**Econ 590 Special Topics. Applied microeconomics in health care**

Fall semester 2021

**Summary**

This 3 credit-hour course will apply microeconomic methods to health, health care, and other related topics. The course will emphasize social policy and consider the economics of current issues such as the opioid crisis and other substance use; mental health care; issues related to behavioral health such as criminal justice and homelessness; social determinants of health; the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; and public health insurance (Medicaid, etc). Pre-requisites are a C or better in ECON 400 (Introduction to Econometrics) and 410 (Intermediate Microeconomics).

**Who should take this course?**

Motivated students majoring in economics or a related major

**Learning objectives**

* Understand and apply economic models to health and health care, crime and criminal justice, housing among the poor and homelessness, and other socially relevant areas
* Review and evaluate empirical evidence
* Think critically about issues in health, criminal justice, and homelessness
* Apply economic principles to a research project to be decided during the class
* Master economic concepts to the degree of being able to discuss them in conversation
* Demonstrate an ability to use skills valued in the wider world of work such as formulating an idea and then testing and researching it, and communicating results to a defined audience

**When do we meet?**

Monday and Wednesday 3:35pm to 4:50pm, starting Wednesday August 18, 2021; Gardner Hall (GA) 309

**Instructor information**

Alex Cowell. Virtual office hours are by appointment. Main email address: [acowell@unc.edu](mailto:acowell@unc.edu). Back-up, personal email address [alexcowell@protonmail.com](mailto:alexcowell@protonmail.com). I check my UNC email at least every other day.

**What to call me (to my face)**

Alex or Dr. Cowell. My pronouns are he, him, and his.

**Grading schema and scale**

**Grading**

* Whenever possible I hide a student’s name when grading. This is possible with the midterm, the paper, and the final.
* Final numeric grades are automatically rounded up or down to the nearest integer, with 0.5 being rounded up.
* The group project grade depends on the contribution of both you and your fellow group members. As part of determining the group project grade, I ask every group member to report on their own contribution as well as the contribution of each of their fellow group members.

**Grading weight**

Midterm Exam 15%

Final Exam 30%

Paper 30%

Group project 15%

In-class quizzes 10%

**Grading Scale**

At least 93% A

At least 90% but less than 93%: A-

At least 87% but less than 90%: B+

At least 83% but less than 87% B

At least 80% but less than 83%: B-

At least 77% but less than 80%: C+

At least 73% but less than 77%: C

At least 70% but less than 73%: C-

At least 67% but less than 70%: D+

At least 60% but less than 67%: D

Less than 60%: F

**Late work or tardy submissions**

See the Econ 590 Scheduleon Sakai for project details and deadlines. If your paper is late, your grade on that assignment will drop 20 points, which is the equivalent of one letter grade, (for example, from an A to a B). All class projects and activities including participation activities are due at the deadline. Late submissions will be penalized for each day they are late. If it’s not ready at deadline time, it’s already considered a day late. Failure to meet some deadlines may earn a zero grade.

**Grade appeal**

Although grades are not negotiable, I will carefully consider a concern about an assignment grade if the concern is promptlyidentified. If you have questions or dispute a particular grade, please bring it to my attention **within a week of receiving that grade**. The only grades that I will discuss at the end of the semester are those assignments you complete at the end of the semester.

You have the right to appeal any grade in this course. You are free to talk with me about a grade in this course and discuss the determination of that grade. If you are not satisfied, you may submit your appeal in writing along with the assignment or project in question. I will respond to your appeal. If you are not satisfied, you may appeal to your academic dean. The academic dean will consider the merits of the grade appeal. After careful consideration, the dean may reject or accept your grade appeal. The dean may also appoint a grade-appeal committee to consider your complaint. That committee would then recommend action to the dean who appointed the committee.

Once reported, permanent course grades may not be changed except for clerical or arithmetical error or by a successful grade appeal, as outlined above. A formal grade appeal, if any, must be filed no later than the last day for late registration of the next semester.

**Policies and resources**

**Expectations of students**

* Engage in class and with the materials. Students will participate in regular discussions during class.
* You are expected to read the class materials ahead of time so that we can discuss the materials in class. Exceptions to this expectation – such as the first day of class – will be noted.
* Use the library resources to obtain the readings. Most readings are in academic journals, and these are available through the UNC library. Although I will link readings when possible through the Sakai platform, it is your responsibility to obtain the readings.
* Contribute to a group project. The group will be small (four to six students). Your grade from the project will depend both on the overall product from the group as well as your own individual contribution. the product will likely be a combination of a presentation and a briefing document of no more than 10 pages.
* Please show good phone and device courtesy. Be present with what is going on in the class. Refrain from making calls or messaging. Feel free to discretely type your notes and research topics live.

**Attendance policy**

* This course depends on instruction and your own independent study. Attend class and be present when in class.
* Per Economics Department policy, I take attendance during the first week of the semester and drop from the course who do not show up for the first two days of class. This action opens seats for students who are waiting to get into filled courses.
* While this is a discussion class that requires your real-time participation, I will attempt to accommodate those who are unable to attend due to COVID-19 issues. If you are in that situation, please let me know as soon as you can.
* UNC-Chapel Hill’s attendance policy stipulates that “*No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences."*
* The Econ 590 attendance policy conforms to the UNC-Chapel Hill’s attendance, grading, and examination policies and procedures, as documented in the [Academic Catalog](https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/) (click link to read [the policy](https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/)).

**Academic integrity**

All students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code (honor.unc.edu). Any violation will result in an F for the course, and other sanctions may apply.

**Community standards**

We are in the midst of a global pandemic. This semester all enrolled students are required at all times to wear a mask covering the mouth and nose in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community — your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the [Office of Student Conduct](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UNCChapelHill&layout_id=23).  At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception.  For additional information, see [Carolina Together](https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/university-guidelines-for-facemasks/).

**Counselling and Psychological Services**

Counselling and Psychological Services is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Peer tutoring is available at <https://econ.unc.edu/undergraduate/econaid/>

**Title IX resources**

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – [Adrienne.allison@unc.edu](mailto:Adrienne.allison@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

**Accessibility Resources and Service**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

**Important dates (As of August 18, 2021)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What | When |
| Mid-term | October 4 |
| Paper | November 1 |
| Group presentations | November 10 or 15 |
| Final | 4pm Thurs December 9 |

**Week-By-Week Schedule and Readings**

* Go to the **Econ 590 Sakai course space** to read the updated course schedule and readings.
* A reminder, with a few exceptions (like the first day of class), students are expected to complete readings ahead of class so that we can discuss the readings in class.
* Listen carefully and pay attention to which readings will be emphasized in the next class or two. The readings in the schedule below may include more material than then minimum necessary. I will endeavor to highlight in yellow which readings were/will be assigned for the following class.
* **The schedule and readings will change frequently.** So, check Sakai after every class.
* Course schedule and readings will change as the semester evolves **to create the best learning environment for you**.
* The schedule includes two flex classes where the material may depend on our needs at that time. During these classes, we may need to review or complement previous material or decide to complement material with additional learnings.
* **Some readings can be difficult and technical.** Some readings are intended to stretch your ability to comprehend something in which the detail is a level or so above your training. You will see the warning “TTA!” on some readings. This is a Technical Terminology Alert. The math or language may be challenging. See how far you can get with the detail, but don’t get bogged down.

**Econ 590 Schedule (As of August 23, 2021)**

|  | Week Beginning | Readings | Mon | Weds |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | August 16 |  | --- | Man with baby with solid fillLife and death: the demand for health |
| 2 | August 23 | Case et al., 2017; CDC, 2019; Cutler et al., 2006; Finkelstein et al.,2012; Jayachandran et al., 2010; Kleiner, 2000; Kravitz, 2014; Stange, 2014; Timmons, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2010 | Life and death: the demand for health  Man with baby with solid fill | Doctor female with solid fillSupply of health |
| 3 | August 30 | Dranove et al., 2003; Dunlap et al., 2008; Einav and Finkelstein, 2011, 2018; Geruso and Layton, 2017 | Supply of health  Doctor female with solid fill | Insurance – theory and evidence |
| 4 | September 6 | Anderson et al., 2012; Buchmueller et al., 2011; Card et al., 2008; Cowell et al., 2018; Einav and Finkelstein, 2011 & 2018 | LABOR DAY – no class!  Electrician male with solid fill | Insurance– evidence: the ACA really is a big deal |
| 5 | September 13 | Cutler and Ly, 2011;  Hartman et al., 2018 | The cost of healthcare | So how do others do it? International health and healthcare (*flex class*) |
| 6 | September 20 | Kruk et al., 2009 | So how do others do it? International health and healthcare | So how do others do it? International health and healthcare |
| 7 | September 27 | Case & Deaton, 2021; Case, A.; Sen, 2002 | Equity and health care | Equity and health care |
| 8 | October 4 | Karoly et al., 2011; Jones, 2012 | Midterm | Prevention and social determinants of health |
| 9 | October 11 | Weinberger, 2014;  Kim and Goldie, 2008 | Prevention and Social determinants of health | Economics and epidemiology |
| 10 | October 18 |  | Obesity | The opioid crisis |
| 11 | October 25 | Cowell et al., 2012; Fenwick et al., 2004;  Bala & Zarkin, 2000 & 2002 | Other substances | Mental health |
| 12 | November 1 |  | Crime and criminal justice (*flex class*) | Crime and criminal justice |
| 13 | November 8 |  | Crime and criminal justice | Group presentations |
| 14 | November 15 |  | Group presentations | Housing and homelessness |
| 15 | November 22 |  | Housing and homelessness | A pandemic special |
| 16 | November 29 |  | A pandemic special | Last Day of Class |

**Bibliography (as of August 23, 2021)**

**Useful Reference**

The following two books are *not* assigned class textbooks. Rather they are reference books for some of the basic concepts and statistics that may be useful as supplementary reading. You will likely be able to complete this course without using them.

Jay Bhattacharya, Peter Tu, Timothy Hyde (BTH; 2013). *Health Economics.* Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 113702996X, 9781137029966.

## Sloan, F. A., & Hsieh, C. R. (2017). *Health Economics*. MIT Press. ISBN: 9780262035118

**In-depth readings**

The following are references for class readings. The syllabus indicates which of these map to which sections of the course. Pay attention in class as to which are required and what you should be getting from the materials when you do read them. This list will grow over the duration of the course. There’s more here than you need to pass the course.

Anderson, M, Dobkin, C. & Gross, T. (2012). The effect of health insurance coverage on the use of medical services. American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 4(1), 1-27

Bala, M. V., & Zarkin, G. A. (2000). Are QALYs an appropriate measure for valuing morbidity in acute diseases?. Health Economics, 9(2), 177-180.

Bala, M. V., & Zarkin, G. A. (2002). Application of cost-effectiveness analysis to multiple products: a practical guide. American Journal of Managed Care, 8(3), 211-220. <http://www.med.mcgill.ca/epidemiology/courses/EPIB654/Summer2010/EF/ef%20mgd%20care.pdf>

Buchmueller, TC., DiNardo, J., & Valletta, R.G. (2011). The effect of an employer health insurance mandate on health insurance coverage and the demand for labor: Evidence from Hawaii. *American Economic Journal-Economic Policy*, 3(4), 25-51.

Card, D, Dobkin, C, & Maestas, N. (2008). The impact of nearly universal health insurance coverage on health care utilization: Evidence from Medicare. *American Economic Review*, 98(5), 2242- 58. TTA!

Case, A, & Deaton, A. (2017). *Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century*. Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Spring 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/casedeaton_sp17_finaldraft.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) (2021) *Health, United States* <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus19-508.pdf>

Cowell, A. J., Brown, J. M., Mills, M. J., Bender, R. H., & Wedehase, B. J. (2012). Cost-effectiveness analysis of motivational interviewing with feedback to reduce drinking among a sample of college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 73(2), 226-237.

Cowell, A. J., Prakash, S., Jones, E., Barnosky, A., & Wedehase, B. (2018). Behavioral health coverage in the individual market increased after ACA parity requirements. *Health Affairs*, *37*(7), 1153-1159. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.1517>

Cutler, David M., Angus Deaton, and Adriana Lleras-Muney, The determinants of mortality. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(3), Summer 2006, 97-120.

Cutler, D. M., & Ly, D. P. (2011). The (paper) work of medicine: understanding international medical costs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25(2), 3-25.

Case, A. (2021). *Deaths of despair* (audio). Social Science Space. <https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2020/05/anne-case-on-deaths-of-despair/>

Case, A., & Deaton, A. (2021). Life expectancy in adulthood is falling for those without a BA degree, but as educational gaps have widened, racial gaps have narrowed. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *118*(11).

Dranove, D, Kessler, D, McClellan, M, & Satterthwaite, M. (2003). Is more information better? The effects of “report cards” on health care providers. *Journal of Political Economy*, 111(3), 555- 88. TTA!

Dunlap, L. J., Zarkin, G. A., & Cowell, A. J. (2008). Examining variation in treatment costs: a cost function for outpatient methadone treatment programs. *Health Services Research*, *43*(3), 931-950. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1475-6773.2007.00799.x?casa_token=9Fta3czW9vUAAAAA%3A9LnIHex9Q318JdzduarMng2nMylihs7fmru1q84Th6Kop_370PUiBXv3QqnYFTt1WdRDGtoeDIeV6DiZ>

Einav, L., & Finkelstein, A. (2011) Selection in insurance markets: theory and empirics in pictures. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 25 (1): 115-138. <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.25.1.115>

Einav, L., & Finkelstein, A. (2018). Moral hazard in health insurance: What we know and how we know it. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 16(4), 957-982. TTA!

Fenwick, E., O'Brien, B. J., & Briggs, A. (2004). Cost‐effectiveness acceptability curves–facts, fallacies and frequently asked questions. *Health Economics*, 13(5), 405-415.

Finkelstein, A., Taubman, S., Wright, B., Bernstein, M., Gruber, J., Newhouse, J. P., ... & Oregon Health Study Group. (2012). The Oregon health insurance experiment: evidence from the first year. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), 1057-1106.TTA! <https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w17190/w17190.pdf>

Geruso, M. & Layton, T.J. (2017). Selection in health insurance markets and its policy remedies. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 4 (2017): 23-50.TTA!

Hartman, M., Martin, A.B., Benson, J., and Catlin, A. et al. (2018). National health care spending in 2018: Growth driven by accelerations In Medicare and private insurance spending. *Health Affairs*, v.37, no. 1

Jayachandran, S; Lleras-Muney, A. & Smith, K.V. (2010). Modern medicine and the Twentieth Century decline in mortality: evidence on the impact of sulfa drugs. American Economic Journal-Applied Economics, 2(2), 118- 46.

Jones, DJ. (2012). Primary prevention and health outcomes: treatment of residential lead-based paint hazards and the prevalence of childhood lead poisoning. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 71(1), 151- 64.

Karoly, L. A., Kilburn, M. R., & Cannon, J. (2005). *Proven benefits of early childhood interventions*. RAND report. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9145.html> (also download related full brief)

Kim, J.J., & Goldie, S.J. 2008. Health and economic implications of HPV vaccination in the United States. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 359(8), 821- 32.

Kleiner, M. M. (2000). Occupational licensing. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *14*(4), 189-202. <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.14.4.189>

Kravitz, RL. (2014). Physician incomes in the twenty-first century: time for a new social contract.” *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 29, (2014): 1425-1426. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11606-014-3012-9>

Kruk, M., Goldmann, E., & Galea, S. (2009). Borrowing and selling to pay for health care in Low- and Middle-income countries. *Health Affairs*. July/August, 28(4) 1056- 1066.

## Newhouse, J.P. and the Health Insurance Experiment Group. *Free for All? Lessons from the RAND Health Insurance Experiment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Sen, Amartya K. Why Health Equity? *Health Economics* 11(2002): 659-666.

Stange, K. (2014). How does provider supply and regulation influence health care markets? Evidence from nurse practitioners and physician assistants. *Journal of Health Economics*, 33, 1-27.

Timmons, E. J. (2017). The effects of expanded nurse practitioner and physician assistant scope of practice on the cost of Medicaid patient care. [*Health Policy*](https://pdf.sciencedirectassets.com/271761/1-s2.0-S0168851016X00152/1-s2.0-S016885101630344X/main.pdf?X-Amz-Security-Token=IQoJb3JpZ2luX2VjEJb%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2FwEaCXVzLWVhc3QtMSJHMEUCIESx4Z47mPIvMQ%2FlDbS3Y4F7wVPhbFrCFDMN8myhWX1lAiEAqsHJJXJ6RM7wryZFPEmIVasg%2B4n32BOgRoQSguSbJB4qgwQIv%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2FARAEGgwwNTkwMDM1NDY4NjUiDDIIizmEFJ2q2NucBCrXA6n0D4bAFN4ImrJr6r0Yx9U1h51sJJ%2BpD2g4MxEpcceeRUOrfhpG41LuKhn7u6cGiSjS8SbqpiMkrL8rNuFJggeeg%2BMsND%2FkAbdoG7rnk8rufIiojz9NfyRjE6kGR0vHwaITWqrnglFQtWfMxM1F2pc1pwA%2FEzxZeieuX3ass%2B38%2BjziAJdXZoW1tb%2FLTvXlidS30tZV4xTl2DJcXBSzirIhmC9ohraLu%2FG84pDAW5ZdhLNv8EZ%2FCCp7G8asGnccowMZUN5leGmS70sqkamaz5VwtJDOOBGfPgfJOfyvSR%2FFcmAVsi7FLvhBe8lhBrIRP5CrKmgOxTv3KstgTaZILvhvcqN6DuHE08HGyXJ741n%2FmuAylZUQxA3vNeReMsY75y%2Bzw29MLk5q4dKv%2Febi%2F0SCC5tRf4QFZ%2B0lHeog0IhJByemuNM%2BO4ok%2Fep2ckhsg%2FDtMOECv9kae7IXAAHR98dO%2FExFyMcxZcl1PfKfRF4OHtY7dn5SwwEZ%2BG9b%2B5%2B0EIVwpwCQxwwsrzKTsAqw%2BX7WplkMK%2BN%2F%2FC1lfQVzUzmYgR9ze8cAgtAbUYMWewy%2Fq1BsTRhIBZR240pNCEDTONBmH0fdDxXFjb5hsQB9OagKZ106mbAxajCh5v6IBjqlAWaKNL7dltUG%2FOWZNYaBO%2F8IYO9pLO%2BEUvHVB3TJOyhurSXqFZwBvfkwUPd4dcfhFrVDwRenWxodFAdegyoTC9%2F4ZpI0XWRo9B%2Bwse8zq6gPe%2B7NbMKPYCMRx9Y54RYIMHq2Cs5tGMCnyAfTgFkAJb0URQiv9k5bt8PrwKaQFqay4X3ckRZJWC7hzR2Hh%2FKJFYXFRWnX%2BGivZj0BiQRIRk6i6DuQLw%3D%3D&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Date=20210820T145326Z&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Expires=300&X-Amz-Credential=ASIAQ3PHCVTYSY2CWAU5%2F20210820%2Fus-east-1%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Signature=d24622f42f00efc39f3fa629729ec14c0ff51ac08d9f04e8125bc6f2004e3c1c&hash=b39f12ce053745de5078d59ce0036f9399face3980e6bae88cf1cc0b01db9e30&host=68042c943591013ac2b2430a89b270f6af2c76d8dfd086a07176afe7c76c2c61&pii=S016885101630344X&tid=spdf-1add2f4e-1494-48d1-8786-d24d2160fae1&sid=e58aa52499d62041d8892306d0c32e6a349agxrqa&type=client), *121*(2), 189-196.

Vaughn, B. T., DeVrieze, S. R., Reed, S. D., & Schulman, K. A. (2010). Can we close the income and wealth gap between specialists and primary care physicians? Health Affairs, 29(5), 933-40. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/scholarly-journals/can-we-close-income-wealth-gap-between/docview/304560686/se-2?accountid=14244>

Weinberger, E. (2014) The governor is very interested. A teaching case from the strategic training initiative for the prevention of eating disorders. <https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1267/2014/10/Revised-Narrative-CEA-Case-Oct-3-14.pdf>

Weeks, W. B., & Wallace, A. E. (2002). The more things change: revisiting a comparison of educational costs and incomes of physicians and other professionals. *Academic Medicine*, 77(4), 312-319.

TTA! – Technical terminology alert! The math or language may be challenging. See how far you can get with that, but don’t get bogged down.

