



Interdisciplinary Centre for Health & Society
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH

March 16, 2020

Dear Health Studies students,

Today is the first day of a planned cancellation of in-person instruction at UTSC. Though campus remains open, we are no longer meeting in person for Winter 2020 classes, final exams, and other events, and, beginning today, many staff members will work from home. Your instructors are working to deliver remaining course material, assignments, and final exams online, and you and your classmates are completing the semester from remote locations. These efforts are all part of an international effort to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and to stem a health crisis. These preventive steps bring with them a great deal of uncertainty and change in our family, work, and school lives—and even preventive action can feel to some people a lot like a crisis.

We're doing what we can in the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health & Society (ICHS) to ease the strain we all face, guided by a few principles and practices.

- **We face this challenge together.** The Associate Directors—Professors Suzanne Sicchia (Undergraduate) and Michelle Silver (Research)—and I are in regular conversation with one another; with faculty, staff, and students; and with the university administration. You can keep up to date on university decisions and policy online through the University of Toronto's [centralized information hub](#) regarding the Coronavirus.
- **Your instructors are working hard to ensure that, even as courses move online, student coursework will meet course learning objectives.** Though assignments and your usual ways of interacting with one another may shift, teaching and learning—the reasons we come together as students and professors in classrooms and online—will continue.
- **A priority is to take care of yourselves and one another—colleagues, students, families, and strangers.** Let's all set reasonable expectations, forgive ourselves and one another the missteps, and help one another do the best work possible inside and outside of our classes.
- **We make a particular commitment to fighting the racism that is a long-time companion to disease outbreaks.** As a community of students, teachers, and resources committed to understanding health and illness, ICHS recognizes and denounces this violence as something we study, interrogate, and resist in our coursework and in our research. We condemn xenophobia and other forms of racism, and we stand in solidarity with anyone experiencing race-based discrimination in response to COVID-19. Please write me at ichs-director@utsc.utoronto.ca to report any racism or xenophobia unfolding in our ICHS community.

I understand this can be confusing, so where should you go with questions?

- Bring questions about your courses directly to your instructors.
- Reach out to me (ichs-director@utsc.utoronto.ca) if you have a program-level question, but also know that I will send updates as I receive them. This situation is moving pretty quickly, and I often don't know about a change in policy much before you do. For example, I haven't heard anything about convocation yet. I'll let you know when I hear something.

- Reach out to the Program Coordinator, [Brigitte Gonzalez-Shin](#), with advising questions—just as you usually would.
- Review the University of Toronto’s [centralized information hub](#) for regular updates on the university’s response to the Coronavirus.

The Health & Wellness Centre remains open for UTSC students. Please visit them at SL270 if you need support or download [My SSP App](#) for online chat or phone counselling support. You’ll find a list of all of the mental health resources Health & Wellness has to offer, including peer- and self-help, online (<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc/services-offered>). You continue to have access to [MYSSP](#) (My Student Support Program), which provides all UTSC students with immediate and/or ongoing confidential 24/7 counselling support for free. Keep in mind also off-campus mental health resources that provide telephone, text, and online access. These include:=

- **Good 2 Talk**, 1-866-925-5454; text GOOD2TALKON to 686868; <https://good2talk.ca/> and
- **LGBT Youth Line**, 1-800-268-9688; online peer-chat support: <https://www.youthline.ca/>.

Finally, I want to thank Health Studies faculty, staff, and students, as well as UTSC and UofT emergency response, facilities, and health and wellness teams, for ensuring the safety and security of our campus. Thank you for all you’ll do over the coming weeks to adapt to these new conditions on campus and to respond to this pandemic, including washing your hands and practicing social distancing. I look forward to seeing you all back on campus soon.

With warmest wishes,



Jessica Fields
Professor and Director