

**Course Title:** Introduction to Health Systems and Policy  
**Course Number:** PHCO 0501  
**Course Prerequisite(s):** None  
**Course Location:** Piscataway  
**Course Date & Time:** Wednesday, 6-8 PM  
**Course Instructor:** Mark McGovern, PhD ([mark.mcgvorn@rutgers.edu](mailto:mark.mcgvorn@rutgers.edu))  
**Office Hours:** By Appointment  
**Course Assistant:** TBA  
**Course Website:** CANVAS

**Required Course Text:** None

**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 regulations 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; 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. In assessing the role of the health care system, we will consider both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the role of evidence in decision making.

**Competencies Addressed:** The competencies addressed in this course include:

- 1. Explain the social, political, and economic determinants of health and how they contribute to population health and health inequities;
- 2. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings;
- 3. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels;
- 4. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence;
- 5. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health;
- 6. Explain the role of qualitative methods and sciences in describing and assessing a population's health;
- 7. Select qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context;
- 8. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity;
- 9. Advocate for political, social, or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations; and
- 10. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue.

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

- A. Understand the history and structure of the U.S. health care system
- B. Identify key health policy issues and the initiatives designed to address them
- C. Evaluate the consequences of alternative policies

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

The course grades will be based on four online quizzes, a health policy debate, a final exam, and class participation.

**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. The preliminary schedule is that the debates will be held in Week 12 and Week 14. Team meetings will be held during the last part of designated class sessions to allow time for preparation for the debates. Each debate will last approximately half an hour. For the debate, each team can prepare a powerpoint slide that provides important background information on the topic that will be displayed during the debate. For example:

SLIDE:

Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS)

- Definition: "Voluntary termination of one's own life by administration of a lethal substance with the direct or indirect assistance of a physician"
- Currently legal in many countries around the world as well as in US in four states: Oregon, Washington, Vermont, and California
- Research shows 75% of patients using PAS have terminal cancer; ~15% have neurodegenerative diseases (e.g., ALS)
- Data on PAS is limited; in Oregon, approximately .22% per 10,000 deaths were the result of PAS

<p>Arguments For:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patients' Rights</li> <li>Reduced Financial Cost</li> <li>Emotional Burden on Families</li> </ul>	<p>Arguments Against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prejudice in healthcare system</li> <li>Slippery slope effect</li> <li>Available alternatives</li> </ul>
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- *A list of activities, assignments, projects, exams, etc. that contribute to course grade, and the respective point/percentage value of each*

1. Quizzes (4)	40 pts.
2. Health Policy Debates	20 pts.
3. Final Exam	35 pts.
4. Class Participation	<u>5 pts.</u>
Total:	100 pts.

- *The participation grade will be based on class attendance, participation in class discussions and the timely completion of assignments, including the “online 30” assignments. Each week, students will be asked to spend at least 30 additional minutes completing work outside the classroom. During the first 9 weeks of the semester, this will mainly involve developing questions or comments about the assigned readings and submitting them to CANVAS at least one day before the class in which we will review those readings. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to reflect on the readings and their implications for health policy. When warranted, we will spend some time reviewing some of the comments and questions posted by the students. During later weeks, the “online 30” assignment will involve group work to prepare for the health policy debates (preliminarily to be held during weeks 12 and 14), and identifying questions for discussion from the final exam study guide.*

- *Grading Policy:*

94 – 100	A
90 – <94	A-
87 – <90	B+
84 – <87	B
80 – <84	B-
77 – <80	C+
70 – <77	C
<70	F

**Course Schedule:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Course Topic</b>	<b>Online 30</b>	<b>Assignments/ Assessments</b>
1	1/22	Introduction and the US Health Care System in Comparative Perspective	Interact with assigned media	
2	1/29	Rationales for Public Policy: Equity and Efficiency / Public and Private Health Insurance in the US	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	
3	2/5	Barriers to Care: Insurance, Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Place	Initial preparation for health policy debate	
4	2/12	A health systems approach to US maternal mortality: Guest lecture by Dr Slawa Rokicki	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	Quiz due
5	2/19	Why Is US Health Care Spending Higher Than Other Nations?	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	
6	2/26	Social determinants of health	Review topics for health policy debate	

7	3/4	The U.S. Public Health System / Health Reform/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	
8	3/11	Competition and entry in health care systems: Guest lecture by Dr Bingxiao Wu	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	Quiz due
SPRING BREAK				
9	3/25	Aging and Long-Term Care	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	Presentations
10	4/1	Evidence based policy: how can we incorporate research into policy?	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	Quiz due
11	4/8	Local Public Health Systems: Interaction with National and State Contexts	Final preparation for health policy debate	Presentations

12	4/15	Health Policy Debate 1	Review guidelines for final exam	
13	4/22	Introduction to Data for Health Systems Research: Qualitative Data Collection Methods for Public Health: Guest lecture by Dr Tom Mackie	Post questions and comments on assigned reading to class CANVAS site	
14	4/29	Health Policy Debate 2	Practice sample exam	Quiz due

Competency	Course Objectives(s)	Lessons	Assessment(s)
1	B, C	1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11	Quiz #3, Health Policy Debates and Final Exam
2	C	1, 4, 5, 6, 11	Quiz #1 and Final Exam
3	B, C	1, 3, 6, 11	Final Exam
4	A	2, 5, 7, 10, 13	Quiz #1 and Final Exam
5	A, C	3, 5, 9, 11	Final Exam
6	C	6, 10, 13	Quiz #2
7	C	10, 13	Quiz #2
8	C	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	Quiz #4 and Final Exam
9	A, B, C	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11	Health Policy Debates and Final Exam
10	A	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13	Quiz #1 and Final exam

**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 (). Canvas is accessible at [canvas.rutgers.edu](https://canvas.rutgers.edu).

**School of Public Health Honor Code:** The School of Public Health Honor Code is found in the School Catalog ([sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog.html](https://sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog.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](https://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-support.html](https://sph.rutgers.edu/student-life/computer-support.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.

**Policy Concerning Use of Turnitin:** Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Canvas) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.

**Withdrawal/Refund Schedule:** Students who stop attending their course(s) without submitting a completed [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/school-calendar.html](https://sph.rutgers.edu/academics/school-calendar.html)