



SYLLABUS FOR CORE 2626
POLITICS, POLICY AND ECONOMICS OF
HEALTH CARE
SPRING-2010

Instructor: Yavuz Yaşar | Office: STURM Hall 240 | Office Hours: M & W | 11:00 -11:50 AM and 3:00-3:50 PM or by appointment. | Phone: 303 871 2244 | e-mail: yyasar@du.edu | Course web-site: <http://mysite.du.edu/~yyasar/PPEHC.htm>

Introduction: This is an interdisciplinary course on health and health care systems with a special emphasis on the U.S. It introduces students to the major issues in health and health care in the context of the crisis in the U.S. health care system by focusing on politics, policy, ethics, and economic aspects of the issue. Specifically, the nature of the organization, delivery, and financing of health care services in the U.S. and other developed countries will be studied from a comparative and historical perspective by giving an account of the economic, political and policy aspects of the issues involved. Therefore, students will be introduced to topics such as the political, economic and historical development of health care system in the U.S.; the social context and production of health; increasing healthcare expenditures and cost control mechanisms; structural changes in health care financing; comparison of national healthcare systems; equity, equality, and ethical aspects of health care delivery and access; and reforms proposed for healthcare systems in developed countries.

Course Objectives: Specifically there are four major objectives:

1. To understand inequities in health and their consequences from the social determinants of health perspective.
2. To understand the way health care services are delivered and financed in the U.S. and their relation with economic theory from a political economy perspective.
3. To understand equity in health and health care from different ethical perspectives such as medical ethics, other ethical theories, and social justice and human rights approaches.
4. To understand political and policy aspects of health and health care in the context of a comparison with national health systems in other countries and health reform debates in the U.S.

Learning Outcomes: Accordingly, after taking this class, students will be able

1. To identify, differentiate and evaluate the relative significance of individual (or life-style) and social determinants of health, and their role in health inequities.

2. To understand how utilization, access, and quality of health care services are affected by different financing mechanisms (i.e., the ability vs. need-based) and organization of delivery of health care services (i.e., the organized vs. disbursed delivery).
3. To understand the role of different conceptualization of health, financing mechanisms, and delivery of health care services in terms of equity and equality in access and utilization of health care services.
4. To understand and critically evaluate the U.S. health care system in comparison with other health care systems and health care reform proposals in light of policy making and politics in the U.S.

Required Texts: We will use the following textbook, available at the bookstore.

Thomas S. Bodenheimer & Kevin Grumbach, 2009, *Understanding Health Policy: A Clinical Approach*, 5th edition, Lange Medical Books/McGraw-Hill.

We will also use some additional reading materials in **E-reserve** for Politics, Policy, & Economics of Health Care (CORE 2626) at the Penrose Library. To access the readings in E-reserve, students should visit the following link:

<http://reserves.penlib.du.edu/eres/default.aspx>

Students also need a **password** to access the readings in E-reserve. The password will be announced in the class.

Class Format: Class time will be mostly dedicated to lectures. In the lectures, the instructor will highlight the most important aspects of the topics that are listed in the course-outline below. Do not expect from the instructor to cover every single page of the readings that are assigned. It is the students' responsibility to do all readings in advance and raise their questions about those readings during lecture times. However, this does not mean that all class time will be dedicated to lectures. Students too are required and expected to participate since their **participation will count toward their final grade**. Specifically, there will be some (10 to 15) spontaneous, in-class, informal writing activities. Such activities can be twofold: (1) a short (e.g., one paragraph) writing assignment at the end of the class to sum up a documentary watched in-class, lecture or a discussion and/or to prepare questions to ask at the beginning of the next class period; (2) an individual, short response (e.g., one or two paragraphs) to a question after discussing it within a group that will be formed to represent a particular view/perspective or is assigned to deal with only one aspect of the same issue discussed on the day the activity takes place. I will not grade these activities according to their substance, length, and grammatical aspects. I will take into account only the number of such activities in grading (see the next section).

Writing Assignments and Grading: This is a writing-intensive course. There will be two types of writing assignments in this course: informal and formal. Informal writing assignments (10 to 15) are exploratory, spontaneous, in-class writing activities. They will not be graded on the basis of their substance, length, and grammatical aspects but they will be considered as an indication of students' participation. Only 8 to 12 of such assignments will count 10 percent toward students' final grade by allowing students to skip one-fifth of the assignments without any excuse.

Formal writing assignments for the course are designed in line with the topics that will be covered: (1) Inequities in health and social determinants; (2) Economics of health and health care (i.e., financing and provision of health care); (3) Ethics and equity in health and health care (e.g., medical ethics, theories of equity, health as a human right); (4) Politics and policy of health care in the context of health reform debates. Having covered each of these topics, students will be assigned to write a long paper (e.g., 2 to 3 pages) for each of the first three topics. Based on the feedback they will receive for these papers, they will be asked to write the last, long (e.g., 5 to 6 pages) paper about the last topic. In short, there will be four long, formal writing assignments. Note that if a student does not return one of those four essays without any legitimate excuse (e.g., a doctor's note, etc.), the student will receive an "F" automatically.

The weight of each assignment and assignments will be the following.

| Exams and Assignments | Weight |
|--|--------|
| In-class writing assignments (8 to 12 out of 10 to 15) | 10% |
| Essay-I..... | 15% |
| Essay-II..... | 20% |
| Essay-III..... | 25% |
| Essay-IV..... | 30% |
| Total..... | 100% |

Other Rules & Regulations: In completing all requirements for this course, the student is expected to fully abide by the University of Denver Honor Code. Any violation will be dealt with in accordance with the University of Denver Honor Code Procedure Governing Students. (see <http://www.du.edu/ccs/honorcode.html> for the details).

COURSE OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION (March 22)

1. Goals and the outline of the course; rules & expectations.
2. Chp. 1: Introduction: The Paradox of Excess and Deprivation (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2005)

(I) INEQUITIES IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS (March 24, 29, 31 & April 5, 7)

1. “Who Gets Sick? The Unequal Social Distribution of Disease,” in *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives* (8th Edition) by Peter Conrad (editor), Worth Publishers, New York, 2009, pg. 20-23.
2. “The Politics of Health Inequities: Contested Terrain,” by Richard Hofrichter in *Health and Social Justice: Politics, Ideology, and Inequity in the Distribution of Disease* by Richard Hofrichter (editor), John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2003, pg. 1-56.
3. The Social Basis of Disparities in Health by F. Diderichsen et al in T. Evans et al (editors), 2001 (E-reserve)
4. Social determinants of Health: The Solid Facts (Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmot, 2003) (See the link on the course web-site)

Documentaries on social determinants of health:

- **Unnatural Causes: In Sickness and in Wealth (part 1-56 min.)**
- **Unnatural Causes: Not Just a Paycheck (part 7-30 min.)**
- **Unnatural Causes: When the Bough Breaks (part 2-29 min.)**
- **Unnatural Causes: Becoming American (part 3-29 min.)**

ESSAY-1 (Assigned April 7, Due on April 12)

(II) POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HEALTH CARE: FINANCING AND DELIVERY

(A) A Brief History of American Health Care System (April 12)

1. Chp. 16: Conflict and Change in U.S. Health Care (Bodenheimer& Grumbach, 2009)

Optional Readings: Starr-I (Excerpts from P. Starr, 1982) (E-reserve). | Starr-II (Excerpts from P. Starr, 1982) (E-reserve). | Starr-III (Excerpts from P. Starr, 1982) (E-reserve). | Professionalization, Monopoly, and the Structure of Medical Practice by P. Conrad & J. W. Schneider in P. Conrad (editor), 2004 (E-reserve).

(B) Alternative Organizations and Delivery of Health Care (April 12, 14)

1. Chp. 5: How Health Care Is Organized-I (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)
2. Chp. 6: How Health Care Is Organized-II (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)

(C) Financing Health Care in America (April 14, 19)

1. Chp. 2: Paying for Health Care (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)
2. Chp. 4: Reimbursing Health Care Providers (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)

(D) Soaring Health Care Expenditures and Cost Containment (April 19, 21)

1. Chp. 8: Painful versus Painless Cost Control (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)
2. Chp. 9: Mechanisms for Controlling Costs (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)

Optional Readings: “Health Costs Absorb One-Quarter of Economic Growth, 2000 – 2005” (2005) by Sager and Socolar ([See the link on the course web-site.](#)) | “High and Rising Health Care Costs: Demystifying U.S. health care spending,” by Paul Ginsburg ([See the link on the course web-site.](#)) | ‘It’s The Prices, Stupid: Why the United States Is So Different from Other Countries,’ (2003) by Anderson et al. ([See the link on the course web-site.](#))

(E) Market Solutions and Their Failure in Health Care Financing and Delivery (April 28, May 3 & 10)

1. Markets and Health Care by Donaldson & Karen, 2005 (E-reserve)
2. Market Failure in Health Care by Donaldson & Karen, 2005 (E-reserve)
3. Foreword by Uwe E. Reinhardt in *The Economics of Health Reconsidered* by Thomas Rice, 2nd edition, Academy Health, 2002. (E-reserve)
4. ‘Illness and Injury as Contributors to Bankruptcy,’ by David U. Himmelstein, Elizabeth Warren, Deborah Thorne, and Steffie Woolhandler, *Health Affairs*, February 2, 2005. ([See the link on the course web-site](#))

Documentary on economics of health care:

- Critical Condition (83 min.)
- Sick Around America (55 min.)

ESSAY-2 (Assigned on May 10, Due on May 17)

(III) EQUITY, EQUALITY, AND ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE (May 12, & 17)

1. Economic Objectives of Health Care by Donaldson & Karen, 2005 (E-reserve)
2. Health Care Financing: Assessing Its Relationship to Health Equity by W. C. Hsiao & Y. Liu in T. Evans et al (editors), 2001 (E-reserve).
3. Ethical Dimensions of Health Equity by F. Peter & T. Evans in T. Evans et al (editors), 2001 (e-reserve)
4. “Health and Human Rights,” by Jonathan M. Mann et all. in *Health and Human Rights: A Reader* by Jonathan M. Mann (editor), Routledge, New York and London, 1999, pg. 7-21.\
5. “Human Rights and the New Public Health,” by Jonathan Mann, *Health and Human Rights* Vol. 1, No. 3, 1995, pg. 229-233.
6. Chp. 13: Medical Ethics & the Rationing of Health Care (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)

Optional readings: “Health Equity and Political Economy: A Conversation With Paul Farmer,” by Fitzhugh Mullan, *Health Affairs*, July/August 2007 (E-reserve). | The Moral-Hazard Myth: The Bad Idea Behind Our Failed Health-care System by Malcolm Gladwell (*The New Yorker* 08/22/2005).

ESSAY-3 (Assigned on May 12, Due on May 19)

(IV) POLITICS AND POLICY OF HEALTH CARE: REFORMING THE SYSTEM (May 19, 24, 26)

A documentary on Different Health Care Systems: Sick Around the World (PBS, 2008)

1. Chp. 14: Health Care in Four Nations (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)
2. “Politics and health outcomes,” by Navarro et al., *the Lancet*, Volume 368, Issue 9540, 16 September 2006-22 September 2006, Pages 1033-1037
3. Chp. 15: National Health Insurance (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2009)
4. “Paying For National Health Insurance—And Not Getting It,” by Steffie Woolhandler and David U. Himmelstein, *Health Affairs*, July/August 2002. (E-reserve).
5. “Policy Without Politics: The Limits of Social Engineering,” by Vicente Navarro, *American*

Journal of Public Health, (2003) Vol. 93 (1), pg. 64-67.

6. “Universal Health Insurance in the United States: Reflections on the Past, the Present, and the Future,” by Bruce Vladeck, *American Journal of Public Health*, (2003) Vol. 93 (1), pg. 16-19.

7. A reading on the latest health reform (TBA)

Optional Readings: | ‘National Health Insurance or Incremental Reform: Aim High, or at Our Feet?’ by David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler (*American Journal of Public Health*, 2003, 93(1)) (E-reserve). | ‘Socialized Medicine? From Republicans?’ by Matt Miller (*Fortune*, April 19, 2005) (E-reserve).

ESSAY-4 (Assigned on May 26, Due on June 2 at 3 P.M.)