

PHIT 116/ PSCI 116: Introduction to the U.S. Health System

Fall 2025

T/TH 9:40-10:55

Lattimore Room 201

Instructor: Mical Raz, MD, PhD. email: micalraz@rochester.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 1105-1205, can be on zoom but need to coordinate in advance

Office – RRL Building, 3rd floor, 370B (go to the history office and then down the hall to the very end, we are one floor above the Humanities center)

Teaching Assistants:

Undergrad TAs:

Jonah Stapels jstapels@u.rochester.edu

Leo Zambrano-Tapia lzambran@u.rochester.edu

Natalie Wolfeiler nwolfeil@u.rochester.edu

Riya Kunderan rkundera@u.rochester.edu

Alison Kang akang9@u.rochester.edu

The TAs are your primary point of contact for questions and concerns. You will each be assigned an undergrad TA who will work with you, grade your essays and answer your questions.

The TAs will also run a question board for discussion on Blackboard, hold regular office hours, and will be available to meet with you. Some will host community viewings of the movies if there is interest in that and will run informal review sessions.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

PH 116 (Intro to the US Health Care System): This course examines the organization, financing and functioning of the United States health care system, utilizing primarily a historical perspective. Among the topics covered are the economics and organization of health systems, racial disparities in access to care and quality of care, historical understandings of social determinants of health, U.S. health policy and politics including the historical struggle for health reform, the passage of the Affordable Care Act, and its transformation under the Trump administration.

The course textbook will be Donald Barr's *Introduction to US Health Policy: The Organization, Financing, and Delivery of Health Care in America*, 5th edition (2023). If you have the 4th edition, that is still acceptable for most chapters. Ultimately you are responsible for the material taught in the class, and any supplemental assigned articles and films. You are **not** responsible for material in the textbook that I did not teach. The course will also incorporate investigative journalism articles, primary and secondary historical sources, and videos and documentary films. Paul Starr's book *The Social*

Transformation of American Medicine is also a very valuable resource, and is available through our library as an e-book.

The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 2 periods of 75 minutes each week. Students enrolled in PH 116 are expected to devote at least one hour each week to identifying the main lines of argument in course readings, working alone or in groups, and to preparing for their assignments and review sessions.

EVALUATION:

Five in class quizzes = 8 pts each X 5 = 40 pts , quizzes will include class material, required reading (not the textbook) and the films. A quiz that is scheduled after a film is assigned may include material from that film. *Students who have accommodations will be released from class to take the quiz at Taylor Hall OR can opt to use the additional time they are entitled to in class.*

Two in-class exams (in class) 30 pts each X 2 = 60 pts
Attendance and engagement may factor in as a way to *increase* final grade.

Grade scale is as follow:

A = 93-100
A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86
B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76
C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66
D- = 60-62

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is important for your success, and my experience with this course shows that students who actively participate in class learn more and earn higher grades. Quizzes and exams should be taken at the scheduled time, barring extreme circumstances that are **pre-approved** by the instructor, via the TAs. If you no-show to a quiz, barring a compelling circumstance, you will not receive credit for that quiz. If you require unique consideration, please reach out in a timely manner. Otherwise, I do not check attendance and there is no need to request excused absences. Classes are recorded and are available on Panopto. Please do not email me to ask if you missed "anything" in class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be treated as such. Anyone who engages in such activities will be turned over to the College Board on Academic Honesty for disciplinary action, as outlined at <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>. For a helpful discussion of plagiarism (including subtle instances), see the American Historical Association's 'Defining Plagiarism,' <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/plagiarism-curricular-materials-for-history-instructors/defining-plagiarism>." If there is any question or concern please contact the instructor for clarification.

STATEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION:

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to change topics and assignments on the syllabus at any point in the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.

PART I Historical Foundations of the US Health Care System:

Tuesday, August 26, 2025.

Introduction, History of 19th Century Medical Profession, Past as Prologue

Reading: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/dec-14-1799-excruciating-final-hours-president-george-washington>

Thursday, August 28, 2025

Early 20th Century Educational Reform, The Flexner Report, The Rise of the Medical Profession

Read:

Starr, *Social Transformation of American Medicine*, 112-134

Barr, Chapter 4 92-100

Tuesday, September 2, 2025

Hospitals – an Evolution

Paul Starr, "The Reconstitution of the Hospital," in *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, p. 145-179

Thursday, September 4, 2025

September 10 Bacteriological Revolution and the Rise of Public Health
Wash Post Op Ed (on blackboard)

<https://infectioushistorians.com/2020/08/30/germ-theory/> Optional but recommended podcast

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

Asynchronous watch film (at home, online) "The Most Dangerous Woman in America"

Thursday, September 11, 2025

Health, Illness, and the Risk of Disease: A Transformation.

Aronowitz, "The Converged Experience of Risk and Disease," *Milbank Q.* 2009 Jun; 87(2): 417-442

In class quiz (15 mins for 10 MCQ)

PART II Social Determinants of Health – Historical Understandings

Textbook for entire section Barr, chapter 12 391-421

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

Historical Understandings of SDoH Part 1

Thursday, September 18, 2025

Historical Understandings of SDoH Part 2

Tuesday, September 23, 2025-Rosh Hashana

Asynchronous. No class. Instead of this class watch at your convenience at home the movie *United in Anger*.

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Maternal Health in American Part

Read Nothing Protects Black Women from Dying in childbirth :

<https://www.propublica.org/article/nothing-protects-black-women-from-dying-in-pregnancy-and-childbirth>

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Finish Maternal Mortality, Quiz

Thursday, October 2, 2025 (Yom Kippur)

Guest Lecture, Elizabeth Sapere, Graduate Student, HIV Activism

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Mid Term Exam

PART III Access to Health Care in the US: Private, Public, and Uninsured

Thursday, October 9, 2025

What is Health Insurance? Intro to ESI

Read: Barr, chapter 5

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 – **Fall break No classes**

Thursday, October 16, 2025

What is Managed Care?

Barr, "Chapter 5.

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

Asynchronous, no in person class

Watch: Power to Heal

Thursday, October 23, 2025

Historical Origins of Medicare and Medicaid

Barr, Medicare Chapter 6

In class quiz

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Medicare and Medicaid cont'd

Chapter 6, 7

Thursday, October 30, 2025

Medicaid Wrap up / zoom with former students

Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Uninsured, Underinsured, Uninsurable, Rand Experiment, Does Health Insurance even work?

In class quiz (15 mins for 10 MCQ)

Barr, Chapter 8, The Uninsured

PART IV: HEALTH CARE REFORM

Thursday, November 6, 2025

100 years of Health reform ,What were the Clinton Reforms and What was Learned?

Tuesday, November 11, 2025

ACA Political History

Read Excerpt from Obama Memoir

Barr, Chapter 1

Thursday, November 13, 2025-

Asynchronous

Watch Sicko:

<https://vimeo.com/76646445>

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

ACA continued, Medicaid Expansion

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Obamacare After Obama/ What do the American Rescue Plan and the IRA do for the ACA/ Where are we now with the ACA? (Some of chapter 14)

In class quiz

Read NY Times piece on work requirements and Arkansas

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

What does the “Big Beautiful Bill” have to do with health policy

Thursday, November 27, 2025 **Thanksgiving**

Tuesday, December 2, 2025 – Wrap up and review session

Thursday, December 4, 2025- Midterm B

