Course Title: Introduction to Health Systems and Policy

Course Number: PHCO 0501: Fall 2017

Course Location: School of Public Health Room 3A/3B

Course Date & Time: Tuesday 6:00 -9:00 pm

Course Instructor: Bernadette West, PhD, Associate Professor, Health Systems and Policy Rm. 120, SPH 683 Hoes Lane/Piscataway 732-235-4535 westbm@sph.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course TA: Nicolette Mateescu nm783@sph.rutgers.edu

Required Course Texts:


Recommended Readings:


**Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

**Course Description:** This course is a requirement for all public health students. As such, the course focuses on issues of health care organization and policy that are relevant to all public health practitioners. Students are introduced to the history, organization, financing and regulation of health services in the United States. Emphasis is placed on the principles of access, cost, and quality of care in the changing economic environment, the social determinants of health that shape health, disparities in health and health services both nationally and globally, the public health system and the health and health care issues of vulnerable populations and the systems of care available to these groups.

**PHCO 0501: Health Systems and Policy – Core Course Competencies**
- Recognize social, economic and cultural factors that impact health care access and utilization;
- Identify research skills useful in assessing the pros and cons of current health policy issues;
- Understand health service options for vulnerable population groups;
- Identify the historical and current political factors that influence health care access and population health in the US and developing countries;
- Understand systems thinking to analyze health system and related policy issues; and,
- Identify public health methods of ensuring community health safety and preparedness.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

The structure of the course includes lectures, class discussions, several small assignments, one exam, a debate and final paper. Students are expected to attend class and participate in general class discussions and in student team meetings. This necessitates that students prepare in advance for each session by doing the assigned readings. Handouts for note taking will be posted on Moodle the day before class. Please print them out ahead of class. THEY WILL NOT BE GIVEN OUT IN CLASS. Laptops should not be used during class except for note-taking and specified in-class activities. Class participation points will be awarded based on attendance as well as participation in class discussions and final debates. Note: 2pts/day will be deducted from any late assignment grade.

The course grade will be based on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Assignment/Exam*</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction/ Commentary on <em>Being Mortal</em></td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>30 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Policy Debates</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Health Policy Paper (12-15 pages)</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>5 pts.</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 pts.</strong></td>
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REACTION PAPER—ON BEING MORTAL BY ATUL GAWANDE (20 points)
A person born in the United States in 1900 had a life expectancy of 47 years; however, a person born today has a life expectancy of 78 years. Many people will live well beyond this. Greater longevity provides both opportunities and challenges for the health care system. We will explore this issue through our reading of Atul Gawande’s book Being Mortal. Students will be asked to write a short (4-5 pages double spaced) reaction paper to the book in which they answer the following questions:

1. Being Mortal begins with an overview of aging in our culture and abroad. How might our society's approach to aging differ from that of other cultures? How has the evolution of nursing homes and assisted care facilities changed the way we approach end of life issues? (5pts)

2. The author points out that a medical student’s education has not traditionally included training on helping a patient cope with grief. Why has this been the case? How could such training change our experience with regards to end of life issues? (5pts)

3. “People with serious illness have priorities besides simply prolonging their lives,” he writes. “If your problem is fixable, we know just what to do. But if it's not? The fact that we have had no adequate answers to this question is troubling and has caused callousness, inhumanity and extraordinary suffering.” What is the author's argument here? (5pts)

4. What problems does Atul Gawande identify within our current system of long-term care and dying? He proposes a significant overhaul of the current approach to aging, care and dying. How realistic a vision is this in light of our present day outlook? (5pts)

We will discuss these questions in class October 17th. A hardcopy of the paper is due in class that evening as well.

EXAM (30 points)
The exam on November 7 will be based on lecture notes, powerpoints and identified readings. The exam will be three-parts and include short essay questions, multiple choice and true/false questions.

HEALTH POLICY DEBATE (20 points)
Students are expected to participate in an oral debate. Early in the semester debate teams will be created. Each team will select a specific issue that will be framed as a question. For example: Is obesity the government’s business? Teams will be divided into those who will argue YES--Obesity is the government’s business and those who will argue NO--Obesity is not the government’s business. Each debate team is expected to conduct research in preparation for the oral debates. Debates will be held on the last two evenings of the course. Team meetings will be held during the last hour of designated class sessions to allow time for preparation for the debates. Each team can prepare ONE powerpoint slide with background information on their topic (e.g., data on the prevalence of the issue, trends over time) that can be displayed during the debate. Students will be graded based on the following:

1. Research effort (5pts)
2. Development of sound arguments (5pts)
3. Compelling nature of their presentation (5pts)
4. Ability to offer rebuttal to counter-arguments presented by the other side (5pts).

Debates will take place December 5th and December 12th.

**FINAL HEALTH POLICY PAPER (25 points)**
Each student will research and write a final 12-15-page (double-spaced) paper focusing on a controversial health policy issue—which should be the same issue they debate in class. The paper should provide the following five sections:

1. Background and history of the issue (5 pts)
2. Description of the most impacted stakeholders and what they win or lose (5pts)
3. Presentation of BOTH the pros and cons of the issue (5pts)
4. Final recommendation for resolution of the issue with a strong rationale (5pts)
5. References: The paper must be well written and provide appropriate references within the body of the paper using the APA Style Guide (5pts). Appropriate references must come from reputable peer-reviewed journals, or government or other official sources. Papers should not rely only on online resources.

The framework for the paper will be discussed further in class. A **hard copy** of the paper is due in class December 12.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION (5 points)**
Class participation will be assessed based on timely completion of assignments, weekly attendance and participation in class discussions and participation in final debates. Laptops can only be used in class for note taking and for assigned class activities.

**Course Schedule:**

**September 5: Week 1**
- Overview of Characteristics of US Health System
- Creation of debate teams
- Assignment for next week:
  - Identify 3 health policy issues that you would consider to be a good debate topic.
  - Come prepared next week to discuss these topics with your debate team members. It is important to select topics where there are arguments on both sides of the issue.
  - Next week in your team, you will discuss your suggestions and select a debate topic. This topic will also be the basis of your final policy paper as well.
- Reading:
  - Chapter 1: *The Challenge of Healthcare Delivery and Health Policy*
  - Chapter 2: “Visual Overview of Health Care Delivery in the US”
  - Chapter 3: “Government and Health Insurance: The Policy Process”

**September 12: Week 2**
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Historical Overview of Health Care in the US: The challenge of assuring ACCESS, controlling COST and maintaining QUALITY

- Semi-finalize debate topics
- Reading:
  - Chapter 9: Organization of Care

**September 19: Week 3**

**Health Care in the US: Incentives and Disincentives**

- Documentary: *Escape Fire*
- Class discussion of Fee for Service and Value-Based Payment approaches
- Reading:
  - Sanacola, L (2017) “What is Value-Based Care?” *Huffington Post*: Access at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/what-is-value-based-care_us_58939f9de4b02bbb1816b892

**September 26: Week 4**

**Health Care in the US: Private and Public Insurance**

- Writing a Health Policy Brief/Overview of Debate and Final Paper
- Team work on debates
- Reading:
  - Chapter 11 “Health Care Financing”

**October 3: Week 5**

**Quality of Care in the US Healthcare System**

- Overview of “Quality”
- Quality of Care exercise in class. Bring your laptop. We will be going online.
- Reading:
  - Chapter 13 “High-Quality Health Care”

**October 10: Week 6**

**Trends in Health Care Costs/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act**

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Alan Monheit, Chair, HSAP Department

- Class discussion of “The Cost Conundrum” by Atul Gawande
- Reading:
  - Chapter 12 “Health Care Costs and Value”
October 17: Week 7
Aging and the Long Term Care System
- Overview of long-term care system
- Class discussion of Atul Gawande’s Being Mortal.
- Hardcopy of Gawande Reaction Paper due in class tonight

October 24: Week 8
Part 1. Medicare and Transitions of Care in the Health System
Guest Lecturer: Dr. Andrew Miller, HCQIS-Network Task Leader-Care Coordination
- Reading:
  http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=370f62d4-7f7b-4bf9-8ad8-61457502a580%40sessionmgr101

Part 2. Social Determinants of Health and Health Behaviors
- Class discussion of readings
- Reading:
    http://www.jstor.org/stable/2626958?&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
  - National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (2017) Let’s Talk: Racism and Health Equity. Available online at:  

Documentary “A Gardeners Tale”

October 31: Week 9 Vulnerable Populations
- Class discussion of readings
- Reading:
  - Chapter 8: “Vulnerable Populations: Tale of Two Nations”


November 7: Week 10 EXAM

November 14: Week 11
Local Public Health System: Infrastructure, Services and Preparedness
Community Health Assessment and Public Health Coalitions
- Team work on debates
- Reading:
  - Chapter 6: “Public Health: Transformation for the 21st C.”

November 21—No Class
(Tuesday is Thursday class)

November 28: Week 12
Introduction to Data for Health Systems Research
- Team work on debates
- Reading:

December 5: Week 13
- Health Policy Debates: Part I

December 12: Week 14
- Health Policy Debates: Part II
- Hardcopy of final Health Policy Paper due in class tonight

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.

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.