ACCESS TO HEALTH
SYLLABUS SPRING 2013

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“There is more to health than health care.”
Risa Lavizzo-Mourey and David R. Williams, “Strong Medicine for a Healthier America (Introduction),” American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 40 (2011): S1

OFFICE HOURS:
Professor Benfer: Weekly, by appointment  
Professor Gold: Weekly, by appointment

REQUIRED TEXT:
ELIZABETH TOBIN TYLE R, ET AL., POVERTY, HEALTH, AND LAW: READINGS AND CASES FOR MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

Other materials are available on the Internet or will be emailed to the class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & STUDENT COMPETENCIES
Welcome to Access to Health, Spring 2013. This course explores the legal, political, environmental, social, financial, and medical issues surrounding access to health in the United States and, time permitting, internationally. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

1. Be knowledgeable about the root causes associated with inadequate access to health;
2. Understand how various populations are affected by barriers to health;
3. Understand and be able to evaluate laws intended to provide access to health;
4. Understand federal health care reform’s abilities and limitations with regard to increasing access to health;
5. Understand the connection between access to health, poverty and the ability to thrive;
6. Understand the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in response to social issues, especially access to health; and
7. Be able to think strategically about solutions to the access to health gap.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
There will be no final exam for this course. Grades will be based on satisfying the following requirements.

1. Attendance: Class attendance is required. Attendance means arriving before class begins and departing after class ends. If a student must miss class due to an emergency, please email Professor Benfer and Professor Gold as soon as possible.
2. **Class Participation:** Thirty percent of the final grade will be based on class participation. Your final grade will depend on the quality of your class participation, including your attendance in class, your interaction with faculty and each other, your success in engaging outside experts and, most importantly, your ability to work well with, and support, each other. Students should demonstrate preparedness by offering thoughtful comments in class and being respectful of their colleagues’ points of view. If you have prior employment or study experience in a discipline related to the subject matter, you are encouraged to bring that perspective to the conversation.

3. **Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments are subject to change due to the timely nature of the topics and faculty efforts to ensure your education is relevant. Students will be given two weeks’ notice if readings are deleted or added.

4. **Cell Phones Must Be Off:** Cell phones are disruptive to your professors and fellow students, particularly in a class setting where everyone is expected to participate in discussion. If your cell phone rings during class, you may be asked to leave. Repeated failure to keep your cell phone turned off during class may affect your final grade.

5. **Proper Laptop Use:** If you elect to bring your laptop to class, you are responsible for using it in a way that is relevant to class work, such as taking notes. Do not bring your laptop to class to surf the internet, gchat, instant message, or play games. If you use your laptop in a way that is irrelevant to class work, it may affect your final grade and/or you may be asked to leave.

6. **Seminar Paper:** A final paper, of approximately 3000 words in length, shall be required for the course. The paper may take the form of a research paper, comments to federal regulations related to health, evaluation of health strategy, and other formats. The paper is not intended to be a summation of law and fact. It must include analysis and the student’s creative approaches to and/or critique of the issue. Paper topics may include special populations (cancer patient, elderly, HIV/AIDS, children and youth, etc.), access to health innovations (medical neighborhoods, poverty clinics, etc.), international comparison, subject matter addressed in class, and other topics. Proposed paper topic and format must be submitted for approval by February 28, 2013.

7. **Group Presentation:** There will be a group presentation of approximately thirty minutes on an aspect of access to health. You may elect to present on the same topic as your paper; however, the presentation must be cohesive and not a series of paper presentations. You may select your own group members. Groups must include between four to five people. Grading will generally be determined as follows: 1) 50% attributable to individual performance; and 2) 50% attributable to the performance of the group. Your teammates will be asked to anonymously evaluate your contribution at the conclusion of the presentation. Faculty reserve the right to waive these guidelines at their discretion and to attribute more or less weight to individual performance.
8. Adherence to the “Writing Rules:” Students are expected to read and follow the guidelines outlined in the “writing rules” document. Failure to adhere to these rules will affect your grade.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

Class 1 – January 24, 2013: DEFINING HEALTH AND EVALUATING HEALTH DISPARITIES

Questions to Consider

• What is the definition of “health”? Who defines (and who should define) health?
• Should there be a right to health? A right to an opportunity for health? A right to be “healthy”?
• What, if any, is a government’s responsibility for any aspect of the health of its citizens?
• What is the effect of gender, race and ethnicity on access to health? Why are gender, race and ethnicity relevant to health? Why is race and ethnicity relevant to access to health?
• Should the ability to pay for care matter in the quality of care or access to care? Does it? Why or why not?

Readings

• Kaiser Family Foundation, Focus on Health Care Disparities http://www.kff.org/minorityhealth/upload/8396.pdf

Class 2 – January 31, 2013: POVERTY AND THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Questions to Consider

• What is poverty in the United States?
• How does poverty affect health?
• How do views about the causes of poverty influence legal and policy responses?
• How has the issue of socioeconomic status been understood in the health care context?
What is meant by “social determinants of health”?

**Readings**

- Chapter 1: Social Determinants, Health Disparities, and the Role of Law
- Chapter 5: Client and Patient Relationships – Understanding Cultural and Social Context (pp 141 – 156).
- Prepare and article of your choosing from the following website for class: [http://www.heritage.org/issues/poverty-and-inequality](http://www.heritage.org/issues/poverty-and-inequality)

**Class 3 – February 7, 2013: NEIGHBORHOOD, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND HEALTH**

**Questions to Consider**

- What housing options exist for low-income persons?
- What is the connection between housing, homelessness, and health?
- What environmental factors cause health problems?
- Why do children suffer from lead poisoning?
- What is the connection between lead poisoning, eviction, and tenants’ rights?

**Readings**

- Chapter 8: Housing: the Intersection of Affordability, Safety, and Health
- Executive Order 12898
- *Place Matters for Health in Cook County: Ensuring Opportunities for Good Health for All*, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (2012) [http://www.jointcenter.org/research/place-matters-for-health-in-cook-county-ensuring-opportunities-for-good-health-for-all-0](http://www.jointcenter.org/research/place-matters-for-health-in-cook-county-ensuring-opportunities-for-good-health-for-all-0)
Class 4 – February 14, 2013: CLASS CANCELLED

Class 5 – February 21, 2013: LIVELIHOOD AND HEALTH

Guest Lecturer: Daniel Contreras, Equip for Equality
Guest Lecturer: Tom Yates, Health and Disability Advocates

Questions to Consider

• What is the connection between access to learning opportunities and health?
• What rights do children have to quality education?
• What is the connection between personal safety and health?
• What legal protections exist for victims of intimate partner violence?
• What is the connection between personal income and health?
• What right to health exists for people who are disabled?

Readings

• Excerpt, Chapter 9: Education: Connecting Health and Quality Learning Opportunities (275-288, bottom of 291-297)
• Excerpt, Chapter 11: Personal Safety: Addressing Interpersonal and Family Violence (345-350, bottom of 353-360, 362-top of 367, bottom of 368-top of 378)
• Chapter 7: Income and Health: Dynamics of Employment and the Safety Net (omit “best practices” and “questions for discussion”)

Class 6 – February 28, 2012: RACE, ETHNICITY, IMMIGRATION STATUS, AND HEALTH CARE

Guest Lecturer: Lisa Koop, National Immigrant Justice Center

Assignment

• One page description of proposed paper topic and format (submit in memorandum format via email by 12pm)

Questions to Consider

• What is the connection between legal status and health?
• Why does legal status matter in one’s ability to access health?
• Does health care reform adequately take race and ethnicity into consideration? Should it do more or less?

Readings
• Chapter 10: Legal Status: Meeting the Needs of Immigrants in the Healthcare Setting
• Judith Graham, et. al., Undocumented worker who became quadriplegic is moved to Mexico against his will, Chicago Tribune, Feb. 6, 2011.
• Poorer Neighborhoods More Likely to Have Scarce Primary Health Services, http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/245143.php
• Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Reform and Communities of Color: Implications for Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities
• Review health disparity readings from Class 1

Spring Break – March 4-8, 2013: ACCESS TO HEALTH TRIP, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Class 7 – March 14, 2013: LESSONS LEARNED FROM TALLAHASSEE & THE SAFETY NET

Guest Lecturer: Dr. David Buchanan, Erie Family Health Center

Assignment
• One page description of group presentation topic and list of presenters (one description per group submitted in memorandum format via email by 12pm)

Questions to Consider
• What is the current safety net system in the United States?
• What is the current and future role of Federally Qualified Health Centers?
• Are there “holes” in the safety net today or that you anticipate in the future?

Reading:
• About Erie Health Center- http://www.eriefamilyhealth.org/about-erie
Class 8 – March 21, 2013: NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM – PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE AND MANAGED CARE IN THE US

Guest Lecturer: Professor Larry Singer, Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy

Questions to Consider

- What are the options to secure private health care in the US?
- What is the relationship between employment and private health insurance coverage?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages to the relationship between employment and private health insurance coverage?
Readings

- Visit: [http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/healthcarereform/Pages/default.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/healthcarereform/Pages/default.aspx)


*Guest Lecturers: John McHugh, Navigant Consulting; Brown University School of Medicine; Andrea Kovach, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law*

Questions to Consider

- What is the effect of income on access to quality health care? Why?
- Should the US government have any obligation to provide low income persons with access to health?
- Please take this short quiz, on health insurance for the uninsured (about five minutes): [http://quiz.kff.org/uninsured/uninsured-quiz.aspx](http://quiz.kff.org/uninsured/uninsured-quiz.aspx)

Readings

- Chapter 2: Who Cares for the Poor? Understanding the Healthcare and Civil Legal Systems in the United States
- McKinsey Quarterly Article: How Health Care Costs Contribute to Income Disparity in the US
Questions to Consider

• What does it mean to have health?
• What is the most important thing you learned this semester?
• Who is the individual affected by access to health?

Questions to Consider

• What food options exist for low-income persons?
• What environmental and social factors affect access to food?
• What are the long-term effects of poor nutrition?

Reading

• Chapter 17: Public Health Crisis: Medical-Legal Approaches to Obesity Prevention

Assignment

• Final Paper submitted via email by 12pm