

Please note: This is a preliminary syllabus and is subject to change. It provides useful introductory detail and additional course insight as you prepare for the application process.

HCM 001: Introduction to Health Economics

Course Description & Objectives

In Introduction to Health Economics, you will explore the application of economic principles to the health care sector. The course emphasizes the importance of scarcity and incentives in guiding the decision and interactions of key players, including care providers, payers, patients and producers. Course content highlights the critical economic issues in producing, delivering, and financing health care.

Through video lectures, synchronous class meetings and discussions with your peers, you will learn to analyze determinants of demand for medical care, the unique role of physicians in resource allocation, the role of health insurance, and competition in medical care markets. The course focuses on the US health care context, but the economic principles applied are relevant to a range of systems.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe the role of economics as it applies to health care markets, organizations, and individuals.
- Identify key challenges, both financially and organizationally, that health care delivery is currently facing.
- Analyze interactions between the players in a health care market, using economic frameworks and models.

Course Overview

This course is divided into 8 weeks, and course content is delivered via video lectures, synchronous class sessions and online discussions. To be successful, you must actively engage with ideas presented in the course, and with those posed by your classmates.

Course Content & Schedule

Video Content and Readings

Video content includes lectures recorded by Dr. Guy David. Each week's lectures will guide course participants through the application of economic principles to a core topic like health insurance or care providers. We would encourage you to take careful notes and review transcripts.

Readings are not required because the scholarship that underlies the lecture content tends to be highly technical and often relies on economics and mathematics knowledge not required for the course. Some weeks will have recommended readings and supplemental resources, posted on the course page. If you have a background in economics or want to learn more about what kinds of material you might interact with in future economic coursework these may be helpful, but entirely optional.

Course Assignments

Weekly discussion forums ask you to apply principles from the week's lectures and readings, respond to scenarios and cases, make an argument, and support it with evidence. Students are expected to make at least one post and constructively respond to two classmates' post.

Weekly quizzes will also be given to assess understanding of course content. Quizzes are open book and may consist of multiple-choice questions that ask you to identify a single correct answer, questions that ask you to identify multiple correct answers, and some free-answer questions.

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Synchronous Classes

Synchronous classes offer the opportunity to explore questions about the course and materials beyond the lectures through live interactions—via videoconference—with faculty, TAs, and your classmates.

Assessments & Grading

Student assessments are grouped in the following categories:

	% of total
1) Collaboration and Active Synchronous Class Participation	
a) Synchronous Class Participation	25
b) Weekly Discussion Posts and Responses	25
2) Quizzes	35
3) Final Assignment	15

If you are having difficulty meeting a deadline, please contact the course instructors to arrange an extension before the assignment is due. Late work submitted without an extension is subject to penalties. To accommodate differences in geography, work will not be considered late if it is submitted before 11:59pm in your time zone. Please consult the Submissions and Grading section of the Course Policies page for details.

Final Assignment

The final project is a paper that will challenge course participants to synthesize key concepts from the course to analyze critical aspects of the US health care environment. Potential topics include past or proposed health care policy reforms, marketplace or technology trends, or others.

About the Instructor

Philip Saynisch, PhD, is a lecturer in Health Care Management at the Wharton School and a research scientist at the National Committee for Quality Assurance. He earned his PhD in Health Policy from Harvard University, and his research interests include primary care delivery system reform, medical decision making and its interaction with technology, and health disparities and equity.