COURSE SYLLABUS

This introductory course about health and medical care, in the Health Policy and Management Program, is designed to familiarize students with basic concepts and ideas concerning the distribution of health and illness in society, the organization of health care systems, and the relationship between those two. 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 sociological view and critique 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. Also, we have 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, 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*. Kovner and Knickman’s book also contains be helpful website and references.


CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

PART A: INTRODUCTION

Class I. September 14: 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


PART B: DISTRIBUTION OF HEALTH, DISEASE AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEMS

Class II. September 21: 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

2. Brown, P. “Popular Epidemiology: Community Response to Toxic Waste-Induced Disease,” Ch. 6.

Blackboard:
4. Rodwin, V. Croce-Galis, M. Population Health in Utah and Nevada: An Update on Victor Fuchs’ Tale of Two States.
Class III. September 28: The Uneven Distribution of Disease: Case of Urban Health

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

**Required reading**

Blackboard:


**Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: A Critical Approach**

1. Syme, L. and Berkman, L. Social Class, Susceptibility and Sickness. Ch. 2.
3. Waldron, I. Gender Differences in Mortality - Causes and Variations in Different Societies. Ch. 4.
5. Wilkinson, R. Health Inequalities: Relative or Absolute Material Standards. Ch. 9

**Optional reading**

Kovner and Knickman, *Health Care Delivery in the United States*


Class IV. October 5: Public Health and Medicine: How is Policy Made?

(Reminder: Paper 1 Due)

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

**Required reading**

Blackboard:


Class V. October 12: Public Health Case Studies

(Reminder: First blackboard assignment due)

**Required reading (either book)**

1. Shilts, R. *And the Band Played On*; or
2. Nestle, M. *Food Politics*.

Guest Lecture: Dr. Isaac Weisfuse, Deputy Commissioner, NYCDHMH

- Achievements in public health
- Public health versus medicine
• Ethics of resource allocation
• Public health infrastructure

PART C: HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATION, FINANCING AND GLOBAL HEALTH

Class VI. October 19: The U.S. Health Care System in International Perspective
(Reminder: 2nd blackboard assignment due)
• History, trends, and characteristics
• What social, medical, and technological factors have shaped the current health care arrangements?
• How does US health care compare to that of other wealthy nations?
• What is the role of government in U.S. health care? How does this differ from other countries?

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

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives

Class VII. October 26: 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, S. and Getzen, T. Costs and Value. Ch. 17.

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives

Class VIII. November 2: Comparative Analysis and Performance of Health Care Systems
(Reminder: Second blackboard assignment due)
• Dimensions of health care system performance
• How to compare health care systems?

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

3. Weiss, G. Uninsured in America. Ch. 27.

Conrad, P. The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives
5. Gabe, J. The British Health Service: Continuity and Change. Ch. 47.

Blackboard:

Class IX. November 9: Global Health
- Is it new?
- Global cities and the spread of infectious disease
- Implications for public health infrastructure
- Equity and workforce issues

Required Reading on Blackboard:

PART D. HEALTH CARE DEMANDS, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Class X. November 16: 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
3. Anspach, R. The Language of Case Presentation. Ch. 31.
5. Pitts, V. 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 XI. November 23. How Can the Health Care System Respond to Changing Health Care Needs?
- The need for long-term care and alternative modes of delivery
- Chronic illness, aging and HIV and AIDS

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

Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*
4. Klinenberg, E. Dying Alone,Ch.8.

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

Class XII. November 30: Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance
(Reminder: third Blackboard assignment due)
Guest Lecture: Yosef Dlugacz, Pd. D and Catherine Besthoff, R.N. Krasnoff Quality Management Institute, North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System
- 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

Blackboard:

Class XIII. December 7: Health Care Reform
Required Reading

Blackboard:
More readings will be posted

Conrad, P. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*

Exam Week December 14 PAPER 2 Due
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to attending and participating in classes, students must submit two papers and three exercises/essays in response to specific questions. 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 will be calculated as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Final Grade</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper I</td>
<td>20% Oct. 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper II</td>
<td>40% December 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercises/Essays</td>
<td>30% 9/28; 11/30;11/09;12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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Paper I – (will be posted under ‘assignments’ in Blackboard) Students must prepare a memo of no more than 3 pages concerning trends in diabetes in the U.S. based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics. The assignment will allow students to demonstrate their ability to understand, interpret, and discuss quantitative data. Class readings will also be useful in preparing this memo.

Paper II – (also will be posted under ‘assignments’ in Blackboard) This paper will require a thoughtful, critical, and well-organized discussion of a provocative concept in Community Health and Medical Care. Rather than a research paper, this paper will provide students the opportunity to reflect upon the course materials. The paper should be 5-7 pages in length and students should present a carefully organized discussion, with well-backed opinions and ideas about a public health topic of the student’s own choice. Material should be footnoted to reflect synthesis of key course readings. References to course materials are required.

Exercises/Essays
Each student must answer three of the four questions (also will be 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 to respond to at least one other student’s essay on three of the four questions.

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.