

PhD in Social and Political Sciences

Course: HEALTH & SOCIETY

a.y.2022-2023

Instructor:

Aleksandra Torbica

Associate Professor - Department of Social and Political Sciences

Office: 3-C1-04 – Via Roentgen 1

email: aleksandra.torbica@unibocconi.it

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) **Research proposal** (70%) – In the last week of the course students will present their *preliminary research proposal* to receive feedback from the instructor and other students. Few weeks after the end of the course, students will submit a *complete research proposal* including a full review of related literature, hypotheses, description of the intended study design, feasibility issues and tentative budget.

Topic covered in the course

- Social determinants of health
- Health and society in the pandemic era
- Health, healthcare and health systems
- Priority setting in health care
- Economic evaluation in health care: theoretical underpinnings and empirical applications
- Measuring health outcomes: methodological challenges
- Experimental studies in health economics & policy research (focus: discrete choice experiments)

SYLLABUS

Date	Topic & readings
Monday March 13 th 10.15-11.45	Introduction to the course Health, healthcare and health systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Policy and Systems: an introduction for PhD students • Measuring health system performance
Wednesday March 16 th 12.00-13.30	Social, economic, political determinants of health (I): conceptual framework and current research
Thursday March 22 th 8.30-10.00	Social, economic, political determinants of health (II) <i>Class discussion on selected papers (students' presentation)</i>
Wednesday March 22 nd 10.15-11.45	The Political Determinants of Health (guest lecture by Renu Singh)
Monday March 27 th 10.15-11.45	Health <i>in</i> all vs. Health <i>for</i> all policies (I): conceptual framework
Wednesday March 29 th 10.15-11.45	Health in all vs. Health for all policies (II): <i>Class discussion on selected papers (students' presentation)</i>
Monday April 3 rd 10.15-11.45	Health economics: overview of research themes and emerging issues
Monday April 3 rd 12.00-13.30	Priority setting and economic evaluation in healthcare: theoretical underpinnings and empirical applications
Wednesday April 5 th 10.15-11.45	Measuring of health outcomes: theoretical underpinnings and empirical challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring quality of life • Monetary value of health benefits

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond health outcomes – wellbeing
<p>Friday April 14th 8.30-10.00 10.15.11.45</p>	<p>Experimental studies in health economics & policy research Discrete choice experiments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison to other design used in health service research Overview of applications of experimental studies in health economics and policy introduction to Discrete Choice Experiments: what are they and their application in health economics?
<p>Thursday April 27th (tbc) 10.15-11-45</p>	<p>Course wrap-up and research proposal discussion In the last session of the course, students will have the opportunity to present their draft research proposals and get feedback.</p>