COURSE SYLLABUS

This core specialization course in the NYU Wagner MPA: Health Policy and Management program explores major topics in the study of health and health care delivery. We will discuss determinants of health, the social distribution of health and disease, and health disparities; the organization and financing of the U.S. health care system, its historical context, the roles and behaviors of its key actors, and its comparison to health systems of other nations; the quality, cost and accessibility of health care services; and health care delivery system improvement and reform. We will examine these themes using a multidisciplinary approach that employs sociological, political, economic and ethical perspectives on health and disease, the health care system, and the challenges of meeting the varied (and often conflicting) needs and motivations of health care system stakeholders. The objective of this course is to build understanding of fundamental ideas, issues and problems in health policy and management and thereby to provide a strong foundation for future studies and careers in the health care field.

COURSE COMPETENCIES

Course focus:

• The ability to assess population and community health needs from a public service perspective
• The ability to examine social and behavioral determinants of health and understand how health systems can address the needs of vulnerable populations
• The ability to understand how policy and delivery processes work, and to consider the demographic, cultural, political and regulatory factors involved in and influencing health policy and management decision-making

Relevant content for the following competencies is also included:

• The ability to understand and apply legal and ethical principles to managerial and leadership decisions affecting health care organizations
• The ability to measure, monitor and improve safety, quality, access and system/care delivery
processes in health care organizations

- The ability to draw implications and conclusions to develop an evolving vision that results in long-term organizational viability
- The ability to communicate and interact productively (via listening, speaking and writing) on matters of healthcare with a diverse and changing industry, workforce and citizenry
- The ability to present convincingly to individuals and groups the evidence to support a point of view, position or recommendation

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the conclusion of this course, students will be prepared to:

- Describe the organization, financing and performance of the U.S. health care delivery system
- Identify determinants of health and explain their impact on the distribution of health and disease
- Define the roles of key stakeholders – providers, government and private payers, employers, regulators, patients – and describe their incentives and behavior
- Compare the U.S. health care system to models of health care organization and financing abroad
- Explain fundamental concepts of health care payment and performance measurement
- Define major health policy developments over the past 50 years and explain their significance
- Analyze strengths, weaknesses and feasibility of policy and management approaches that aim to promote health, prevent disease and improve health services delivery and assess the impact of these approaches on quality, access, cost and equity goals

**BOOKS AND READINGS**

Students should arrive to class prepared to participate in the discussion of these themes based on their critical analysis of assigned readings.

**Required textbook:**


**Other required readings:**

Assigned readings that are not included in the required textbook will be posted on Blackboard.

**Recommended readings:**

In addition to assigned readings, students are encouraged to browse recent issues of peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of the American Medical Association, New England Journal of Medicine, Health Affairs, and American Journal of Public Health*. The Kaiser Family Foundation website (http://www.kff.org) is also an excellent resource on health policy issues.
WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to complete two papers (one 4-page double-spaced memo due February 27 and one 12-page double-spaced final project due May 7) and three short response exercises (no more than one page, choose 3 of 4: due February 6, March 5, April 2, and April 23). Further details on written requirements and grading are provided at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE SESSIONS

A. POPULATION HEALTH

1/23: Week 1. Introduction: Health, Disease and Community
- Overview of course
- Definitions of health and disease
- Relationship between health and medical care

Health Care Delivery in the United States

Blackboard

1/30: Week 2. Epidemiologic Measures and Determinants of Health
- Relationships between socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, gender and health
- Population health inequalities and social justice implications

Health Care Delivery in the United States

Blackboard
2/6: Week 3. Public Health Policy and Management
- Public health infrastructure
- Prevention and health promotion frameworks
- Health behavior
- Policy approaches to improving public health

**RESPONSE EXERCISE #1 DUE ON BLACKBOARD**

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*
- Orleans, C. and Cassidy, E. Chapter 7: Health and Behavior, pp. 125-149.

Blackboard

**B. ORGANIZATION OF THE U.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

- Historical development of health care delivery system
- Government role in health care system

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*

Blackboard

2/20: No Class (President’s Day)

2/27: Week 5. Health Care Financing
- Fundamental characteristics of health care markets
- Medicare, Medicaid/CHIP and private insurance
- Spending growth in the U.S.
- Managed care and cost containment
• Implications of 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)

**PAPER 1 (MEMO) DUE TODAY**

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*
• Appendix: Major Provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, pp. 365-376.

**Blackboard**

3/5: Week 6. U.S. Health Care System in International Perspective
**Guest speaker: Professor Victor Rodwin, NYU Wagner**
• Comparative health systems
• Models of delivery and payment in other developed nations

**RESPONSE EXERCISE #2 DUE ON BLACKBOARD**

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*
• Frogner, B., Waters, H. and Anderson, G. Chapter 4: Comparative Health Systems, pp. 67-82.

**Blackboard**

3/12: No Class (Spring Recess)

3/19: Week 7. Providers and Organization of Care
• Acute and ambulatory care delivery
• Evolving organizational forms

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*
• Caronna, C. and Ong, M. Chapter 9: Organization of Medical Care, pp. 181-204.
• McCarthy, D. Chapter 10: Integrative Models and Performance, pp. 205-231.
Blackboard


3/26: Week 8. Medical Professionals and the Health Care Workforce

- Historical and emerging roles for physicians and health professionals
- Health care labor markets
- Professionalization and power in organized medicine

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*


Blackboard


- Role of the patient in the health care system
- Patient preferences and informed patient decision-making
- Provider–patient relationship
- Consumer-directed care and patient demand for and use of information

**RESPONSE EXERCISE #3 DUE ON BLACKBOARD**

Blackboard

C. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, CHALLENGES AND DEBATES

- Chronic disease management
- Long-term care
- End-of-life issues

Blackboard

4/16: Week 11. Managing New Medical Technology
- Expanding use of pharmaceutical and medical devices in health care
- Treatment benefits versus monetary costs associated with medical innovation
- Role of pharmaceutical/biotech industry in health care system

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*

Blackboard

4/23: Week 12. Improving Quality of Care
- Safety and quality of U.S. health care delivery
- Measuring, regulating and improving quality and patient safety
- Challenges of quality improvement and adverse event reduction in health care
- Quality improvement frameworks and interventions

**RESPONSE EXERCISE #4 DUE ON BLACKBOARD**

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*
- Kropf, R. Chapter 16: Health Information Technology, pp. 331-349.
Blackboard

- Barriers to care for vulnerable patient populations
- The uninsured and underinsured in the U.S.
- Implications of 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

*Health Care Delivery in the United States*
- Billings, J., Cantor, J. and Clinton, C. Chapter 8: Access to Care, pp. 151-178.

Blackboard

5/7: Week 14. Directions for Health System Change
- Future of the U.S. health care delivery
- Competing agendas for change
- Final project presentations

**PAPER 2 (FINAL PROJECT) DUE TODAY**

Blackboard
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to attending and participating in classes, students are required to submit two papers and three short written exercises. Please format all written work with 1-inch margins and 12-point font.

**Paper 1: Public Health Memo**
**Due February 27**
4 double-spaced pages maximum

Please write a concise, well-structured memo to the attention of the mayor, governor or other government official of a town/city or state you have inhabited (or another town/city or state of interest to you) in which you provide analysis on how to improve the health of the local population. Present evidence on factors that influence health and identify priorities and recommended actions that the municipal or state government should pursue to achieve meaningful improvements in community health over the next 10 years.

In your memo, please include the following:
- Background on the health of the focal town/city or state population
- Three top-priority objectives that government and other community-based entities should aim to achieve over the next 10 years, with well-reasoned arguments for the selection of these objectives motivated by themes discussed thus far in the course
- Strategies to achieve these objectives, with consideration of both potential impact and feasibility

Your paper should be focused and direct, consistent with the memo style, and it should not exceed four pages. Please see the Writing Center Guide to Writing Memos posted on Blackboard for memo composition guidelines. Citations are required. Exhibits (not included in page length) are permitted but not required.
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Paper 2: Final Project
Due May 7
12 double-spaced pages maximum

In a three- or four-student team, please compose a research report in which you focus on one dimension of performance of the U.S. health care delivery system. Please examine how performance on this dimension is influenced by the organization and financing of health care in the U.S. and behavior of key health system stakeholders, what must be improved or reformed to achieve performance gains in your selected area, and the implications of your analysis for health policy and management. You may focus on performance in a broadly-defined area (such as quality of care, cost or access to care) or you may define your focus more narrowly within one of these categories (e.g., quality of care for chronically-ill elderly patients, cost-effectiveness of new medical technologies, access to specialized care for low-income populations). In your analysis, please consider all stakeholders relevant to your specified focus—providers, payers and purchasers, patients, communities, policy-makers, other groups that play a role in performance in your focal area—and be sure to examine performance and implications for reform at both the policy and delivery system levels.

Please include references to course readings as well as any relevant outside sources that support your analysis. Citations and a references page (not included in page length) are required.

In addition to your paper, please prepare a very brief PowerPoint presentation (five minutes maximum, 4-6 slides) that communicates key points of your research report as succinctly as possible. For example, a general template might include a title slide, a slide that summarizes current performance or trends in your selected performance area and significance of the topic, a slide that describes key health care system factors that you identified to contribute to the problem, and a slide that highlights your analysis of required changes or reforms necessary to achieve performance improvement.

In our last session on May 7, we will select a random subset of presentations (10-12 groups) to be delivered to the class. Due to large class size and time limitations that do not allow every team to present, grading will be based exclusively on the slides that you submit and not on the in-class delivery.
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion Board Response Exercises
Complete 3 of 4
Due February 6, March 5, April 2 and April 23
One single-spaced page maximum

Over the course of the semester, please participate in three of four web-based forums in the Discussion Board on Blackboard. Please post your response as a thread in the forum specified for the week’s topic (directly in the body of the post or attached as a Word document) by start of class (6:45 pm). Your responses should be based on course readings and discussions and may also draw upon relevant ideas and evidence from outside sources such as journals, media or websites – although no outside reading is necessary – or your own experiences. Parenthetical citation of readings assigned for class is fine.

In addition to posting your one-page response, please also reply to at least one other student’s response exercise with 3-5 sentences that demonstrate your engagement with the ideas and arguments presented in his or her response. Replies to another student’s post should be completed by Wednesday at midnight of the week that the response exercise is due.

EXERCISE 1: DUE FEBRUARY 6

Topic: If you were assessing the health of a community to determine priorities for disease prevention and health promotion, how would you measure community health? What types of data would you want to collect to capture population health status? How would you collect these data? What concerns would you have about your findings on health based on your approach?

EXERCISE 2: DUE MARCH 5

Topic: Why has health care spending risen dramatically in the U.S. over the past five decades? What do you identify as the most promising approaches to increase value and constrain cost growth in health care?

EXERCISE 3: DUE APRIL 2

Topic: What are barriers to informed patient decision-making when selecting providers and treatments? What changes are necessary to enable patients to engage with the health care system as activated consumers?

EXERCISE 4: DUE APRIL 23

Topic: How well does the health care delivery system perform on quality and patient safety? Why is measuring quality challenging, and what are the implications of these challenges for rewarding and improving quality? What do you identify as the greatest priorities for achieving a safe, reliable and effective health care delivery system?
GRADING

Final course grades will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
<th>Due Date(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Public Health Memo</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2: Final Project</td>
<td>40% (30% report, 10% presentation)</td>
<td>5/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Exercises (3 of 4)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2/6, 3/5, 4/2, 4/23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Class Participation – 10% of the final course grade is determined by class participation. Evaluation will be based on student engagement in and constructive contributions to class discussions.

Lateness Policy – Please submit assignments on time. Assignments are due by midnight of the date due. Late assignments will be penalized by one-half letter grade for each day late.