COURSE INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand where health and health services rank among social and personal concerns across nations
2. Evaluate the contributions of health care to population health outcomes
3. Identify a set of broad criteria to evaluate health system performance
4. Evaluate the current performance of the U.S. health care system in comparison to other national health systems
5. Explain the social values and political interests that shape health systems development and reform efforts

COURSE DESIGN AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course is designed as an independent study, allowing students considerable flexibility in scheduling the work and reporting the lessons learned. All readings and other materials are available in portable, electronic format. The intellectual approach is highly interdisciplinary, encouraging students to examine health systems from the perspectives of philosophy, history, sociology, demography, epidemiology, economics, and politics as well as clinical medicine.

The course is organized as a sequence of four modules:

Module 1—International Health System Performance
Module 2—Health Systems in the Context of Global Health Needs
Module 3—Health Systems and Policies in High Income Countries
Module 4—The Politics of Health System Development and Reform
Each module includes a required set of readings and a written assignment. Module 3 has a required set of audiovisual materials to accompany the other materials.

To satisfactorily complete the course, students must select three of the four modules and write a series of short papers (3-4 pages each) addressing the questions posed in the written assignment for each module.

Students should submit papers directly to Professor Oliver via e-mail (troliver@wisc.edu) unless they receive other instructions (a Learn@UW dropbox will eventually be set up for the course). If electronic submission is not possible, they can send paper copies to Professor Oliver’s office address (see contact information above).

In the course of their reading and preparation of writing assignments, students may consult with Professor Oliver via e-mail, phone, or meetings at his office.

EVALUATION

Upon completion of the written assignments for three of the four modules, students will earn a letter grade for the course. It is necessary to complete all three papers to earn a passing grade. Each paper counts equally toward the final course grade.

Grades for written assignments will be based on: 1) the comprehensiveness of the analysis in identifying appropriate concepts, literature and applications; 2) the logic, accuracy, and overall persuasiveness of the arguments; and 3) the quality of the writing style (including basic grammar, punctuation, and proofreading).

MODULE 1
INTERNATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

  Overview, pp. xi-xix
  Chapter 1, “Why Do Health Systems Matter?” pp. 1-19
  Chapter 2, “How Well Do Health Systems Perform?” pp. 21-46
  Annex Table 1, Health System Attainment and Performance in All Member States, pp. 152-55


**Written Assignment for Module 1 (3-4 pages not including references)**
- Across nations, how high a priority is health compared to other social and personal concerns?
- Which dimension of health system performance—effectiveness, equity, or efficiency—is most important in your view?
- Based on the cross-national evidence, is there an obvious tradeoff between equity and efficiency? Or does greater efficiency appear to go hand in hand with greater equity?
- How does the U.S. health system compare with other nations in basic measures of performance? What are its greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses?

**MODULE 2**

**HEALTH SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL HEALTH NEEDS**


Written Assignment for Module 2 (3-4 pages not including references)

- Why is global health—as opposed to the health of individuals, communities or nations—a critical issue in the 21st century?
- Who has responsibility for global health protection and improvement?
- How important is adequate health care, and the funding needed to provide it, to population health?
- Where do prevention and primary care fit into health financing needs? Where do they fit into current health financing priorities? What must change to achieve a proper balance and better population health outcomes?
- To what extent are practices drawn from the American health insurance industry being adopted in other countries? What reasons are given for adopting such practices and what is the experience with them so far?

MODULE 3
HEALTH SYSTEMS IN HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES: HISTORY, ORGANIZATION, FINANCING, AND DELIVERY


PBS Frontline Program: Sick Around the World
The online program is based on journalist T.R. Reid’s upcoming book on international health care, We’re Number 37! The title refers to the U.S. ranking in the 2000 World Health Organization report on health systems.
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/

Five Capitalist Democracies and How They Do It
Each has a health care system that delivers health care for everyone—but with remarkable differences.
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/countries/

Watch Online (videos on each country)
United Kingdom
Japan
Germany
Taiwan
Switzerland

Health Care Systems—The Four Basic Models
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/countries/
Beveridge Model
Bismarck Model
National Health Insurance Model
The Out-of-Pocket Model
Interviews with physicians, analysts, and public officials
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/interviews/
See text summaries or videos

Analysis of Themes
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/themes/
- What Lessons Can We Learn?
- How Does It Work for Doctors in These Five Countries?
- Does Universal Coverage Mean Socialized Medicine?
- The Cost of Drugs Issue


**Written Assignment for Module 3 (3-4 pages not including references)**
- Assess the four basic models for national health care systems discussed in the PBS Frontline program, *Sick Around the World* (as illustrated in the real-world systems of the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Taiwan, Switzerland, and the United States).
- Your assessment should include what you find are the primary strengths and weaknesses of each model from the perspective of a) physicians; b) patients; and c) the society at large.

**MODULE 4**
**THE POLITICS OF HEALTH SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM**


**Written Assignment for Module 4 (3-4 pages not including references)**

- What is the general relationship between social inequalities and population health outcomes? In the U.S. in particular, how has race influenced our perceptions of health disparities and our commitment to reducing them?

- How do political parties shape systems of health and social services, and with what outcomes? In particular, how do social democratic parties contrast with parties in the liberal political tradition?

- What social values and political interests have priority in contemporary European health systems as compared with the U.S. health system?

- What has changed in American society, politics, and health care to undermine the traditional influence of organized medicine and organized labor in debates over health system reform? Who—if anyone—might have the power to overcome the historical obstacles to major reform?