College of Nursing
Michigan State University

NUR 841: Health Care Policy in Perspective: Principles of Economics, Politics and Ethics

Spring 2007

COURSE SYLLABUS FOR WEBCOURSE

Sections: 741, 742, 746

Course Faculty:

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For additional information about each of the course faculty, click on the 'Class' tab at the top of the course page, and then click on 'User Profile' for each faculty member.
University Catalog Description

Semester: Spring of every year.

Credits: 2.

Target Student Audience: Required for all students in the Master's of Science (MS) degree and the ‘fast-track’ of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs in the College of Nursing.

Description: Economic, political and regulatory environment of the U.S. health care system; quality, costs, equity in access of services; comparison of U.S. systems with those of other advanced industrial countries.

Course Description

This two-credit web course is designed to provide an understanding of the economic, organizational and political environment in which advanced practice nurses spend a major part of their professional life. Basic principles of economics are applied to illuminate how markets and governments interact in the financing and delivery of health care services. Two broad themes are addressed throughout the course: (1) how economic incentives and disincentives shape the decisions of consumers/patients, insurance companies and providers, and (2) how government rules and regulations directly or indirectly (through altering economic incentives) shape the decisions of consumers/patients, insurance companies and providers. The insights gained from an understanding of the basic economic and organizational principles underpinning the U.S. health care system will be applied to a discussion of such problems as access to care, quality of care, cost containment and rationing of care. Two 'case studies' are employed to discuss the distributional and ethical implications of alternative health care policies: Medicare and the pharmaceutical industry. Labor markets for nurses and, in particular, the role of advanced practice nurses in the provision of primary care will be examined from legal, economic and political perspectives, emphasizing the scope of practice, competition and co-operation with other health care providers, and the efficacy of political advocacy.

Prerequisites

NUR801 or permission from instructor.
**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of NUR 841, the student should be able to:

1. Contrast and compare major features of the U.S. health care system to those of other advanced industrial countries.

2. Analyze the variety of public and private mechanisms for financing health care services.

3. Analyze how market forces and government regulations shape the labor markets in health care.

4. Analyze how ethical principles, social policies and economic interests influence access, delivery and organization of primary care.

5. Discuss principles of effectiveness, efficiency and cost to evaluate health care services.

6. Discuss principles of evaluation of health care policies based on population outcomes.

**Methods of Evaluation**

1. **IN-CLASS MID-TERM (40%)**

   The mid-term exam is an individual exam that requires the student to answer questions in the format of SHORT essays (approximately one page of response per question).

   *(NOTE: EXACT TIMES AND LOCATIONS WILL BE POSTED IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT SECTION NO LATER THAN THURSDAY, JANUARY 18.)*

2. **PARTICIPATION IN WEEKLY WEB DISCUSSIONS (30%)**

3. **GROUP PROJECTS (30%)**

   A. The future of Medicare:
      (1) affordability, (2) scope of coverage, (3) privatization, (4) Medicare, Part D

   B. The pharmaceutical industry:
      (1) Research & development and marketing of drugs, (2) The role of the FDA in regulating drugs, (3) Paying for drugs: private consumers/patients, insurance companies, government (4) Importing drugs from foreign countries: pros and cons.
Students have a choice among the eight group projects outlined above, each of which involves researching a current health policy issue. Groups must be formed by the fourth week of the semester and a group paper, not exceeding 10 pages, is due to the instructor at the end of the 12th week of the semester. After review and revisions, the group papers will be posted on the web at the beginning the 14th week to be discussed by all.

(Note: Exact procedures for group formation will be posted in the announcement no later than Thursday January 25.)

Required Books


(Note: All other readings will be accessible through links imbedded in the web course material.)

Course Calendar

To view the course calendar, view the outline below or click on the Calendar link in the NUR 815 Angel web site.

Each week’s course content is placed in a separate folder under the Lessons tab, labeled by the week number and dates. For example, the first week’s content is in a folder entitled, “Week #1 Content,” and the dates for Week #1 are January 11-17, 2004. The dates for Week #2 are January 18-24, and so on.

When to Look for Course Materials

In this course, each Thursday is considered the beginning day of a new week (refer to the Course Calendar under Calendar tab). The only exception to this rule is the first week, when access to the class material is given on Monday, January 5. Thus the first "week" lasts from January 5 to Wednesday, January 17. You will always be able to see the course material for two weeks. Thus, starting on Thursday, January 18 (first day of Week #2), the materials for Weeks #2 and #3 will
be accessible to you. For each subsequent week of the course, you will also be able to view the material of the current week and that of the next week after that. Materials from past weeks will always remain accessible throughout the course. For example, on Thursday, January 25, you'll be able to see materials for Week #3 (current week), Week #4 (following week), as well as Weeks #1 and #2.

On Thursday, March 1 (the day of the mid-term exam), you will already be able to view materials for Week #9. Because of the Spring Break week (March 5-9), your weekly discussion contributions will be due by Wednesday, March 14, since ‘Week’ #9 officially ends on that day.

Starting on Thursday, April 12, you will be able to view all the posted group projects, which will then be open for general discussion during the last two weeks of the class until May 2.

**Completing and Submitting Course Assignments**

(1) Weekly discussion contributions must be posted in the Chat Room of the course section you are assigned to. They are due by **no later than 5:00 pm on Wednesday of each week** (Wednesdays are always considered the “last day” of the week throughout the course). For example, the assignments listed for Week #2 are due at the end of the day (5:00 pm) on Wednesday, January 24. It is expected that all students participate on a weekly basis. **Zero credit will be given for late postings.**

Reading Assignments and Topics for Web Discussions are posted each week. **Your contributions to these discussions form a major part of the successful completion of this course.** See also below for further comments on the weekly discussions.

(2) The mid-term exam is a written, in-class, short essay exam at locations and times to be announced two weeks in advance (see the Course Calendar for dates). You are required to attend in person, unless you can document a health or other emergency event.

(3) The group projects/group papers (see Course Calendar for due date) may be submitted in one of two ways: It may be...

1. ... posted online in the course web site drop box;
2. ... sent as a MS Word file attachment via email to Manfred, who will confirm the receipt of each paper.

**Please do not FAX or send course papers by the postal or campus mail systems, as these delivery methods have not always been reliable in the past.**
**Grading Scale and Policy:**

Grades will be posted electronically within two (2) weeks of the assignment due date. The following grading scale is used in this course:

- 4.0 = 93-100 points
- 3.5 = 86-92 points
- 3.0 = 80-85 points
- 2.5 = 75-79 points
- 2.0 = 70-74 points
- 1.5 = 65-69 points
- 1.0 = 60-64 points
- 0.0 for < 60 points

Final Course Grades are a weighted average of the mid-term exam (40%), the discussion contributions (30%) and the group paper (30%).

**Comments on Discussion Expectations**

Each week, the course faculty will post *Discussion Questions* in the online chat room. These questions generally refer to the material (textbooks and online sources) you are assigned to read for that week. While the questions probe your factual knowledge of some of the assigned material, they are primarily geared towards helping you discuss and highlight the critical issues involved in health care policy. Discussions of health care policy involve not only questions of fact, but also questions of value, e.g., attitudes towards the role of government in a market economy, attitudes concerning individual responsibility, views of justice, and so forth, etc. We may not necessarily all agree about such values, and there is absolutely no requirement that you agree with the views of the instructors or your fellow students! Instead, the primary purpose of the discussions is to show that you understand and can describe (a) the factual basis for a particular policy position and (b) the underlying value (ethical principle) that leads a person to advocate a particular policy. Should it come to major disagreements on health policy in the class discussions, we all need to remember that we should treat each other with civility and respect! In particular, if you disagree with some point of view, always give reasons for your disagreement. That way, fruitful discussions are stimulated.

Throughout each week's discussion, faculty will follow your conversations closely on a daily basis, and will contribute to the discussion from time to time, to assist in your learning. However, the discussions are meant to be primarily discussions among yourselves. If you feel that you need clarifications from the instructors on some relevant course material or discussion item, address us in the discussion forum: "Manfred, could you clarify the concept of moral hazard..." etc. Depending on the need, faculty may also offer weekly summary comments ("Discussion Synthesis") about that week's discussion, which will be posted in that week's Content folder. From time to time,
faculty may post additional questions that arise out of the week's discussions. Most important for the success of the discussions in a policy course is that no one feel constrained or shy to comment or ask questions.

If you have course-related question that refer to material from previous weeks or any other course-related issue, post your question in the “Ask Manfred” or "Ask Audrey" or "Ask Renée" link (as appropriate) under the "Lessons" tab.

Occasionally, one or the other faculty member may not be available for several days during the course of the semester, due to other professional commitments (e.g., conferences). If one of us is gone for a few days or longer and offline during that time, we will post an announcement in the course web site in advance of our absence to let you know when that will happen.

In general, we ask that you post your discussion contributions in your designated course section. In the past, we have found it unwieldy to have all students participate in a single discussion group. However, you are welcome to follow the discussions in other groups and you may, at least occasionally, contribute there, if the discussion raises an important issue. (However, you should also raise such an issue in your discussion group.)

We have opted for three discussion groups, each being primarily supervised by one of the three instructors. However, faculty may cross occasionally into other discussion groups, just as you are free to take a look there. Remember, however, that your main weekly contribution MUST be posted in your designated discussion group.

DISCUSSION GROUP ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE POSTED IN THE FIRST WEEK UNDER THE WEEK #1 LESSON.

It’s important to keep in mind that the chat room discussions are supposed to simulate a “back and forth” conversation between a group of people, in which everyone has a turn to talk, and the talk should be balanced in terms of how much each person contributes. Think about how you would interact with others at a social event, or in an in-person classroom setting. With in-person interactions, people take turns exchanging relatively brief statements about a topic of interest. Thoughtful dialog should be balanced regarding individual contributions, and we all should carefully read each other's contribution before responding. This type of dialog enhances the understanding of the course content and also conveys respect for the contributions of classmates. This does not mean that you should avoid arguing passionately for or against a particular point of view. However, all arguments should be based on reasons or cite supporting evidence.

With these thoughts about group discussions in mind, here are some more specific suggestions that may be helpful during weekly online discussions:

(1) There is no need that your first comments for a week address ALL posted discussion questions. Start with one and let others tackle different questions first.
(2) Initial contributions should be short "to get the ball rolling." That means a contribution of anywhere between 3-10 sentences would be fine.

(3) Come back later in the week and address other questions as well as the contributions of your fellow students.

(4) Past experience shows that some students are always among the first to make their contributions and others have a tendency to follow. In this class, all students are required to be first discussants at some point during the course (this will be monitored!).

(5) Given that the start of the new week is always pegged on Thursdays, it is expected that initial contributions would start no later than the following Monday. Remember, since you always get access to the material for the following week, you can plan ahead to make your contributions in time.

(6) The weekly discussions are meant to be both a learning tool and a way for faculty to check your progress in grasping the course material. While opinions and values are certainly part of policy discussions, your contributions should primarily reflect your grasp of the material and the policy issues. Show us how the concepts and facts introduced in the course material and readings help you think more clearly about the policy issues at hand!

(7) As a final rule, remember that these discussion groups occur in a public forum. That means, that you can present your and any point of view as vigorously as you like (a little spice in life is a good thing!), as long as you avoid personal attacks on others. Other than that, there are no restrictions on your contributions, although good grammar and good style are always welcome! 😊

Additional Thoughts and Suggestions

Students in prior semesters have often found it very helpful to form study groups, to discuss the course content by telephone or in person. This is a key strategy for successful learning and faculty strongly recommend it. Meeting on a regular basis with at least some other students who are taking the course with you is a relatively best way to enhance your understanding of the content. It’s best to form study groups very early in the semester. You may also want to use the group projects as a focal point for discussions of other course material.

If you find yourself experiencing academic difficulty in this course, contact the faculty as soon as you recognize this—please do not put off talking to us until it is too late! E-mail is the best way to reach us, but we are also glad to make appointments to discuss course issues with you by telephone. Phone appointments set up by e-mail (which is the preferred option!) can also facilitate faculty phoning you from the College in order to save you long distance...
telephone charges, if you live at long distance from the main MSU campus. **If you leave telephone messages for us on our office phones, please allow for delays until a response.** Depending upon our schedules for a given week, we may or may not receive phone messages in a timely fashion. In general, we make a commitment to respond to e-mail messages within 24-48 hours of when we receive them (Monday-Friday). If we are going to be off-line longer than 48 hours due to out-of-town travel, we will notify you in advance.

Finally, we welcome you to NUR841 and hope that the course will turn out to be rewarding to you as well as us.

*Manfred, Audrey and Renée*

January 2007

**Course Calendar for NUR 841 (2007):**

Week 1 (January 11-17):

- General Perspectives on the U.S. Health Care System and the Nursing Profession.
- The Contribution of Economics to Understanding the Role of Markets and Government in the Provision and Regulation of Health Services
- Professional Labor
- Costs of Health Care Services
[Readings: B&G, chapter 1; CP&P, chapters 1+4; + web-selections]

Week 2 (January 18-24):

- Basic Principles of Market Exchange:
- Determinants of Market Demand
- Determinants of Market Supply
- Price Determination and Market Equilibrium
[Readings: CP&P, chapters 2+3; + web-selections]

Week 3 (January 25-31):

- Financing of Health Care 1.
- The Effect of Third-Party Insurance on Consumer/Patient Behaviors:
- General Principles of Insurance (public or private)
- Consumer/Patient 'Moral Hazard' without Budget Constraint; 'Adverse Selection'
Financing Mechanisms: Out-of-Pocket Payments, Premiums, Co-payments, Deductibles, Flexible Spending Accounts, Health Savings Accounts

Week 4 (February 1-7):

Financing of Health Care 2.
The Effect of Reimbursement Models on Provider Incentives:
Fee-for-Service Payments
Prospective Payment Systems/Types of Capitation Payments:
Medicare DRGs, Relative Value Scales, Global Budgeting
[Readings: B&G, chapters 4+5; CP&P, chapter 12; + web-selections: CMS, Medicare Payment Systems]

Week 5 (February 8-14):

Access to Health Care Services.
Health Insurance Coverage:
Medicare, Medicaid, Other Public Insurance
Employer-based and Individual Private Insurance
Un- and Under-Insurance
Non-Insurance Barriers to Accessing Health Care Services

Week 6 (February 15-21):

Medicaid: Health Insurance for the Poor
The structure of the program; current program benefits;
Current financing; recent changes at state level;
Reimbursement under Medicaid
[Readings: B&G, chapters 2&3; + web-selections: Profile of Medicaid]

Week 7 (February 22-28):

The U.S. Health Care Delivery System:
Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Care;
General and Specialty Hospitals
Physician (individual and group) practices
Nurse-managed Care Practices
HMOs
Nursing homes
[Readings: B&G, chapters 6, 7, 10; U.S. Statistical Abstract, 2004 Edition: Section 3]

Week 8 (March 1):

MID-TERM EXAMINATION (EXACT TIME AND LOCATION TBA.)

Spring Break (March 6-12)

Week 9 (March 1-4, 12-14):

Costs of Health Care:
Cost Control and Quality of Care: Conflicting or Compatible Goals?
Cost control and Rationing of Health Care Services by Third Party Payers
Technology: Source of Cost Savings or Cost Increase?
Electronic Medical Records
[Readings: B&G, chapters 8, 9, 11 & 12; CP&P, chapters 4, 14-17; + web-selections]

Week 10 (March 15-21):

The Health Care Labor Force:
Labor Markets and Education for Nurses
Physicians & Other Health Professionals

Week 11 (March 22-28):

Health Care Systems of Other Countries:
Canada, Germany, Great Britain & Japan:
Varieties of National Health Insurance Models
[B&G: chapter 14; + web-selections]
Week 12 (March 29-April 4):

- Regulation and Licensing of Health Professions:
  - General Characteristics of Professions
  - Physicians and Nurses
  - Justifications for Professional Licensing
  - Economic Impact of Professional Licensing
  - Self-Policing of Professions
  - Professional Politics Concerning Foreign-trained Nurses and Physicians
  - Scope of Practice; State and Federal Regulation;
  - Legislative Conflicts over NP Scope of Practice
[Readings: TBA] (NOTE: DUE DATE FOR DRAFTS OF GROUP PROJECTS)

Week 13 (April 5-11):

- Policy and Professionalism Issues Related to Nursing:
  - Public Prestige/Reputation of the Nursing Profession – Media Representation
  - Major 'Divisions' or 'Interest Groups' WITHIN Nursing
  - Participation in Shaping Policy:
  - What Role can and does a Nurse play in Policy Change?
  - Responsibilities of Nurses at Different Levels: Future Challenges and Practice Issues
[Readings: TBA]

Week 14 (April 12-18):

- The Future of Medicare: Group Projects posted on ANGEL

Week 15 (April 19-25):

- The Pharmaceutical Industry: Group Projects posted on ANGEL