Dimpho’s family is from Uganda in East Africa, she was born in Lesotho in Southern Africa, and spent most of her life in the Minnesota. As a scholar, Dimpho is interested in process, and methods and approaches to reducing race and gender-based inequities. She is particularly interested in how social change happens at the institutional, community level, and at the intersection of the two. Dimpho is a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Research Scholar (HPRS).

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Ashley Perez

Keywords: Sexual minority health; health disparities; racial/ethnic minorities; intersectionality; HIV prevention

Read Bio

Ashley Perez is a Graduate Dean’s Fellow and a doctoral student in sociology. Her primary research interest is sexual health and behavior among minority populations, particularly looking at the intersections of race/ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. Ashley has worked on HIV prevention projects in the U.S., China, and Brazil. Ashley holds a BA in Public Health and ScM in Social and Behavioral Health Sciences from Brown University. She can be contacted at ashley.perez@ucsf.edu [19].
Giselle Pérez-Aguilar

Keywords: Latinx immigrant health, indigenous healing, racialized health inequities, mental health

Read Bio

Giselle Pérez-Aguilar is a first-generation Mexicana Indigena doctoral student, inspired by her Boyle Heights roots, Zapotec ancestors, and educational endeavors at UC Berkeley and the University of Michigan School of Social Work. She was introduced to health research in 2010 and has worked closely with her mentors Dr. Nancy S. Wu, Dr. Alejandra Casillas, Dr. Rebecca Dudovitz, and other scholars, to address health inequities and deepen our understanding of adolescent substance abuse, adolescent mental health, and barriers to electronic health records for BIPOC communities. Giselle’s main interest lies in bridging indigenous healing practices with western mental health, using psychoanalytic approaches, spirituality, and environmental justice, to help undocumented women of color heal from complex trauma, reclaim their power, and become earth stewards. During her doctoral journey, Giselle hopes to use her clinical social work skills to give back to the communities that have uplifted her throughout the years and move health research in the direction of humanistic/liberation approaches. She currently collaborates with Dr. Stacy Torres and Dr. Jennifer James at UCSF and can be reached at giselle.perez-aguilar@ucsf.edu [20]
Brittney Pond

Key words: Aging, Alzheimer's disease, emotion work, death and dying, caregiver trauma, qualitative methodologies, ethnography.

Read Bio

Brittney Pond is a Doctoral Student in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Psychology in 2018 and completed a thesis in which she used ethnographic methods to study formal caregivers working with people who have Alzheimer's disease. Currently, she is a Graduate Research Assistant for UCSF studying tobacco use and lung cancer. Her main research interests focus on perceptions of aging, "dying well," and elder agency, especially for those with Alzheimer's disease. She is engaged in questions regarding emotion work, caregiver burnout, and qualitative methodologies.
Adrienne Shatara, MPH

Keywords: Social determinants of health, trauma informed care, adverse childhood experiences, mental and behavioral healthcare, healthcare design research; maternal, child, and adolescent health (MCAH); children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN)

Read Bio

Adrienne Shatara, MPH is a PhD student in the UCSF department of Sociology and Behavioral Sciences, and a Research Manager at the Family Health Outcomes Project in the UCSF department of Family and Community Medicine. Her interests are around the Social Determinants of Health and Trauma Informed Care, and how these two concepts can be addressed together to inform policy and person-centered healthcare and mental healthcare design for vulnerable populations. She can be contacted at adrienne.shatara@ucsf.edu [21]
Keridwyn Spiller

Keywords: maternal health care; patient experience; sex and gender; race; intersectionality; feminist theory; sexual and reproductive health; social inequalities in health

Read Bio

Keridwyn (Keri) Spiller is a sociology doctoral student in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UCSF. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Women's & Gender Studies from Texas A&M University in 2019. Her interests include maternal health care and labor and birth experience, with a focus on how gender, race, and other identities impact maternal health. Keridwyn is currently finishing a coauthored sociological paper connecting traumatic birth experiences and sexual assault, based on primary research of forced, coerced, and pressured medical procedures during labor and birth in The United States. She hopes to continue researching people's experiences in maternal health care and work with individuals in the healthcare industry to develop solutions that can help people have more empowering, less life-threatening, and less traumatic, labor and birth experiences. She can be contacted at keridwyn.spiller@ucsf.edu.
Megan R. Visser (Dowdell), MA

Keywords: Religion/Spirituality, coping, chronic illness, intersectionality, spiritual care, interpretive phenomenology.

Read Bio

Megan is a PhD candidate interested in religion/spirituality, coping and chronic conditions. Megan is a Unitarian Universalist minister, serving a small congregation in Santa Clarita Valley and brings a chaplain’s heart to her research interests in medical sociology. From 2010-2020, she was a professor at a small theological school. She holds a BA in Society & Health from Simmons College in Boston and a MA in Ethics and Social Theory from the Graduate Theological Union. Her doctoral dissertation project is a phenomenological study on the religious/spiritual experiences of women of color with heart disease. She can be contacted at megan.dowdell@ucsf.edu [23]. Her personal website is www.meganruthvisser.com [24].
Rebecca Wolfe is a doctoral student in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UCSF. She is interested in the intersection of race/class/gender, religion, embodiment, and eating disorders. She is currently focused on the impact of the protestant evangelical movement known as “Purity Culture” on the development of eating disorders in young women raised within that movement. She is also currently working with Dr. Kristen Harknett on the Shift Project, looking at work schedules and family health. She earned her B.A. in Sociology from Seattle Pacific University in 2016. She can be reached at rebecca.wolfe@ucsf.edu.