Comparative Healthcare Systems in Spain and the U.S

Language of instruction: English.

Coordination: Dr. Jordi Alonso and Dr. Gabriela Barbaglia.

Total workload course: 45 lecture/contact hours and 105 self-study and group-work hours.

Recommended credits: 3 US credits-6 ECTS credits.

Course prerequisites: Undergraduate students from different areas, who want to undergo postgraduate studies in health-related sciences.

Language requirements: English and basic Spanish

Course focus and approach: The aim of this course is to provide a broad perspective of what health systems are with a particular focus on public health services. Important public health topics will be also approached.

Course description: This course will approach 5 main public health topics, with an emphasis on the comparison between Europe and United States. An up-to-date picture on how population health can be measured will be introduced in the Global Burden of Disease class. The objectives and the organization of health systems in general will be presented with an emphasis in the Spanish and the American health systems. What is public health along with its different functions will be presented and discussed. Finally, three specific public health topics will be approached, cancer screening, vaccines and inequalities in health, as examples of the transdisciplinary nature of public health. Two public health institutions (the Public Health
Global Health Program

Agency of Barcelona - ASPB- and the Catalan Agency for Health Information, Assessment and Quality - AQuAS) and the Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre will be visited. Through these visits the students will have the opportunity to be in contact with different public health activities.

Course workload: There will be 45 contact hours, including classes, seminars and the different visits. The student will have to do oral and written presentations. Most of the work will be done in groups.

Teaching methodology: The course will include lectures, seminars and on-site practical assignments.

Assessment criteria:
Qualifications will be based on the following criteria:

a- Class participation (20%)
b- Assignments (30%)
c- Two reports (max 500 words) (20%)
d- Final exam (30%).

The grades are: 94-100%: A; 93-86%: B; 85-79%: C; 78-70%: D and 69-0%: F.

Absence policy:
Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student’s final grade as follows:
The PEHE/HESP attendance policy does not distinguish between justified or unjustified absences. The student is deemed responsible to manage his/her absences.

Emergency situations (hospitalization, family emergency...) will be analyzed on a case by case basis by the Academic Director of the HESP.

Classroom norms:
- No food or drink is permitted in class
- Students will have a ten-minute break after one-hour session.
## Course outline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1: The Global Burden of Disease: Concepts, Data, Discussions</th>
<th>15.00-15.50</th>
<th>16.00-16.50</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 12th: Mortality and Disability</td>
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<td>G Barbaglia</td>
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<td>January 14th: GBD study</td>
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<td>January 19: Iberoamerican Cochrane Center visit</td>
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<td>January 21st: Oral Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session 2: An Analytical Model for Health Systems: Objectives &amp; Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 26th: Health System</td>
<td>J Alonso</td>
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<td>January 28th: Health System</td>
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<td>February 2nd: AQuAS visit</td>
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<td>February 4th: AQuAS visit</td>
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<td>February 9th: Oral presentation</td>
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<th>Session 3: Public Health Functions: An International Perspective</th>
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<td>February 11th: Public Health Functions</td>
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<td>February 16th: Public Health Functions</td>
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<td>February 18th: ASPB visit</td>
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<td>February 23rd: Oral presentation</td>
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<th>Session 4: Public Health Topics</th>
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<td>February 25th: TBD Cancer screening</td>
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<td>March 1st: TBD Cancer screening</td>
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<td>March 3rd: Vaccines</td>
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<td>March 8th: Vaccines</td>
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<td>March 10th: Inequalities in health</td>
<td>G Barbaglia</td>
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<td>March 15th: Inequalities in health</td>
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<td>March 17th: Oral presentation</td>
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<td>March 29th: Consultation hours</td>
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<td>March 31st: Exam</td>
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General course contents and reading assignments

Session 1: Global Burden of Disease: Concepts, Data, Discussions
A consistent and comparative description of the burden of diseases and injuries and the risk factors that cause them is an important input to health decision-making and planning processes. This session will introduce the students how diseases, injuries and risk factors that cause premature death, loss of health and disability in different populations can be compared.

Required readings:

Additional resources:

Session 2: An Analytical Model for Health Systems: Objectives and Organization
This session will introduce the students to health systems by identifying their major objectives, functions, elements and organizational issues. It will review international health systems organization and transformation. The evidence about the contribution
of health systems to the improvement of population’s health will be discussed.

**Required readings:**

**Additional reading and resources:**

OECD Health Data 2011:
[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,3746,en_2649_37407_2085200_1_1_1_37407,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,3746,en_2649_37407_2085200_1_1_1_37407,00.html)

World Health Organization (WHO). Health in Transition Series (HiTS):
[http://www.euro.who.int/observatory/Hits/TopPage](http://www.euro.who.int/observatory/Hits/TopPage)

**Session 3: Public Health Functions: an International Perspective**
Public Health is the science and profession of protecting and improving the health of societies through policies, interventions, education, promotion of healthy life conditions and lifestyles, and research. This session will provide an introduction to public health. Definitions, approaches and essential functions of public health will be discussed. A central questions for discussion will be: Can we assess better the individual and collective positive effects of public health policies?

**Required readings:**
Porta M (Ed.). A dictionary of epidemiology. 6th. edition. New York, Oxford University Press, 2014. Read (and reflect on) definitions of terms that catch your interest, including if possible, Public health; global health; epidemiology; prevention; common good; integration, creativity; effectiveness; metaphor; risk factor; causal inference; causes in public health sciences; dysregulation; Health in All Policies; healthy public policies, costs of inaction; external effects; political epidemiology; EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE; EVIDENCE-BASED PUBLIC HEALTH; strategy, “population”; strategy, “high-risk” significance; relevance; medicalization; iatrogenesis; values.

Porta M. Ver lo que nos sale a cuenta. Diario El País, 10 de junio de 2010: 31

Additional reading:

http://www.whatispublichealth.org/what/

Session 4: Public Health Topics: I. Cancer screening
Cancer screening involves testing apparently healthy people for signs of the disease. We know that cancer screening saves thousands of lives each year. It can detect cancers at an early stage and in some cases and even prevent cancers from developing in the first place. But screening is not perfect: the tests can miss cancers, and have other risks too. This session will address the basic aspects on cancer screening overall and specifically in Spain, it benefits and harms, and will include practical exercises intended to understand how cancer screening programmes are run and evaluated.
Required readings:
Cancer Research UK. *Understanding cancer screening*. Available at: http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/screening/understanding-cancer-screening

*Easy read about the meaning and facts of screening and which cancer screenings are available. The UK cancer screening programmes are quite similar to the ones in Spain.*

Recommended bibliography:

*This article explains the different cancer screening programmes we have in Spain. However, keep in mind that, in the last 5 years colorectal cancer screening programmes have been implemented in many other regions.*


*For those capable of reading in Spanish, this article is worth Reading because it explains the details of the colorectal cancer screening programme of Barcelona, the one we will be talking about and eventually visit.*

Public Health Topics: II. Vaccines
After clean water, vaccines represent the most effective and cost-saving public health intervention. This session will provide an introduction to vaccines. It will review the history of vaccine development, the types of vaccines and the impact of vaccination in the United States and worldwide. In addition, the risks of vaccines, both real and perceived will be discussed, with a focus on the Papilloma Virus Vaccine.

Required readings:
Recommended bibliography and additional resources:

World Health Organization (WHO). Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals:
http://www.who.int/immunization/en/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vaccines:
http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/

Public Health Topics: III. Inequalities in Health
Most health problems are attributable to the conditions of life and work. These conditions include social determinants such as poor housing and overcrowding, inadequate working conditions and social exclusion. However health policies remain dominated by disease-focused solutions that ignore the social and physical environment. This session will provide knowledge on the definition and assessment of social inequalities in health. It will address the major axes of inequality which are social class, gender, ethnicity or country of origin.

Required readings:

**Recommended bibliography:**