

ECON 456/PUBP 514: Economics of Health and Health Care
Spring 2024
TR 12:30-1:50 pm, Chancellors 134

Instructor

Jennifer Mellor, Paul R. Verkuil Professor of Economics and Public Policy

Contacting Me

Email: My W&M email address is jmmell@wm.edu. I will generally respond within 24 hours to emails received during the week; it will take me longer to reply if your email is sent over the weekend, so please plan accordingly.

Office Hours: I am available to meet with students every Tuesday and Thursday from 2-3 pm in my office in Chancellors (#433), no appointment required. If these times don't work for you, please email me to suggest some alternate times/days.

Course Description

This course uses economic analysis to study health and health care with a particular emphasis on the role of the public sector. It is divided into two parts. The first part of the course focuses on the *economics of public health*, specifically non-medical determinants of health, such as socioeconomic status, health behaviors, and government policies. The second part of the course focuses on the *economics of public insurance for healthcare*; topics include the economics of Medicare, Medicaid, and subsidies for insurance. In both parts, we will begin our study with a review of core economic theories and models, and then turn to policy applications.

A note on the composition of the class: ECON 456 and PUBP 514 are cross listed, which means class meetings are attended both by students from the W&M Master's in Public Policy Program and by advanced undergraduate students. The content of weekly course readings and two short tests, as well as expectations for class participation, will be the same for both groups of students. The design of other assignments will differ; I'll make these differences clear in the assignment instructions I post on Blackboard and review in class.

This Course & the Course Catalog

For undergraduates: This course requires ECON 303 and ECON 308 and fulfills the Economics major writing requirement.

For BA-BS + MPP students: You can earn credit for either the 500-level version of this course, or the 400-level version, but not both.

For all MPP students: This course counts as elective credit toward the MPP upon earning a C or better.

Course Learning Objectives:

In completing this course, students will:

- Learn a set of concepts, theories, and models central to the economics of health and healthcare.
- Apply these concepts, theories, and models to study the design and effects of public policies intended to improve health and healthcare access.
- Critically assess quantitative research in the field of health economics/health policy evaluation.
- ECON students: Learn by doing as you design a research proposal on a topic of your choice suitable for the course; improve your critical thinking skills, written and oral communication skills and your familiarity with data sources.
- PUBP students: Learn by doing as you develop evidence-based policy recommendations in a policy brief on a topic of your choosing suitable for the course; improve your ability to communicate with policy audiences and your knowledge of specific health policies.

Evaluation and Grading

<i>Item</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Date</i>
Test #1	17%	In class on 2/20
Test #2	17%	In class on 4/9
Research Corner Assignment	10%	Due on Bb on 3/6
Interim Deliverables for Project		
Topic Brainstorm	5%	Due on Bb on 3/26
Outline	8%	Due on Bb on 4/16
Oral Presentation of Research Proposal or Policy Brief	8%	PUBP: In class on 4/30 ECON: In class on 5/2
Written Research Proposal or Policy Brief	25%	Due 5/7, noon
Participation	10%	Each class period

Tests

Two in-class tests will assess your knowledge of foundational theoretical concepts and models used in health economics. The first test will cover concepts, theories, and models related to the economics of public health and the second will cover concepts, theories, and models related to the economics of health insurance. Each test will be 50 minutes in length; the rest of the class period will be spent on other relevant course material.

Research Corner Assignment

A short writing-and-research assignment will help you apply what you will learn about assessing quantitative research in health economics. In this assignment, you will choose a research article that relates to themes covered in the first half of the semester and write a summary/evaluation of the article for a policy audience in the style of [Tradeoffs Research Corner](#). Instructions will be provided in class.

Project and Interim Deliverables, Presentation

The goal of this larger project is to create an original product that builds on content and approaches you will learn in this course and allows you to learn by doing. ECON students will work in pairs to design a *Research Proposal*, while PUBP students will work individually to develop a *Policy Brief*. All students will choose a topic area of interest to them, provided it fits the bounds of the course. I'll provide detailed

instructions on the timeline and requirements and provide feedback on student progress as you complete two interim deliverables (a *topic brainstorm* and an *outline*). An in-class *presentation* on the final deliverable will help you develop your oral communication skills in this field.

Participation

Discussion of course concepts is important for both individual and collective learning. Effective participation in this course means sharing points of understanding, points of confusion, and points of view on the topics of the day with others in the course. I especially encourage contributions that respond to pre-posted questions on Blackboard or other aspects of readings; link to what others have said or to prior course readings; or lead to a clearer statement of concepts being discussed or attempt to synthesize the discussion.

I take attendance and assess classroom discussion daily. Multiple absences over the semester will reduce your maximum possible participation grade. If you miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to obtain notes and follow up on what you missed.

Required Readings

Readings from the course are available on Blackboard and unless otherwise noted, are required. To increase your understanding of the material and your ability to contribute to class discussions, please complete readings before coming to class.

Student Wellbeing

W&M recognizes that students juggle different responsibilities and can face challenges that make learning difficult. There are many resources available at W&M to help student navigate emotional/psychological, physical/medical, material/accessibility concerns, including the [W&M Counseling Center](#) (757-221-3620), where services are free and confidential, and the [W&M Health Center](#) (757-221-4386). For additional support or resources and questions, please contact the Dean of Students at 757-221-2510. For a list of many other resources available to students, see [Health and Wellness Resources for Students](#).

Course Policies

Grading scale. Letter grades for the course will be based on a standard 100-point scale as determined by the following ranges: A (>=93 through 100), A- (>=90 through <93), B+ (>=88 through <90), B (>=83 through <88), B- (>=80 through <83), C+ (>=78 through <80), C (>=73 through <78), C- (>=70 through <73), D+ (>=68 through <70), D (>=63 through <68), D- (>=60 through <63), and F (less than 60).

Blackboard. The Blackboard website is the central repository for the course. I will use it to communicate with the class as a group, accept and grade response paper submissions, and post materials for the course. Make sure that you regularly check both it and the email account associated with Blackboard.

Late work. Assignments submitted after the due date will receive deductions of 5 percentage points per day. Deductions will not be prorated by the portion of the day: i.e., an assignment that is turned in any time after the deadline will receive at least a 5-point deduction.

Etiquette. Please do not use devices during class for non-class-related activities. Many research studies show that using laptops/phones during class to browse social media, shop, catch-up on email, etc. causes harmful effects: it distracts other students, it lowers the quality of classroom interaction, and it reduces the multi-tasker's grades and level of comprehension. I reserve the right to ask you to close laptops during face-to-face meetings.

Disabilities. William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2512 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please see www.wm.edu/sas.

Honor Code. Academic integrity is at the heart of W&M, and we all are responsible for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. The [Student Handbook](#) includes your responsibilities as a student and the full Code. The use or incorporation of any AI-generated content (from ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) in assignments is not allowed and if suspected will be treated as an Honor violation. Submitted work may be reviewed, as needed, for AI-generated content as well as plagiarism and improper citation. I expect your full participation and observance of the Honor Code.

COVID and this course. Please follow W&M requirements and guidelines about COVID safety which are available here: https://www.wm.edu/about/administration/emergency/current_issues/coronavirus/.

Course Resources

Library Research Services (all). William & Mary Libraries offers free research assistance to all students at W&M. Research librarians hold a graduate degree in library science and are trained to help users find, evaluate, and ethically use high-quality sources for their research projects. To make an appointment, visit libraries.wm.edu/ask. Students may also receive drop-in research help during business hours by visiting the front desk of Swem Library or live chat with a librarian 24/7 at libraries.wm.edu

Writing and Communication Center (for undergraduates). The Writing and Communication Center, located on the first floor of Swem Library, is a free service provided to W&M students. Trained consultants offer individual assistance with writing, presentation, and other communication assignments across disciplines and at any stage, from generating ideas to polishing a final product. The WCC's goal is to help you become a better writer and communicator. To make an appointment, visit the WCC webpage (<http://www.wm.edu/wcc>).

The Graduate Writing and Communication Center (for master's Students). The GWCC is a free resource brought to you through a partnership between the A&S Graduate Center and the Writing and Communication Center. Located on the first floor of Swem Library, the GWCC welcomes grad students for individual help at any stage of writing, from generating ideas to polishing a final draft. We offer individual writing consultations as well as occasional [GWCC Workshops](#) and [Write-ins on Saturday mornings](#). Visit the [Grad Center Events Calendar](#) for upcoming GWCC events.

Course Calendar

The table below shows the topics we will cover this semester. Details on readings are available on Blackboard. I reserve the right to make slight adjustments to topics/readings for select class periods based on our progress in previous class periods and any weather-related class cancellations. I will notify you in advance of any such changes.

Date	Major Topic
1/25	Introduction to US population health and health insurance
1/30	Production of Health: The Grossman Model; SES and Health
2/1	Production of Health: The Rational Addiction Model
2/6	Behavioral Economics and Health
2/8	Public sector intervention (COI, health externalities)
2/13	Public sector intervention (CV, WTP)
2/15	Statistical Tools for Health Economists
2/20	TEST #1
2/22	Policy 1: The obesity epidemic
2/27	Policy 2: The opioid epidemic
2/29	Policy 3: Gun violence
3/5	Policy 4: Vaccines
3/7	RESEARCH CORNER WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE (will be discussed in class)
3/12	<i>Spring Break</i>
3/14	<i>Spring Break</i>
3/19	Role of Medical Care and the Role of Government
3/21	Rothschild and Stiglitz Model of Insurance
3/26	Cutler and Zeckhauser Model of Adv Sel (TOPIC BRAINSTORM DUE)
3/28	Economic of Designing Subsidies for Health Insurance
4/2	Economics of Medicare and Medicare Advantage
4/4	Economics of Medicaid (take-up, crowd-out)
4/9	TEST #2
4/11	Visit by Robert Greenstein
4/16	Policies/strategies to improve consumer insurance choice (OUTLINE DUE)
4/18	Economics of multipayer systems
4/23	Policies/strategies to increase provider participation in public programs
4/25	Policies/strategies to promote health and health equity in Medicare/Medicaid
4/30	PRESENTATIONS OF POLICY BRIEFS (PUBP 514)
5/2	PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS (ECON 456)
5/7	POLICY BRIEFS and RESEARCH PROPOSALS due noon

Other Important Dates to Know: The last day to *drop* a course (disenrolling from a course without receiving a “W” on your transcript) is Friday, February 2, and last day to *withdraw* from a course is Monday, March 25. When you withdraw from a course, a “W” will appear on your transcript.