HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE P11.1830 (001), Spring 2009

Prof. Kieke Okma
Mondays, 6:45-8.25 pm
First class: January 26, 2009; last class May 4, 2009; Spring Break March 16-20
704 Silver Center
Office hours: before class, upon email request
Email: kieke.okma@nyu.edu

COURSE SYLLABUS

Health and Medical Care is a mandatory course in the Health Policy and Management Program of the Wagner School. It is designed to familiarize students with basic concepts and ideas concerning the distribution of health and illness in society and the organization of health care systems. We shall discuss definitions of health and illness, tools for their assessment, and historical developments in public health and medicine. We examine characteristics of health care systems at the local, state and federal levels in the United States as well as in other nations. In addition, we require students to become familiar with the health care system in one other country of their choice so that they may develop a comparative perspective over the semester.

Students should come to class prepared to participate in the discussion of major themes related to health and society, social and geographical distribution of disease, as well public policy and other factors that influence access to health care services.

BOOKS AND READINGS

Students are expected to read the chapters and articles listed in the syllabus each week. Conrad’s edited volume provides a (critical) sociological view of health and health care delivery. The textbook edited by Kovner and Knickman, focuses on the organization and financing of health care delivery in the United States. Additional articles on the syllabus are designed to extend the materials in these textbooks and expose students to other views. We have also added books by Nestle, Nuland and Shilts. Nuland’s book provides a clinical perspective on death and dying and deepens our understanding of the role of the patient and relevant ethical issues. Shilts provides case study material on the evolution of the AIDS epidemic and the importance of public health infrastructure. Nestle highlights the political nature of a pressing public health issue, namely obesity and nutrition policy. All of these books are available, on reserve, at Bobst Library, most medical libraries, and the NYU Professional Bookstore.

For all readings below that are not in these books, students can download PDF versions from the blackboard site associated with this course. They must also be prepared to find additional background materials, on their own, about the country they choose as a standard of comparison to the US.
REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:


ADDITIONAL BOOKS AND JOURNALS

We encourage students to browse recent issues of well-respected journals, e.g., *American Journal of Public Health; Journal of the American Medical Association; New England Journal of Medicine; The Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law, and Health Affairs*. The recent book by former senator Tom Dashell (nominated to be the Secretary for Health and Human Services in 2009) provides an excellent overview of the history of health politics in the US in the 20th century and current problems (as well as his suggestions for solutions). Kovner and Knickman’s book also contains helpful website and references. Those sources also provide important background material for student papers.

Two of the following three books:


CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

Introduction

Class I Jan 26, 2009    Health, Disease and Community
- Discussion of course readings and class requirements.
- Definitions of health and illness. What does it mean to speak of the “social production of disease?”
- How are health status and health care related?

Required reading:
2. Evans, Barer and Marmor: Why Are Some People Healthy and Others Not? (ch 1)

Distribution of health, disease and public health problems

Class II Febr 2, 2009    Introduction to Epidemiological Measures and Methods
- Descriptive vs. analytic methods.
- Social factors and disease
- How do we assess and measure health status?

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, Health Care Delivery in the United States:

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: A Critical Approach:
Class III Febr 9, 2009 The Uneven Distribution of Disease

- How do such factors as age, gender, race, poverty, occupation and lifestyle relate to morbidity and mortality?
- Are these relationships consistent across nations?

(Reminder: First blackboard assignment due)

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
1. C. Tracy Orleans, Elaine F. Cassidy. “Health-Related Behaviors.” Ch. 10
4. Ingrid Waldron. “Gender Differences in Mortality - Causes and Variations in Different Societies.” Ch. 4.
6. Richard Wilkinson, “Health Inequalities: Relative or Absolute Material Standards.” Ch. 9

Class IV Febr 16, 2009 Public Health, Medicine and Resource Allocation

- Public health versus medicine
- Ethics of resource allocation
- Public Health Infrastructure

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*:

Class V Febr 23, 2009 Public Health Case Studies

- Public health and nutrition.
- The evolution of the AIDS epidemic.
- Terrorism as a public health issue

(Reminder: First Paper Assignment Due)

Read either book:
1. Shilts, Randy. *And the Band Played On*; or Nestle, Marion. *Food Politics.*
Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*:
Health care organization, financing and workforce

Class VI March 2, 2009   A Comparative Overview of U.S. Health Care

- History, trends, and characteristics
- What social, medical, and technological factors have shaped the current health care arrangements?
- What is the role of government in U.S. health care? How does this differ from other countries?
- How does U.S. health care compare to that of other (developed) nations?

(Reminder: 2nd blackboard assignment due)

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, Health Care Delivery in the United States:

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives:
4. Light, Donald W., “Comparative Models of ‘Health Care’ Systems.” Ch. 45.

Class VII March 9, 2009   Health Care Delivery: Hospitals and Ambulatory care

- How are hospitals organized and governed?
- How has role of the hospitals changed over time?
- How are ambulatory services organized and provided?
- How and why has the delivery of ambulatory care changed in recent years?

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, Health Care Delivery in the United States:

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives:
Class VIII March 23, 2009  Commercialization of Medicine: Focus on Pharmaceuticals

- What factors have spurred the growth in the pharmaceutical industry?
- How has public policy responded to the growth in pharmaceuticals and new technologies?
- What conflicts of interest have emerged with the commercialization of U.S. Medicine?

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
1. Strongin, Robin J. and Ron Geigle, “Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices.” Ch. 11.

Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*:
2. John McKnight. “Politicizing Health Care.” Ch. 42.

*Articles posted on blackboard*

Class IX March 30, 2009  Financing, Cost Containment and Managed Care

- Efforts at cost containment
- Strengths and weaknesses of managed care
- Alternative mechanisms for financing healthcare.

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
2. Finkler, Steven A. and Thomas Getzen, “Costs and Value.” Ch. 17.

Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*
Class X April 6, 2009  Physicians, Nurses, and Allied Professionals

- Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of health care workforce
- Physicians as a dominant profession
- Licensure and medical monopoly
- Role of medical education
- Historical and emerging roles for doctors, nurses, and other providers

(Reminder: third Blackboard assignment due)

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, Health Care Delivery in the United States:

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives:
2. Peter Conrad and Joseph W. Schneider. “Professionalization, Monopoly and the Structure of Medical Practice.” Ch. 16.

Health care demands, needs and system performance

Class XI April 13, 2009  The Role of the Patient

- Issues of patient compliance
- The relationship of patients, physicians, and the health care system
- Information and consumer issues

Required reading:
Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives:
5. Victoria Pitts. “Illness and the Internet: Writing and Reading Breast Cancer in Cyberspace.” Ch. 44

Nuland: How We Die: Reflections on Life’s Final Chapter:
6. Chapter 1, plus at least one other chapter.
Class XII April 20, 2009  Access, Equity and Rationing

- Barriers to care
- The crisis in health insurance and the problem of the uninsured
- Comparisons with other nations in regard to access and insurance coverage

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
1. John Billings and Joel C. Cantor. “Access to Care.” Ch. 16.
3. Gregory Weiss, “Uninsured in America.” Ch. 27.
5. Daniel Callahan, “Rationing Medical Progress: The Way to Affordable Health Care.” Ch. 40

Class XIII April 27, 2009  Changing Health Care Needs

- The need for long-term care and alternative modes of delivery
- Chronic illness, aging and HIV and AIDS

(Reminder: Final blackboard assignment due)

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*:

Class XIV May 4, 2009  Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance

Last class; PAPER 2 Due

How do we measure and monitor the quality of health care services?
- How do we assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of care?
- What are the ethical issues in the quality of health care delivery?

Required reading:
Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*:
2. Douglas Wakefield and Bonnie Wakefield, “The Complexity of Health Care Quality,” Ch. 15
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to attending and participating in classes, students must submit two papers and three short essays in response to specific questions (see below). These requirements are described below and the actual assignments are attached. The assignments assume that students have become knowledgeable about the health care system of the U.S. and one other country selected by the student.

Course grades:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper I</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Febr 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper II</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>May 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Febr 9, Mar 2, April 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Paper I** – (see under ‘assignments’ in Blackboard). Students must prepare a paper of no more than 3 pages concerning trends in diabetes or contraceptive use (or another disease) provided by the National Center for Health Statistics (see CDC statistics on its website). The assignment will allow students to demonstrate their ability to understand, interpret, and discuss quantitative data. Class readings will be essential in preparing this memo.

**Paper II** – (see under ‘assignments’ in Blackboard). This paper (5-7 pages) will require a thoughtful, critical, and well-organized discussion of a core concept in health and health care. This provides students the opportunity to reflect upon the course materials. Students should present a carefully organized discussion of a topic of their own choice, with well-substantiated claims and ideas. Material should be footnoted to reflect synthesis of key course readings. References to course materials are required.

**Essays**

Each student must answer three of the four questions (posted under “assignments” on Blackboard). The response should be in the form of a brief, one-page essay based on class readings, relevant data and ideas from popular media, journals or websites, and/or your own experiences. You should take the time to create a thoughtful and well-written response. You are also asked each time to respond to at least one other student’s essay.

**Class Participation**

Classroom discussion and debate are essential to this course. Students are expected to come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings.

**Administrative Procedure**

If you have trouble posting the required essays and responses on Blackboard, please contact Blackboard Helpline.