Purpose: This class will briefly discuss the basics of health economics and the use of empirical methods to isolate the causal effects of laws on individual behavior and health outcomes. We will then analyze a host of current issues in health policy, including the effect of insurance coverage on health, the determinants and the effects of the rise in obesity in the developed world, and what drives the explosion of healthcare costs in the U.S. No prior training in economics or statistics is required.

Evaluation: Grades will be based entirely on two components: 1) a written paper submitted by midnight on May 6, 2011 will count for 90 percent of the grade; 2) the remaining 10 percent will be based on 4 short (2 pages each maximum) papers as described below.

Short Papers: For each week in the schedule (beginning with February 3), we will be discussing a set of papers. For 4 out of 10 of the weeks, write a brief response to one of the papers for that week which includes the following: 1) a statement of the research question; 2) a short discussion of why the question is important; 3) a brief discussion of the research design; 4) a statement of the findings; and 5) a description of the major limitations of the study. Upload this paper to the document dropbox in the course portal BEFORE class begins on the day we will be discussing the paper. If you complete 1-5, you get full credit. If you miss one of the points, you get no credit.

January 13 Introduction
January 20 Economics of Health
January 27 Basics of Empirical Analysis

February 3 Determinants of Healthcare Costs in the U.S.


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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 10</td>
<td>No class (to be made up)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>No class (Spring Break)</td>
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<td>March 17</td>
<td>Is Insurance Unaffordable?</td>
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March 24

Poverty and Health


March 31

Bankruptcy and Health

David U. Himmelstein, Elizabeth Warren, Deborah Thorne and Steffie Woolhandler (2005), “MarketWatch: Illness And Injury As Contributors To Bankruptcy,” Health Affairs


April 7

Obesity


April 14

Pharmaceuticals


April 21