



Department of Economics Course Outline

Course:	ECON 679/MDSC 679 [Health Economics I]	Term:	Winter 2008
Time:	M 09:00 – 12:00	Section:	01
Instructor:	Dr. Herb Emery	Place:	HSC G732 (subject to change)
Office:	HSG0121, Health Sciences Centre	Telephone:	220-8625
Office Hours:	TBA	E-mail:	hemery@ucalgary.ca

Course Description

This course provides an overview of topics in health economics. The aim of the course is to introduce students to economic principles and techniques which are of use in analyzing and planning health policy, in particular the delivery of health services, and for understanding the health behaviour of individuals. The course will be run as a combination of lectures and seminar discussions. A list of topics to be covered over the term can be found below.

Prerequisite

The course is open to graduate students in Economics as well as students in Community Health Sciences (or other health sciences).

Required Resources

There is no set textbook for this course. A list of relevant textbook reference resources and journal articles will be distributed in class. Selected articles and book chapters will be provided on the UofC BLACKBOARD site for this course.

Suggested Textbook

See above.

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Course Goals

The course goals are to:

Have students understand of how economics can contribute to the organization and financing of health services, the evaluation of health and health care alternatives, decision making in a health environment and insight into the health behaviour of individuals.

Students who are new to economics will gain an understanding of how economic incentives influence key factors in the health care system even when explicit markets for health care services do not exist in the traditional sense.

Graduate students in economics will gain an understanding of the challenges for analyzing, and setting policy, for an important sector that lacks the market structures that economists typically appeal to in their work.

Much of health economics is applied in a multidisciplinary context, thus, it is important the economists become adept at explaining their ideas in a language accessible to non-economists. Equally, health researchers benefit by learning the language and concepts of economics. An emphasis will be placed on facilitating an exchange of learning between these two groups of students.

Learner Objectives

Following completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Integrate economic concepts into their future research
- Identify the strengths and limitations of economic and non-economic research methods/tools.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Community Health Sciences expects **intellectual honesty** from its students. Course participants should be aware of University policies relating to Principles of Conduct, Plagiarism and Academic Integrity. These are found in the printed Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar, or online under Faculty Regulations in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar, or at www.ualgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/how/How_LB.htm.

Cut Points For Grades

This course adheres to the grading system outlined in the University of Calgary, Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar. Percentage/letter-grade conversions are standard for courses in the Department of Community Health Sciences.

Grade	Course %	Grade Point Value*	Graduate Description*
A+	97-100	4.0	Outstanding
A	90-96.5	4.0	Excellent
A-	85-89.5	3.7	Very good performance
B+	77-84.5	3.3	Good performance
B	72-76.5	3.0	Satisfactory performance
B-	68-71.5	2.7	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Grad Studies
C+	63-67.5	2.3	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	60-62.5	2.0	

Late Assignments:

- Assignments are due on the specified date by 9 AM. Students who hand in assignments late will be penalized 10% per day for handing in late. Assignments that are handed in 7 calendar days or more after the due date will be refused and the students assigned a score of zero for the assignment.
- Students may hand in assignments late without penalty under the following circumstances:
 - The student has discussed the timelines with course instructor in advance of the due date and the course instructor has granted an extension
 - There is a valid health or family emergency such as is discussed under the University regulations for deferral of final examinations. Students may be required to provide the Course Coordinator with such documentation related to illness and/or emergency as is discussed and required in the University regulations pertaining to deferral of final examinations. This information can be found in the University Calendar.

Evaluation Plan

Due Dates	% of Final Mark	Evaluation Method
#1: Monday January 28	20%	Media Excitement (3 to 5 pages) - you will identify and summarize one article from a newspaper or widely read periodical that has gained considerable attention from the public. In addition to the summary, you will critique the piece assessing the quality of the economic argument and the extent to which the claims are based on economic evidence.
#2 Monday March 3	30%	Economic Evaluation Exercise – You will identify a treatment, technology, policy or program relevant to the delivery or finance of health care. You will describe the program and define the appropriate evaluation framework for assessing your chosen object. You will then detail the information that you would require to perform the evaluation and within the time possible, gather the information that you can to do a “partial” evaluation.
#3: Monday April 21	30%	What Can Health Services Research Gain from Health Economics? Choose a research topic, or research area, where the published work has not been carried out by economists. You will want to pick a well defined topic since you will need to find 5 to 10 articles published on this topic over the last 5 years. Where possible, choose the work considered to be “seminal” or exemplary of the highest quality for the area. Summarize the major findings, sources of evidence and policy implications of the work. Next you will assess what the underlying economics of the work appears to be. After that, you will identify key economic insights with respect to research program design (e.g. sampling), and/or data analysis, and/or interpretation of evidence that are missing from the work. Finally you will describe how you would do a study that addresses the claims that you have previously made.
#4 Monday April 21	20%	Class Participation – based on attendance, interactions/contributions in class, and demonstrated familiarity with course readings.

Preliminary Schedule of Topics – Winter 2008

Week 1	January 14	Introduction to the economics of health and health care The nature of health care, markets and market failure
Week 2	January 21	Health Care Outcomes and Health Care Systems;
Week 3	January 28	Socio-economic determinants of health
Week 4	February 4	Economic Evaluation in health and health care Introduction to principles, Types of economic evaluations
Week 5	February 11	Economic Evaluation – continued
Week 6	February 25	Economic Evaluation – Continued
Week 7	March 3	Economics of health behaviour
Week 8	March 10	Incentives -- paying providers
Week 9	March 17	Incentives -- Managing Demand
Week 10	March 24	Technology
Week 11	March 31	Pharmaco-economics
Week 12	April 7	Debates over private versus public delivery, and private and public finance in Canada
Week 13	April 14	Wrap-up; Class Evaluation

Safewalk / Campus Security: 220-5333
