Health Economics
ECON 450
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Fall 2025 Syllabus[1]

Logistics

Instructor: Andrés Hincapié
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Gardner 101

Department: Economics
Credit Hours: 3.0

Lectures:

Section 1:
T/Th 11:00-12:15 PM
Gardner 309

Section 2:
T/Th 12:30-1:45 AM
Gardner 309

Office Hours: On Zoom
You MUST ask for a time slot via email before the start of office hours
Mondays 4:00-5:30 PM
ZOOM LINK
Meeting ID: 976 5540 2656
Passcode: 590432

Prerequisites:
ECON 400 and 410, a grade of C or better in both courses is required.
Permission of the instructor for students lacking the prerequisites.

Textbook:
Bhattacharya, Jay, Timothy Hyde, and Peter Tu. *Health Economics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Course Description

Health and health care are often contentious topics of discussion. The attention the public pays to the topic is not misplaced. National health care expenditures as a percent of the GDP have been growing over the last 50 years but the U.S. ranks low among developed nations in public health measures such as life-expectancy and infant mortality.

In this class we will study the market for health and health care focusing on basic economic concepts to understand the choices of agents in these markets as well as interactions between agents (consumers, firms, and the government). The course **largely relies on mathematical, economic models** to develop the fundamental ideas in health economics; hence, students are expected to be familiar with multivariate calculus and intermediate microeconomics. The course is specially aimed at Economics undergrads but students from other fields with some background in economics and mathematics should also benefit from taking the course. Students should expect to learn the main features of health care markets.

The course will generally follow the textbook with added materials from the academic literature. The slides will be fairly self-contained but reading the textbook will help you understand concepts even further.

[1]This version was compiled on `November 17, 2025`. I will notify you of any updates to the syllabus.

Course Goals and Key Learning Objectives

The course aims for students to:

- become familiar with basic national trends describing health and the healthcare sector as well as empirical results describing demand for healthcare.
- understand the Grossman model of health production and its implications.
- know some of the hypotheses explaining health disparities across socio-economics groups and to be able to analyze them in the context of an economic model.
- understand economic arguments explaining unhealthy behaviors.
- know basic characteristics of the market for physicians and have a basic understanding of the role hospitals play in the supply of healthcare.
- understand the concept of insurance and why individuals demand it.
- understand and distinguish the concepts of adverse selection and moral hazard, and be able to identify health-related environments where they might emerge.
- become familiar with the role of innovation and technology in healthcare markets.
- understand common issues associated with designing health policies.
- recognize the main approaches to healthcare provision adopted by nations around the world and their main motivations and obstacles.
- have a basic understanding of various econometric methods that economists use to study health and healthcare.

Grading

You have two alternatives to choose from depending on whether or not you want part of your grade to depend on participation. Please select your grading alternative using **THIS LINK.** **If you do not choose an alternative the default is no participation (Alternative B)**. Hence, students asked to actively participate are the ones who selected to do so. If you join the course after the deadline for answering the Google form, and you would like to be in alternative A, please notify me via email. Otherwise you will be allocated to alternative B.

Alternative A:

- Midterm (2): 14% (each)
- Final: 24%
- Problem sets (7 or 8): 27% (total)
- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 8%
- Student presentations: 8%

Alternative B:

- Midterm (2): 18% (each)
- Final: 24%
- Problem sets (7 or 8): 27% (total)
- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 0%
- Student presentations: 8%

- *Exams.* All exams are closed book and no electronic devices are allowed. However, I allow for *cheat sheets*. A *cheat sheet* is a two-sided, letter size, white paper sheet in which you can write anything you want. For each of the midterms I allow **one** cheat-sheet. For the final I allow **two** cheat-sheets.

  The **final exam** is cumulative. Anything discussed in class can enter in the exams unless stated otherwise, even if it was not part of a problem set. For exams and problem sets students will get numeric grades on a 100 point base.

- *Problem sets.* The problem set overall grade will be the average grade across all the problem sets. Groups of at most two people may work together in their problem sets and turn in one single set of solutions for both individuals. Solutions to the problem sets will be made available to allow for exam preparation.

  The problem sets will be posted and must be submitted through Gradescope. They must be solved on the form provided (the same way you do with exams).

- *Attendance.* I will do random checks of attendance during the semester. You **lose 10 points** off your attendance grade for every class you are not present.

- *Participation.* If you choose **Alternative A** you are agreeing to being randomly selected to provide your answer to various questions I ask during class. There is no penalty for answers that are not correct (we all learn a little from making mistakes in class) but I will note if you are not paying attention to class and adjust your grade accordingly. If you chose this alternative please help the class by paying attention and being engaged with the content of the class. You **lose 8 points** off your participation grade for every class in which I happen to draw your name for a question and you are not present.

- *Presentations.* You will choose your own group. The group will choose their own topic from a number of academic journals suggested. The number of members in the group, as well as the time allotted for each presentation, will depend on the number of students in the class.

- *Overall.* At the end of the semester, final numerical grades will be approximated to their closets integer and converted back to letter grades when reported to the system using the following conversion table:

Letter Grade	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
A	95	100
A-	90	94
B+	87	89
B	83	86
B-	80	82
C+	77	79
C	73	76
C-	70	72
D+	65	69
D	60	64
F	0	59

- *Re-grading.* Inquiries regarding re-grades are allowed only within a week of receiving your grade. Due to time limitations to report final grades, requests for regrading the final exam are not allowed.

Policies and Expectations

Class Conduct. During class and office hours (and hopefully in your life in general!) I expect we all communicate with respect and civility.

Attendance. Following university policy: No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences: Authorized University activities; disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC); significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the EOC. Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences.

Honor Code. All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from lying, cheating, or stealing in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult honor.unc.edu.

Accessibility Resources and Services. UNC facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with

documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Title IX Resources. Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Other Resources

The academic papers in the "Reading" column of the schedule will be posted in "Reserves" on Sakai. If you ever need assistance from a librarian, Nancy Lovas is the economics librarian. She is available to work with you on your research if you were to need it. You can email or meet with her to talk about developing a research question, identifying databases, how to search for information, literature reviews, finding datasets, and more. You can make an appointment with Nancy at https://calendar.lib.unc.edu/appointments/business or contact her via email at nancy64@email.unc.edu.

Tentative Schedule - Fall 2025

Week	Day	Date	Unit	Topic	Suggested Readings	Comments
1	Tu	8/19	Intro	Intro	Ch 1*, Cutler, Rosen, and Vijan (2006), Fuchs (2012)*	
1	Th	8/21	Demand	Demand for health care	Ch 2*, Finkelstein et al. (2012), Keeler et al. (1988) (Summary)	HW1 Posted
2	Tu	8/26	Demand	Grossman model	Ch 3*, Grossman (1972)	
2	Th	8/28	Demand	Grossman model	Ch 3*, Grossman (1972)	HW1 Due
3	Tu	9/2	Demand	Health Disparities	Ch 4*	HW2 Posted
3	Th	9/4	Demand	Health "bads"	Becker, Grossman, and Murphy (1994)	
4	Tu	9/9	Demand	Health "bads"	Becker, Grossman, and Murphy (1994)	HW2 Due
4	Th	9/11	Demand	Health "bads"	Becker, Grossman, and Murphy (1994)	HW3 Posted
5	Tu	9/16	Review	Review session for MT 1		HW3 Due
5	Th	9/18	EXAM	MIDTERM 1		
6	Tu	9/23	Supply	Physician Labor Market	Ch 5*	
6	Th	9/25	Information	Demand for insurance	Ch 7*	HW4 Posted
7	Tu	9/30	Information	Demand for insurance	Ch 7*	
7	Th	10/2	Information	Adverse selection	Ch 8*, Akerlof (1970)	HW4 Due
8	Tu	10/7	NO CLASS			Well-being day
8	Th	10/9	Information	Adverse selection	Ch 8*, Akerlof (1970)	HW5 Posted
9	Tu	10/14	Information	Adverse selection & Risk Aversion	Ch 9*, Ch 10*	HW5 Due
9	Th	10/16	NO CLASS			Fall Break
10	Tu	10/21	Information	Adverse selection & Risk Aversion	Ch 9*, Ch 10*	HW6 Posted
10	Th	10/23	Information	Adverse selection & Risk Aversion	Ch 9*, Ch 10*	
11	Tu	10/28	Review	Review session for MT 2		HW6 Due
11	Th	10/30	EXAM	MIDTERM 2		
12	Tu	11/4	Information	Moral hazard	Ch 11*	Presentation rules
12	Th	11/6	Health Policy	Moral hazard	Ch 11*	
13	Tu	11/11	Health Policy	Beveridge and Bismark models	Ch 15*, Ch 16*, Ch 17*, Ringard (2012)*, Or et al. (2010)*, Ringard (2012)*	HW7 Posted
13	Th	11/13	Health Policy	American model	Ch 18*	
14	Tu	11/18		Student Presentations		HW7 Due
14	Th	11/20		Student Presentations		
15	Tu	11/25	Health Policy	HTA	Ch 14*	
15	Th	11/27	NO CLASS			Thanksgiving Break
16	Tu	12/2	Review	Review session for FINAL		
Final	Mo	12/8	EXAM S2	4:00-7:00 PM		
Final	Tu	12/9	EXAM S1	12:00-3:00 PM		

Notes: The class schedule is subject to changes depending on how the class develops. Readings marked with a star are the most relevant for the class. Other readings are suggested.

References

Akerlof, George A. 1970. "The Market for "Lemons": Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 84 (3):488–500.

Becker, Gary S., Michael Grossman, and Kevin M. Murphy. 1994. "An Empirical Analysis of Cigarette Addiction." *The American Economic Review* 84 (3):396–418.

Cutler, David, Allison B. Rosen, and Sandeep Vijan. 2006. "The Value of Medical Spending in the United States, 1960-2000." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 355 (9):920–927.

Finkelstein, Amy, Sarah Taubman, Bill Wright, Mira Bernstein, Jonathan Gruber, Joseph P. Newhouse, Heidi Allen, Katherine Baicker, and Oregon Health Study Group. 2012. "The Oregon Health Insurance Experiment: Evidence from the First Year." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127 (3):1057–1106.

Fuchs, Victor R. 2012. "Major Trends in the U.S. Health Economy since 1950." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 366 (11):973–977.

Grossman, Michael. 1972. "On the Concept of Health Capital and the Demand for Health." *The Journal of Political Economy* 80 (2):223–255.

Keeler, Emmett B., Joan L. Buchanan, John E. Rolph, Janet M. Hanley, and David M. Reboussin. 1988. *The Demand for Episodes of Medical Treatment in the Health Insurance Experiment.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Or, Zeynep, Chantal Cases, Melanie Lisac, Karsten Vrangbaek, Ulrika Winblad, and Gwyn Bevan. 2010. "Are health problems systemic? Politics of access and choice under Beveridge and Bismarck systems." *Health Economics, Policy and Law* 5:269–293.

Ringard, Ånen. 2012. "Equitable access to elective hospital services: The introduction of patient choice in a decentralised healthcare system." *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 40:10–17.