Social Medicine (SOCM) Electives Notes for Students

Overview

Social Medicine (SOCM) electives are usually specific topical projects developed by individual students in consultation with a Social Medicine faculty member. Although electives are typically operated for individual students, collaborative work involving two or more students is possible. Presently there are no pre-scheduled SOCM elective courses or pre-established course syllabi. A few faculty members may have ongoing research projects that students can “plug into,” but most electives, especially scholarly reading/writing projects, are built around specific student interests.

SOCM elective planning by any student should begin with:

1) consultation with one or more Social Medicine faculty members to discuss their capacity for mentoring / precepting of an elective project in a specified time frame. Advanced consultation with potential Social Medicine preceptors is a must; if you are considering doing a Social Medicine elective you should contact faculty as early as possible.

2) notification of Social Medicine electives staff—coordinator, Dr. Barry Saunders, and course manager, Kathy Crosier—that an elective is in the works (their contact information is below).

Identifying a willing faculty preceptor is the key to registration for a SOCM elective. No elective can be scheduled without a preceptor’s permission.

Resources to help students identify prospective preceptors:

- instructors for PD1-2 or PD3;
- web pages on Social Medicine research and scholarship;
- faculty member bio pages;
- websites for Social Medicine-affiliated Centers: Center for Bioethics, Center for Health Equity Research, and Center for Genomics & Society;
- Social Medicine electives coordinator, Dr. Barry Saunders.

Prospects for engaging a faculty member as preceptor are best if:

- elective topic offers a good fit with faculty interests/expertise;
- faculty member is given plenty of advance notice.

It is not necessary to have a topic fully developed at an initial faculty consultation. General ideas are fine starting points; flexibility is good; elective topics are often modified or particularized over several stages of discussion. Advance work students have done to brainstorm, rummage in literature, and consider how their work may fit with work of prospective preceptors is also welcome.

Faculty member capacities are finite; their work commitments vary across the academic year. It is not possible to guarantee that every student wishing to undertake a particular elective in a
particular slot can be accommodated. Early consultation is strongly advised. Students who have been admitted to the Humanities & Social Sciences Scholarly Concentration will be given special consideration.

**Specific Procedures**

**Students registering for an elective must:**
- agree with preceptor on plan of work, schedule of meetings, and deliverables (paper, presentation, etc.);
- convey approval of preceptor and Social Medicine elective director to registrar (official signed form required for Foundation Phase students, but not for Individualization Phase students);
- notify Social Medicine course manager of elective topic and timeline.

**Amount and timing of elective work:**
6 hours of elective credit presumes ~160 hours work (equivalent to 4 weeks of full-time effort). Students may register for 6 or 3 hours’ credit. Students may accomplish portions of elective work over weeks or months prior to the official registered course slot (assuming approval of preceptor), but must submit all final materials by the close of the official course, to allow for prompt preceptor evaluation. Students should only seek SOCM elective credit for new work, not work performed for other courses or for paid projects.

**Available Electives:**
SOCM 403 Readings/Projects in Social Medicine
SOCM 403B (adapted for Science of Medicine Selective in Individualization Phase)
SOCM 404 Global/International Projects in Social Medicine
SOCM 405 Health Systems and Population Health Research
SOCM 410 Readings/Projects in Social Medicine at Asheville Campus
SOCM 416 Advanced Fourth Year Elective in Social Medicine (primarily for Individualization Phase students who have already done one SOCM elective).

See also:
- [https://www.med.unc.edu/socialmed/education-training/electives](https://www.med.unc.edu/socialmed/education-training/electives)
  - includes examples of prior student electives
  - these await some revision but most information is sound

**SOCM Electives Staff**
Electives Coordinator: Dr. Barry Saunders (bfsaunde@med.unc.edu)
Course Manager: Kathy Crosier (kathy_crosier@med.unc.edu)