Course description:
This course introduces undergraduates to the complex interplay of social factors that affect population health in any society. It focuses on the social determinants and distribution of health and disease across geographic areas, the organization and financing of the health care system, and the relationship of one to the other. The course may be thought of as consisting of the two parts summarized below.

In the first part, before the mid-term exercise, we will consider divergent perspectives for thinking about health and society. We begin by comparing clinical and public health perspectives on health and illness, reviewing alternative definitions of these concepts, tools for their assessment, and the contributions of social and economic theory, as well as health services research, to the study of health and society. For example, we will examine key studies on health and health care among geographic areas and socio-economic groups in society. We will also consider how these perspectives were influenced by the evolution of public health, medicine and the health care system over the course of the past century.

In the second part, we will draw on these perspectives to study the health care system in the United States, how it compares to that of other nations and how population aging, urbanization and globalization are raising new challenges for health and society, worldwide. We begin by studying alternative approaches to health care financing and organization and analyzing the U.S. health care system in this context. Next, we consider how increases in human longevity and population aging will affect the organization and financing of health and social services. Also, we consider two emerging areas of study related to health and society: “urban health” and “global health.” Finally, we consider issues of health care reform in the United States in light of the experience of other wealthy nations abroad, which have developed systems of universal health care coverage.

Required books:
There are three required books: a collection of journal articles edited by Harrington and Estes; a new book of essays on clinical approaches to disease (Groopman); and a popular comparative analysis of the practice of medicine in the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany (Payer). In addition, special readings
are posted on blackboard. The following books are available at NYU’s Bookstore located at 18 Washington Place.


In addition to these books, there are other required readings posted on blackboard, which you may access through the internet at NYUhome. I shall also provide interested students with a bibliography of optional readings.

**Course format, requirements and grading:**

This class will meet once a week for almost 3 hours. During the first class, we will meet together for the full period and divide into two groups. Beginning with the second class, we will all meet together for the first hour, during which I shall lecture and run some formal discussion and debate. After this introduction to each topic, we will break for 10 minutes. Next, my “graders” (teaching colleagues) will conduct small group discussions and exercises. Finally, I shall meet with the whole group to answer questions and continue our discussions.

All students must come to class having completed all of the required readings. Students must complete three assignments: 2-3 page responses to questions based on the readings. These responses will be posted on blackboard under the Communication/Discussion Groups. In addition, there will be a mid-term exercise and a final examination (essay questions) based on the assigned readings.

The three assignments will count for 40% of the grade; the midterm for 20%; the final for 30%; and 10% for the quality of class participation.

**Course Outline and Required Readings**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**1. Health and Society: Overview**

*Blackboard:*


II. DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES FOR THINKING ABOUT HEALTH AND SOCIETY

2. Clinical Perspectives September 15
   
   Blackboard:

3. Epidemiologic and Public Health Perspectives September 22
   Blackboard:
   Chiasson, M. & Jonas, S., “Measuring Health Status.”
   Frumkin, H., “Urban sprawl and public health,” *Public Health Reports*.

4. Socio-Cultural Perspectives September 29
   Payer, L. *Medicine and Culture*
   
   Health Policy
   Fiscella, K. and Williams, D. Health Disparities Based on Socio-Economic Inequalities. Pp. 49-60
   
   Blackboard:

5. Health Services Research Perspectives: Urban Health October 6
   Blackboard:
   Wennberg, J., “Variations among regions and hospitals in managing chronic illness: how much care is enough?”
6. Economic Perspectives
   
   **Blackboard:**

   **Health Policy:**
   Max, W. “Economic Analysis in Health Care.” pp.260-270;

   **HEALTH CARE, HEALTH SYSTEMS AND HEALTH**

7. The U.S. Health Care System in International Perspective
   
   **Health Policy:**
   Ch 3, pp 83-112; Ch. 9, pp. 281-307; Ch. 11, pp. 370-404.

   **Blackboard:**
   Thorpe, K, “Protecting the Uninsured,” *NEJM*.

8. The Rise, Fall and Significance of Managed Care in the U.S.
   
   **Health Policy:**
   Ch. 10

   **Blackboard:**
   Articles will be posted

9. Comparative Analysis and Performance of Health Care Systems
   
   **Health Policy:**

   **Blackboard:**

10. Global Health
    
    **Health Policy:**
Blackboard:

11. The Role and Impact of Patients on Health Care November 17
Nuland, Sherwin B. How We Die: Reflections on Life’s Final Chapter

Blackboard:
Pitts, V. Illness and the Internet: Writing and Reading Breast Cancer in Cyberspace

12. Forces of Change: Aging and Chronic Illness November 24
Health Policy:
Ch. 4

Blackboard:
Shoven, J., “New Age Thinking: The aging of the world’s population won’t be the crisis we fear.,” Foreign Policy, Jan/Feb 2008.

13. Patient Safety and Quality Assurance December 1
Health Policy:
Ch. 7

Blackboard:
Gawande, A.

14. Health Care Reform for the U.S. December 8
Health Policy:
Ch 12, pp. 381-410

Blackboard:
More readings will be posted