

Health Economics

Last Updated: Sun, 01/04/2026

Course prefix: ECON

Course number: 4510

Section: GL2

CRN (you may add up to five):

34815

Instructor First Name: Rachel

Instructor Last Name: Behrman

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course surveys theoretical and empirical evidence on current issues in health and health care. The course presents individual-level models of health behaviors and the demand for health and medical insurance. Students analyze the economic behaviors of physicians, hospitals, and insurance companies as well as the possible role of government in encouraging the equitable and efficient performance of health markets. The course emphasizes current debates involving individual health decisions, health care reform, and the diffusion of new medical technologies.

Course learning outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Explain the core concepts of health economic theory (e.g. adverse selection, moral hazard), and apply economic models to case studies and real-life examples
- Describe consumer and producer behavior as it relates to the healthcare system, and how government intervention affects competition, incentives, innovation, and equilibrium outcomes on price, quantity, and quality in the market.
- Analyze the US healthcare system, discuss influential government involvement (such as the Affordable Care Act), and compare it to alternative systems
- Critically discuss current events and public policy initiatives

Required course materials:

Health Economics by Jay Bhattacharya, Timothy Hyde, and Peter Tu. 2013. Bloomsbury.

Additional reading material (e.g. journal articles, news) will be made available in Modules on Canvas along with a list of useful resources. Some of these documents will be required reading before attending class on a given day.

Grading policy:

Your final grade will be composed as follows:

- Top 3 of Exams (3) and Final (1): 63% (21*3)
- Problem Sets: 20%
- Comparative Healthcare System Presentation: 10%
- In-Class Participation: 7%

Description of Graded Components

Examinations: This class will have three exams and one final exam. I will drop your lowest score so that your top three scores make up your final grade. If you are running late to the exam for some legitimate reason, please email me as soon as possible, so that I know to allow you to take the exam. Make-up exams will be given with an excused absence (see make-up policy below). The dates for the exams are listed in the schedule at the end of the syllabus, but **are subject to change as necessary. Students are expected to arrive on time for exams, especially for the final exam. The instructor reserves the right to deny students the ability to take the final exam if they are over an hour late arriving to the final.**

Problem Sets: Problem sets will be posted on Canvas to solidify your understanding of the material for the exam. Due dates for these will be posted with each problem set and will be due in class on that day. You are welcome to work with your classmates, but everyone should turn in their own problem set and explanations should be in your own words.

Comparative Healthcare System Presentation: Students will form groups and give a 9-minute presentation on a country's healthcare system. Signups will occur in class and any students leftover will be assigned by the instructor. This presentation will address the topics listed below. The presentation will occur near the end of the semester on the day assigned to your country. Slides must be uploaded the night before your assigned presentation date.

- Overview: where is the country, what language(s) do they speak, and/or anything else that's relevant to their health care system.
- Payer system: single v. multiple payers (i.e., insurers), public v. private, etc.
- Coverage: who is/isn't insured? Is insurance coverage mandatory/universal?
- Anything you (or others) view as exceptional or unusual about the country's health care system and/or health outcomes, including challenges (e.g., political, economic, etc.) to providing health care services or improving health outcomes
- Conclude by answering the question: Would you implement this healthcare system in the U.S.? Why or why not? Elaborate on this response.

In-Class Participation: We will have graded in-class participation activities throughout the semester, approximately one per two lecture classes. These may be submitting a two-sentence free response thought on the material this week, doing a math exercise in small groups, or some other form of engagement. I will take attendance through Canvas and you will receive full credit if you are in class that day. I will drop your lowest two scores. If you are sick or have an emergency, please message the TA in Canvas for the access code.

Extra Credit

Any extra credit opportunities will be announced in class and made available to the entire class. There will be no individual extra credit offered out of consideration towards fairness to the rest of the class.

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100.99%
B	80-89.99%
C	70-79.99%
D	60-69.99%
F	0-59.99%

Grade cutoffs are final and grades do not round up. I do not arbitrarily raise any individual's grade at the end of the semester to bump a student above a letter grade cutoff. I consider it unethical to change a student's grade at the end of the semester; I will not respond to those emails and please do not ask. For fairness reasons, all opportunities for grade increases will be captured in extra credit assignments that are offered to the entire class. For pass/fail students, a C or higher is passing.

Attendance policy:

Attendance in class is expected and will help you better learn the material. This is, in part, enforced through the weekly in-class participation (message the TA on Canvas with any questions about this). However, I do not want students coming to class sick and I realize that circumstances may arise that prevent a student from attending class on a certain day. For that reason, please message me on Canvas if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of

academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in

foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support

students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical,

economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion