

## PhD in Social and Political Sciences

### Course: HEALTH & SOCIETY

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#### **Instructors:**

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#### **Course Description**

The field of health is dynamic and complex as health of individuals is influenced by a diversity of interconnected factors, and different sectors and actors are involved. On the other side, all economic and social institutions fully depend on the activities performed by people and thus their health status is of fundamental importance for a society as a whole. We live in an era when health and healthcare present unique challenges and opportunities for societies throughout the globe. While there are new advances, innovations, and healthcare technologies, there are also increasing inequalities, increasing costs, changing social and ethical issues, emerging health problems, health policy challenges and a number of other health and quality of life issues. Students of the Health & Society course examine these important issues and address them through the critical, constructive lens of social sciences. The Health & Society course explores the broad socio-demographic, cultural and political contexts that underlie health of individuals, organization of healthcare systems and health policy. Perspectives adopted are that of individual (behavior) and population (system wide) while main disciplinary focus is on health policy and health economics fields.

The course aims at familiarizing the students with the concrete application of research methodologies used in health economics and policy, giving them the opportunity to experience for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of such approaches. The course, therefore, will entail traditional lectures, the discussion of scholarly papers and examples of evaluations conducted with the methodologies discussed. By the end of the course, students should be able to undertake empirical work that has the potential to advance knowledge in those areas.

#### **Coursework and Grading**

- 1) **Students' presentations** (30%) – Throughout the course students will have the chance to present selected papers on a chosen topic related to the course contents.
- 2) **Final exam** (70%)

## SYLLABUS

Date	Topic
<b>Lesson 1</b>	Introduction to the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and society: exploring the bidirectional link through research</li> <li>• Social, economic, political determinants of health: prevalent theories and models</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons 2&amp;3</b>	The socioeconomic gradient in health and health inequity: <i>paper discussion</i>  Focus: Use of intersectionality theories to study health inequality among older population
<b>Lesson 4</b>	Health co-benefits to other sectors in the society: theoretical framework and current research  <i>Class discussion on selected papers (student presentation)</i>
<b>Lesson 5</b>	Economic evaluation in healthcare: theoretical underpinnings and empirical applications  Measuring of health outcomes: theoretical underpinnings and empirical challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring quality of life</li> <li>• Monetary value of health benefits</li> <li>• Beyond health outcomes – wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 6</b>	Optimal health expenditure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macro-level expenditure: effectiveness and efficiency</li> <li>• Trends in macro-level expenditure</li> <li>• Budget cuts and health outcomes</li> </ul> <i>Student presentation</i>
<b>Lesson 7</b>	Determinants of health expenditure: aging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determinants of healthcare spending</li> <li>• Common arguments for healthcare expenditure growth: aging</li> </ul> <i>Student presentation</i>
<b>Lesson 8</b>	

	<p>Determinants of health spending: innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation and R&amp;D spending in healthcare: incentives and costs</li> <li>• Are companies under/over investing in R&amp;D?</li> <li>• Are prices too high?</li> </ul> <p><i>Student presentation</i></p>
<b>Lesson 9</b>	<p>Determinants of health spending: health behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health behaviors and healthcare spending</li> <li>• Are bad behaviors “rational”?</li> <li>• Policies and health behaviors</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons 10 &amp; 11</b>	<p>Experimental studies in health economics &amp; policy research</p> <p>Focus: Discrete choice experiments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison to other design used in health service research</li> <li>• Overview of applications of experimental studies in health economics and policy</li> <li>• Introduction to Discrete Choice Experiments: what are they and their application in health economics?</li> </ul>
<b>Lesson 12</b>	<p>Final session</p> <p><i>Free topic: class discussion</i></p> <p>Course Wrap-up</p>

***Readings and references: posted on Blackboard***