Hamilton College  
Spring 2015  
Health Economics  
Economics 360  

Instructor: Stephen Wu  
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Office: Kirner-Johnson 206  
Office Hours: M 2-4pm, Tue 2:30-4pm  

Class Meetings: Tue/Thur 9-10:15am, KJ 101  

Course Description:  
This course will analyze the economics of health and medical care, with particular emphasis on the provision of health care in the United States. Topics include the structure of public and private health insurance programs, financing the rising costs of medical care, medical malpractice, and the causes and consequences of health behaviors. The course will relate these issues to current public policy debates, particularly the recently passed Affordable Care Act. The goal of the course is to be able to have a solid understanding of the economic issues related to the production of health and the provision of healthcare.

Requirements:  
I expect students to come to all class meetings and to be on time. The readings will consist of a mix of textbook chapters and academic journal articles. I will occasionally circulate newspaper and magazine articles. I encourage you to forward me articles of interest that you read in various outlets. Please have the assigned reading finished prior to the class period that we will be discussing it. This will make discussion more beneficial to you, and to the class as a whole. You will have one midterm exam, one final exam, a health policy paper (written in two parts) and occasional homework assignments. For your paper, I will require you to schedule at least one Writing Center appointment. There will also be one group presentation on a health care system of a foreign country. Grades will be determined by a combination of these factors.

Students with Disabilities:  
Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. I request that any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021) with appropriate documentation of your disability.

Grading:  
Policy Paper (part 1)  20%  
Policy Paper (part 2)  20%  
Group Presentation  10%  
Midterm Exam  25%  
Final Exam  25%  

Due Dates:  
Policy Paper (part 1): Due Thursday, March 12  
Policy Paper (part 2): Due Thursday, April 23  
Midterm Exam: Thursday, March 5 (in class)  
Final Exam: Thursday May 14 (2-5pm)
Tentative Schedule:
1/20  Motivation for Studying Health Economics (Chapter 1); “Slowing the Growth of Healthcare Costs: Lessons from Regional Variation,” Fisher et al. (2009)
1/22  Utility and Health (Chapter 2)
1/27  Obesity
1/29  Production of Health (Chapter 3); “Physician Beliefs and Patient Preferences,” Cutler et al. (2014)
2/3   The Demand for Medical Care: Conceptual Framework (Chapter 4)
2/5   The Demand for Medical Care: Empirical Studies (Chapter 5)
2/10  The Rand Health Insurance Study
  “Health Insurance and the Demand for Medical Care: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment”, Willard Manning et al. (1987)
2/12  The Physician as a Supplier of Medical Care (Chapter 6)
2/17  The Market for Physicians (Chapter 7)
2/19  The Hospital as a Supplier of Medical Care (Chapter 8)
2/24  Hospitals in the Marketplace (Chapter 9)
2/26  Demand for Health Insurance (Chapter 10); “Employment-Based Health Insurance and Job Mobility: Is There Evidence of Job-Lock?” Madrian (1994)
3/3   Review
3/5  Midterm Exam
3/10  Guest Speaker: Mehul Mehta, M.D., Vice President, Partners Healthcare International
3/12  Managed Care (Chapter 11)
3/31  Medicare and Medicaid (Chapter 12)
4/2   Medical Malpractice (Chapter 13)
4/7   Externalities in Health Care (Chapter 14)
4/9   Regulation in the U.S. Health Care System (Chapter 15)
4/14  Health Reform and Universal Health Coverage (Chapter 16)
4/16  Cost Control
4/21  Effectiveness Research and The Affordable Care Act
  “Comparative Effectiveness Research,” Chandra et al. (2011)
4/23  Global Health Issues
4/28  Organ Donation
4/30  Behavioral Issues in Health
5/5   Group Presentations
5/7   Group Presentations