Course Title: *Population Health and Public Policy*

Course Number: HSAP 0673

Course Location: Room 1A, SPH building in Piscataway

Course Date & Time: Tuesday, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Course Instructor: Irina B. Grafova, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, Department of Health System and Policy, Rutgers School of Public Health, Room 310, phone: (732) 235-6890, email: grafovib@sph.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Room 310 SPH building in Piscataway and by appointment

Course Assistant: None


Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources: Supplemental readings and resources are an essential part of the course and are included to provide “real world” and policy-relevant discussions of issues covered and developed in class and in the text readings.

Course Description: Apart from individual-specific medical care interventions, the social, economic, and residential circumstances of individuals, their political environments, and their health behaviors can have profound impacts on population health and wellbeing. Such factors manifest themselves in their contributions to longstanding health problems including, but not limited to, obesity and excessive body weight; smoking; excessive alcohol consumption; substance abuse; premature childbirths and poor birth outcomes; mental and physical health problems; and early mortality. These health problems can also contribute to the educational attainment, employment status, and economic success of individuals, as well as to the stability of families. The purpose of this course is to survey selected population health problems and to explore the underlying circumstances, monetary and non-monetary incentives, and behaviors of individuals that contribute to such problems. In doing so, an important goal will be to identify underlying causal mechanisms that lead to health problems. Finally, a particular emphasis of the course will be to explore public policy initiatives to
address the health problems under consideration and to evaluate their success and unintended consequences.

**Selected Concentration Competencies Addressed:** Each Department identifies competencies for each degree offered. The competencies addressed in this course for the MPH for the Department of Health Systems and Policy include:

- Use economic theories, concepts and methodologies in the analysis and evaluation of current health care issues and problems
- Apply quantitative and qualitative research methods in the analysis of health service and policy issues
- Assess and delineate public health policies and practices recognizing legal and ethical implications for individuals and populations

Please visit the Concentration webpages on the School of Public Health’s website at [sph.rutgers.edu](http://sph.rutgers.edu) for additional competencies addressed by this course for other degrees and concentrations.

**Course Objectives:** By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe how social, economic, and health system factors can affect population health and well-being.
- Critically evaluate research studies related to the socioeconomic determinants of population health and well-being.
- Evaluate alternative public policy interventions to improve population health.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

**Health Policy Analysis Project**
Student’s major project for the semester is to apply all that was learned to develop a health policy analysis of a health problem of student’s choice. Students will conduct an in-depth analysis of a single health policy issue and present the results in a final, written policy memo (10-12 double-spaced pages in length plus references or other appendices) as well as in an oral presentation. You will have a set of 5 homework assignments designed to help you create your health policy analysis. Each health policy analysis homework assignment is worth 5% of your grade. The first homework will not be counted toward your final grade even though you will receive the feedback. Based on the feedback you receive, you will submit your revised complete health policy analysis paper. Remember, the homework is only a foundation for your health policy analysis paper. The paper should be deeper, broader, and more developed that the five home works taken together. The final health policy analysis paper is worth 20% of your grade. Students will also have a 15 minute presentations of their papers during the last class. The presentation is worth 15% of the final grade. Literature must be cited using APA or comparable standardized format.
Writing well is extremely important in policy analysis. As graduate students, you should approach written assignments professionally—present them as you would to an employer. This includes handing all assignments in on time. 20% will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. Writing must be clear and concise and should not be marred by typographical mistakes. This means complete sentences, well-developed arguments, accurate citations to the literature, and all the other characteristics of professional level composition.

Some sources for identifying a topic for your Health Policy Analysis:
- Kaiser Family Foundation – http://kff.org
  (or its member stations, e.g. WNYC)
- Pew Research Center – http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/
- New York Times

Sample topics from the previous years:
- Higher Education as Health Policy for Undocumented Immigrants
- Strength of the Primary Care Workforce after Implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccination mandate as a condition of school attendance
- Targeting Youth Economic Inequality in NYC through ‘Computer Science Education for All’. Is it a sound option?
- Paid Maternity Leave: Should the U.S. mandate a paid maternity leave policy?
- What effect will the FDA ban on Transfats have on the Obesity Epidemic in the United States?
- Nutrition Facts Label and Their Effect on Obesity
- Expanding Naloxone Legislation to the Federal Level
- Mandated Patient to Nurse Ratios
- Gun Regulation and Brady Act Expansion

Home works (designed to help you create your health policy analysis):
HW #1 (due 9/18): Health Policy Analysis - Topic and problem statement
This is the first step in writing your health policy analysis brief. It is about getting the ‘big picture’. Identify an issue, not just a topic. Topics identify a subject of study—but issues identify an access, cost, or quality problem that can have many potential solutions.

HW #2 (due 10/2): Health Policy Analysis - Background
- nature and magnitude of the problem,
- affected populations,
- social and economic consequences,
- risk factors

HW #3 (due 10/16): Health Policy Analysis – Existing Health Policy Landscape
identify/classify relevant public policies and very generally critique/evaluate the effectiveness (or lack thereof).

HW #4 (due 10/30): Health Policy Analysis – Proposed Policy, Part I
Summary of how the proposed policy would address the problem: the intended outcomes;

HW #5 (due 11/13): Health Policy Analysis - Proposed Policy, Part II
Description of potential unintended outcomes of the legislation

Final paper grading criteria:
The written policy analysis will be graded based on content, style, structure, grammar and spelling. Students should proofread their documents prior to submission, as poor grammar/style can result in substantial reductions in the grade for this assignment as much as lack of content.

1) Abstract (5 pts.)
(a brief half to one page summary of the purpose of the paper, major findings from the literature review, and major implications for health policy)

2) Thoroughness and Precision in Developing the Subject (30 pts.)
(e.g. appropriateness of material discussed; the degree to which relevant literature has been appropriately discussed and summarized;)

3) Logic, clarity, organization of material, and clarity of expression (30 pts.)
(e.g., the degree to which the author breaks the paper into appropriate sections and subsections; the degree to which thoughts are stated clearly and concisely)

4) Discussion of implications for health policy (30 pts.)
(the degree to which the author discusses the importance of the topic to health policy)

5) Quality of references cited (5 pts)
(the number and quality of references; whether references have been appropriately cited within the paper)

Policy Analysis Paper Presentation
Each student will be required to give an oral presentation of approximately 10-15 minutes in length that summarizes the results of his/her health policy analysis towards the end of the term. Presentations will be evaluated in terms of mastery of content, style, effectiveness of delivery, and facilitation of group discussion/Q&A.

Guidelines for Presentations
1. Be organized, time is limited
2. Include a slide with an outline of the talk.
Present in a logical manner. State a question/problem. How did you go about answering it? What did you find? What do the findings mean?
3. Don’t abuse PowerPoint.
4. Speak off of each slide.
Help the audience by ‘walking through’ each table for figure with a pointer.
5. Have one point per slide
Make slides simple, clear, and easy to understand. If the audience is trying to figure out what the slide is showing, then they are not paying attention to what you are saying. Do not show a table with comprehensive data; just show the important stuff. Make font 24 size minimum for the main text of the slide. Use larger font for headings.
6. Include a summary/conclusion slide.
Use your final slide to repeat the major take-home message from your talk.
Audiences are likely to remember the last thing point of the presentation.

7. Practice! Practice! Practice!
Go through the talk at least 2-3 times before actually giving it. Practice out loud, and edit the talk until you can do it in time.

8. Stay on time.

9. Ensure computer compatibility.
Do not wait until the last minute to run your presentation through the computer that you will use so that you can edit if necessary.

**Final grade**
Course requirements consist of active class participation by students, health policy analysis project, and final examinations. Final course grades will be assessed on the following basis:

- Class participation: **10%** of grade
- Health Policy Analysis Project
  - Home works designed to help building up the final paper: **20%** of grade
  - Final Paper **20%** of grade
  - Health Policy Analysis Presentation **15%** of grade
- Final examination: **35%** of grade

# Note that there will be 5 *home works* in total. You will get a feedback for each homework. Homework 1 grade will not be counted toward final grade. The grades for the other 4 home works will added together for the home work part of the final grade.

*Student participation* grades will be based on attendance at lectures, comments and discussion of assigned readings in class. In addition, each student will pick one of the class topic, choose a recent article published in popular press, and lead discussion of that article in the class.

*Final exam* will be a combination of short answer, multiple choice, and true/false questions.

**Course Schedule:**

I. **Introduction**

**Week 1 (September 4): Introduction**
- Eyler et al., chapter 1: The Power of Policy to Improve Health

II. **Social Policy as Health Policy**

**Week 2 (September 11): Education and Population Health.**
- Schoeni et al., chapter 2: Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence. pp. 29, 37-41, 53-52
- Schoeni et al., chapter 3: Health Effects of Human Development Policies.

**Week 3 (September 18):** *Income and Health*

*Homework 1 is due*

- Schoeni et al., chapter 4: Income Support Policies and Health Among the Elderly

**Week 4 (September 25):** *Civil Rights and Health*


**Week 5 (October 2):** *Macroeconomic conditions and population health*

*Homework 2 is due*

- Schoeni et al., chapter 7: Macroeconomic Conditions, Health, and Government Policy.

### III. Health Behaviors & Population Health

**Week 6 (October 9):** *Smoking and Public Policy*

- Eyler et al., chapter 6: Public Policy and Tobacco

**Week 7 (October 16):** * Obesity, Part I*

*Homework 3 is due*

- Eyler et al., chapter 7, 8

**Week 8 (October 23):** * Obesity, Part II*


**Week 9 (October 30):** *Alcohol Abuse and Public Policy*

*Homework 4 is due*

- Eyler et al., chapter 9

**Week 10 (November 6):** *Prescription Drug Abuse and Public Policy*

- Eyler et al., chapter 14
IV. Health and Health Care Policy
Week 11 (November 13): Health Insurance and Health
Homework 5 is due

Week 12 (November 27): Dartmouth Atlas and Accountable Care Organizations

Week 13 (December 4): Health Care Quality: Regulation versus Report Cards

V. Summing Up: What have we learned about the determinants of population health and the role of public policy?

Week 14: (December 11) Summary
Health policy analysis presentations

Final Exam: December 18;
Final paper is due 3:00 p.m. December 18;

Learning Management System: Canvas will be used extensively throughout the semester for course syllabus, assignments, announcements, communication and/or other course-related activities. It is the student’s responsibility to familiarize themselves with Canvas and check it regularly. If you have difficulties accessing Canvas, please inform the instructor and Canvas Support (help@canvas.rutgers.edu). Canvas is accessible at canvas.rutgers.edu.

School of Public Health Honor Code: The School of Public Health Honor Code is found in the student bulletin (sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog/index.html). Each student bears a fundamental responsibility for maintaining academic integrity and intellectual honesty in his or her graduate work. For example, all students are expected to observe the generally accepted principles of scholarly work, to submit their own rather than another’s work, to refrain from falsifying data, and to refrain from receiving and/or giving aid on examinations or other assigned work requiring independent effort. In submitting written material, the writer takes full responsibility for the work as a whole and implies that, except as properly noted by use of quotation marks, footnotes, etc., both the ideas and the works used are his or her own. In addition to maintaining personal academic integrity, each student is expected to contribute to the academic integrity of the school community by not facilitating inappropriate use of her/his own work by others and by
reporting acts of academic dishonesty by others to an appropriate school authority. It should be clearly understood that plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can lead to sanctions up to and including separation from the Rutgers School of Public Health.

**Students with Disabilities:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student must apply for services by first completing a Registration Form with the Rutgers Office of Disability Services (ODS) at ods.rutgers.edu. The student will also be required to participate in an ODS intake interview and provide documentation. If reasonable accommodations are granted, ODS will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations which should be shared with your instructors as early in your courses as possible.

**Graduate Student Computer Policy:** Students are required to possess a personal laptop, no older than approximately two years, that must meet minimum requirements which may be found online at: sph.rutgers.edu/student_life/computer_requirements.html

**Policy Concerning Use of Recording Devices and Other Electronic Communications Systems:** When personally owned communication/recording devices are used by students to record lectures and/or classroom lessons, such use must be authorized by the faculty member or instructor who must give either oral or written permission prior to the start of the semester and identify restrictions, if any, on the use of mobile communications or recording devices.

**Withdrawal/Refund Schedule:** Students who stop attending their course(s) without processing an Add/Drop Course form will receive a failing grade. Furthermore, students dropping to zero credits for the semester are considered withdrawn and must submit a completed Leave of Absence form from the School of Public Health's Office of Student Affairs. The School of Public Health refunds tuition only. Administrative and technology fees are non-refundable. You may find the Withdrawal/Refund Schedule on the School of Public Health website at: sph.rutgers.edu/academics/registration/school_calendars.html