Course Description. This issue-oriented course presents an overview of the U.S. healthcare delivery system, its components, and policy challenges. It examines the multiple determinants of health (focusing on the role that medical care plays), private and public financing, the actions of various providers, and the effects of both market competition and government regulation. The course will give students an appreciation of the fundamental dilemma confronting our society: how to balance cost, quality, and access.

The healthcare system is considered from an organizational perspective, including an analysis of roles of patients, providers (e.g., doctors, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies), health plans, and private and public payers. Through course readings, lectures, guest presentations, and videos, students will gain a better understanding of how legislative and market forces have shaped and will continue to influence the problems faced by each component.

Required Texts

4. Supplemental readings are available at no cost from several websites including UD Library’s Electronic Reserves and UD Library’s electronic journal collection (e.g., www.healthaffairs.org). These supplemental articles are an essential part of the course. You should concentrate on the main ideas.

Optional Texts

Who Shall Live? 2nd edition by Victor Fuchs, World Scientific (1998). A classic monograph. The second edition reprints the 1974 first edition and also has some additional later essays appended. Other than the first chapter, which is available on UD electronic reserves, I will not take up this book in class. Fuchs provides an excellent description of several important economic principles applied to health care. Although the numbers are dated, the issues Fuchs discusses are for the most part remarkably current.

For those who wish to see a deeper economic treatment of issues in the course, consider these four textbooks. Many of the topics covered in the course are covered in some fashion in these texts.

*Health Economics* by Charles Phelps, Addison-Wesley.

*The Economics of Health and Health Care* by Allen Goodman and Miron Stano, Prentice Hall.


*Handbook of Health Economics*, eds., Anthony Culyer and Joseph Newhouse, vols 1A and 1B, North Holland Publishers. This is a very comprehensive two-volume text, but many chapters require a strong background in mathematical intermediate microeconomics.

Course Requirements

Grades will be determined by a midterm exam (30%); a small-group term paper and presentations of the paper and work-in-progress (30%); a journal containing six reviews of guest speakers and videos (20%), and class participation/exercises (20%).

Midterm Exam (April 19). The closed-book midterm will be administered in class and will cover selected material covered in class and in the assigned readings. Approximately two weeks before the exam, I will provide a study sheet identifying the most important concepts and materials to know for the exam. You have the option of taking the (same) midterm as a take-home exam with the highest possible exam grade becoming a “B.” The performance on the midterm contributes 30% towards the course grade and will be the deciding factor in deciding borderline course grades.

Term Paper Requirements (Due May 8)
1. Length: 10–12 double-spaced pages (approximately 300 words per page), not including figures, tables, or references. If you prefer to write the paper on your own, the length should be 8–10 pages.
2. Suggested topics will be provided by the instructor.
3. Your paper likely will be easier to write, and better, if you center it on answering one or two questions that you explicitly state.
4. Choose one of the following formats and write your paper in the format you select.
   a. Think piece that clearly lays out a problem, alternative solutions, and your preferred solution and that incorporates key ideas and evidence available (use a model think piece article in the major health policy/medical journals or the main journals in your academic field).
   b. Policy briefing report written for a legislative committee or regulatory agency or for a corporation or coalition of corporations. Define a problem and alternative solutions/courses of action that the committee/agency/corporation or coalition might take, with your suggestion as to the appropriate one for fixing the problem. For this paper, specify the type of organization at which the report is aimed (e.g., congressional committee, CMS, the Washington Business Group on Health, etc.)
   c. “Hot Topic”: in-depth article and editorial typically found in Saturday editions of The Wall Street Journal. The WSJ editorial includes specific recommendations/ideas/suggestions to address the issue. (If interested, I can share a sample article and editorial.)
   d. Business plan for an employer group (e.g., Washington Business Group on Health), medical group, drug company, or health plan/managed care organization that specifies a system-wide problem, discusses alternate strategies that the organization firm might adopt, gives pros and cons of each, and recommends one and gives the reasons why. Cutting auto industry retiree health insurance costs is an example of a “system-wide” issue that would be appropriate.
   e. Design a public engagement process* for community leaders to address a significant health policy issue. You will be expected to propose a process and develop examples of actual materials
to be distributed to policy makers, providers, employers, and/or the public. Incorporates key ideas and evidence available for this health policy issue. Your paper also must include a clearly explained rationale for using public engagement to solve this significant health policy problem. (Critics might say: Perhaps community members will choose not to be engaged?) If your team picks this approach, I will ask you to consult with a couple of in-house community engagement experts.

*Public engagement is a commitment to an ongoing collaborative process during which community leaders work with the community to build understanding, guidance, and active support for the community (community’s health system) and its future. By using traditional approaches to public involvement, such as public meetings, in addition to planning committees, focus groups, technology, polling, study circles, and other innovative methods, the community is encouraged to voice their opinions and listen to the opinions of others. The community moves through the stages of awareness of the problem, understanding of the issue and views of all groups, concern, action and acceptance of the solution where there are meaningful and long-term improvements. Public engagement calls for spending time to involve the community in the decision-making process and (hopefully) eliminating the need to convince the community. By engaging the public appropriately, public ownership of policies is created, representative and participatory government is strengthened, and the decisions made in the process better reflect the values of the community.

5. Get started early in the semester with your literature search. The UD Library collection includes only bound copies of some very helpful resources such as The New England Journal of Medicine (www.nejm.org) and The Journal of the American Medical Association (www.jama.ama-assn.org)

6. You must integrate course material into your paper. References to the assigned readings/articles should be included in your main analysis.

7. On April 10 teams will submit an annotated bibliography and give a brief class presentation describing work completed. This portion of the assignment counts for 20% of the term paper grade. The expectation is that your team will have completed at least 75% of the literature review.

8. Papers are due at the beginning of our May 8 class. Short (12–15 minute) professional-quality presentations will be given the last three days of class (May 10, 15 and 17).

9. Everyone will submit a 1–2 page (300–400 word) peer-review/critique of another team’s paper and presentation. Rather than a final exam, we will have a special class session on Friday, May 19 (time TBA) to submit and discuss peer reviews.

Guest Speaker/Video Journal. (Due March 22 and May 10) Students are required to write critiques of any six special guest presentations or selected in-class videos. Even though completed journals are not due until Wednesday, May 10, draft reviews shortly after the presentations. Revisit the reviews, as necessary, to add material we cover later in the semester.

Specific requirements: Each journal entry journal should be 1.5–2 typed pages (400–500 words). Begin with a one- or two-paragraph discussion of the speaker’s presentation, highlighting key points. Then, use at least half the paper to evaluate/critique the presentation and discuss how the presentation relates to the overall course and assigned readings. Each review must include citations from at least three different assigned readings. Focus on the main ideas presented in the cited readings/articles rather than on simple factual information. So, for example, if you were to cite an article discussing the increasing number of uninsured adults in the United States, discuss causes and implications—and not simple summary statistics about the number of uninsured.
You are welcome to substitute outside readings that you might find on your own or have used in other classes. In fact, I encourage you to integrate what we cover with what you have learned elsewhere (e.g., courses in health promotion, economics, or the politics of health care).

Draft journals are due March 22. The completed journals are due May 10 and must include: a cover page, a table of contents, and a complete list of “works cited” noting the relevant presentations for each reference.

Class Participation/Exercises. Students are expected to attend all classes and actively participate in class discussions including guest lectures. We frequently will use class time for activity-based, small-group exercises. To receive an “A” for class participation/exercise component of your grade, you must participate and consistently demonstrate that you are keeping up with the readings. It helps to bring assigned reading material to class so you can use it for group exercises.

Expectations for your participation are:

• Read, assimilate, discuss, and critique all materials assigned for class.
• Participate reliably in class and team activities.
• Participate actively in special guest presentations.
• Uphold the expectations of your team by completing class and team responsibilities and assignments on time.
• Provide frequent feedback to other team members about their performance.
• Be creative, active, analytical, and thoughtful in raising issues for discussion for the entire class or in group work.
• Maintain a sense of humor and have fun.

Academic honesty. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the University’s Policy on Academic Honesty, which can be found in the Student Guide to University Policies (www.udel.edu/stuguide/05-06/index.html).
Course Schedule at a Glance

Feb 8 – Introduction

Feb 13, 15 – Medical Progress and Spending
Mark Greene lecture -Feb 13

Feb 20, 22 – System Outcomes: Access, Quality, and Costs

Feb 27, March 1 – Determinants of Health and the Role of Government

March 6, 8 – Health Service Professionals

Mar 13, 15 – Insurance Basics

Mar 20, 22 – Barriers to Fixing Health Care, Managed Care I
Draft speaker journals due March 22

March 27, 29 Spring Break

April 3, 5 – Managed Care II, Public Financing of Health Care

April 10, 12 – Quality of Care, Geographic Variations
Term paper literature review due April 10
Class presentation of completed work also on April 10

April 17 – Measuring Quality of Care
April 19 – Midterm Exam

April 24, 26 – Hospitals, Disruptive Technologies

May 1, 3 – Information Technology, Pharmaceutical Drug Policies

May 8, 10 – Pharmaceutical Drug Policies, Group Presentations
Term papers due May 8
Speaker journals due May 10

May 15, 17 – Group Presentations

May 19 (Friday) – Final Class Meeting
Peer reviews of group papers/presentations due
READING LIST (Last updated: February 10, 2004)
The supplemental articles are an essential part of the course. You should concentrate on the main ideas.


Special Lecture
Monday, February 13 from 12:15–1:30 p.m. in the Perkins Student Center – Kirkwood Room. Dr. Mark Greene, who recently joined the faculty of the University of Delaware’s Philosophy Department, will discuss the moral and ethical issues that arise out of advances in the life sciences and subsequent applications through biotechnology. We will be meeting with Professor Ed Freel’s Contemporary Issues class.

Feb 8 – Introduction

Shi, Ch 3.

Victor Fuchs, “Introduction” and Ch. 1 from Who Shall Live? (available on UD’s electronic reserves).

Feb 13, 15 – High and Rising Health Care Costs and Medical Progress
Feb 13 – Group presentations: Cutler, Ch 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6.

Shi, Ch 12. Carefully read pp. 483-504. We will cover pp. 505-524 later in the semester.

Cutler, Ch 1.

Feb 20, 22 – System Outcomes: Access, Quality, and Costs

Shi, Ch 1.


Kaiser Family Foundation Tutorial (www.kaiseredu.org)
• Health Coverage and the Uninsured. (Go to www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials_index.asp#countingUninsured and scroll down to the uninsured. Click on the “View Tutorial” under “Health Coverage and the Uninsured.”)

Feb 27, March 1 – Determinants of Health and the Role of Government

Shi, Ch 2.


March 6, 8 – Health Service Professionals, Medical Malpractice
Special Guest Speaker: Thomas A. Collier, M.D., C.F.A., Director, Comegys Bight Foundation, Chestertown, Maryland. (Dr. Collier will meet with us for two class sessions.)

    Shi, Ch 4.


Mar 13, 15 – Insurance Basics

    Shi, Ch 6.


Mar 20 – “Barriers to Fixing Health Care” or “Health Care: The Problem that Won’t Go Away”
Special Guest Speakers: Debbie Chang (invited), Senior VP and Executive Director, Nemours Health and Prevention Services (NHPS) and Paula Roy, Executive Director, Delaware Health Care Commission.

    Shi, Ch 13.


Mar 22 – Managed Care I

    Shi, Ch 9.

March 27, 29 (Spring Break) – No Classes

April 3 – Managed Care II


April 5 – Public Financing of Health Care  
Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Tim Brooks, Consultant, UD Center for Disabilities (formerly VP for Student Affairs). Dr. Brooks’ presentation will focus on the Medicaid program.

Shi, Revisit Ch 6 paying particular attention to pp. 197-211.

Kaiser Family Foundation Tutorials (www.kaiseredu.org)  
• Medicaid 101  
• Medicare 101  
• The New Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

April 10, 12 – Quality of Care, Geographic Variations  
April 10: Term paper annotated bibliography due. Brief in-class presentations describing work completed.

Cutler, Ch 9.


April 17 – Measuring Quality of Care  
Special Guest Speaker: Richard S. Citron, Director, Wilmington (DE) Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Richard Citron will discuss innovations in the veterans health care system and will focus on quality measurement.

Shi, Ch. 12 – pp. 515-525.


April 19 – Midterm Exam

April 24 – Hospital Facilities and Services  
Shi, Ch 8.

Shi, Ch 7. Pay close attention to pp. 249-256; skim the other material.


April 26 – Disruptive Technologies: MedCath Case Study  
Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Tom Collier


Regina Herzlinger, “MedCath Corporation,” Harvard Business School Case 9-303-041, Revised April 20, 2005. This case is available from the UD bookstore. Unfortunately, it is not available on UD’s electronic reserves.

May 1 – How Will Information Technology Change Health Care?  
Special Guest Speaker: Steve Hess, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, ChristianaCare Health System.

Readings: TBA

May 3, 8 – Pharmaceutical Drug Policies


May 10, 15, 17 – Catch-up and Group Presentations

May 19 (Friday) – Final Class Meeting  
Peer reviews of group papers/presentations due.