

Economics 340: The Economics of Health

Fall 2021

Prof. Lawrence King

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Course format: In-person

Tuesday and Thursday: 2:30-3:45 Machmer Hall E-33

Office hours: Thursday 4:00-5:30 in Gordon Hall Room 216.

This course applies the theories and methods of heterodox economics and comparative political economy to the analysis of population health. The grade will be based on:

Quizzes: Each class will have a 50% chance of a quiz (determined by a coin flip). There are no make-up quizzes, so if you miss a class where there is a quiz, you miss the quiz and it gets counted as a 0. If you have an excused absence, a missed quiz will not count for anything. Each student's two lowest quizzes will be dropped, and the average of the remaining quizzes will be worth 35% of the final grade.

Research paper: Each student will do a research paper worth 35% of your final grade.

Short papers on documentaries: each student will write 5 short papers (2 pages) on documentaries. The papers will be graded with a check, check-plus, check-minus system. Your score for the documentaries will be the following formula: 3 or more check-plusses and no check-minuses is worth 100%; 2 or more check-plusses and no check-minuses is worth 93%; one check plus and no check-minus is worth 85%; nothing below a check is worth 80%; one check-minus is worth 65%; two check-minuses is worth a 40%; three or more is worth 0%. The short papers score will be worth 15% of your final grade.

Attendance and participation is worth 15% of your final grade. Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences. Each additional absence will result in a deduction of 1% from the attendance and participation grade.

Research paper:

The research paper must be on an "industrial epidemic." In this paper you must **compare** the activity of the tobacco industry with another major industry that has also had a major negative impact on public health. You can choose one of five industries associated with major health crises facing us today: (1) prescription opioid makers and the opioid epidemic; (2) alcohol

producers and deaths and poor health resulting from alcohol; (3) Big sugar (the sugar producers/soft-drink/snack food and breakfast cereal industries) and the epidemic of obesity and diabetes; (4) gun manufacturers and gun deaths; (5) Cars, accidents and respiratory disease. You may choose another “industrial epidemic” such as asbestos or any other good or service that has a negative public health impact. However, you need the instructor’s permission to do another topic. The research papers should be approximately 10 double-spaced pages not counting sources, and you may have additional endnotes and appendices. Papers must have at least 20 academic sources such as peer-reviewed scientific journals. A book chapter counts as one source and must have an independent citation. The citations must list all authors, the title, the journal name (and volume and issue number if they apply), the year of publication and page numbers. Books require name, year, publisher, and publisher’s location. Book chapters should also provide the title of the chapter and the pages of the chapter. In-depth investigative stories seven pages or longer by journalists are also acceptable and should be cited like journal articles. Web-based only citations should include the author of the work, the title of the source in quotation marks, the web site name in italics, the publisher, the posting date, and the date of access. All data/evidence presented in the paper must be cited. **You must include a page number for the location of the information that you cite** (for web sources, provide a paragraph number if there are no page numbers). Improper citations will result in deductions from the research paper’s grade, and the student must redo all citations in the proper form in order to receive any grade for the paper. **Pdfs of 20 sources must be uploaded to the Moodle page.** If you are using a hardcopy, you must scan the article or book chapter to make a pdf. All pages of the research paper must be numbered. Students must upload a copy of the paper to Moodle so that it can be checked for plagiarism as well as hand in a hard copy during class.

For information about the tobacco industry **you must read and cite the following:**

Proctor, Robert. *The Golden Holocaust: Origins of the Cigarette Catastrophe and the Case for Abolition*. 2012 University of California Press. Pp. 1-23, 49-55, 289-339, 539-549. Proctor 2012 **does not count** as of one of your 20 sources.

The research paper should have two parts. In Part 1 you should summarize the behavior of tobacco companies based on the Proctor reading and the documentary “The Tobacco Conspiracy: The Backroom Deals of a Deadly Industry.” This should include information on how tobacco companies sought to keep selling tobacco even as it became widely known tobacco was carcinogenic. You will receive feedback on Part 1, and you may rewrite based on this feedback. In Part 2, you must contrast and compare the record of the tobacco sector to whatever sector is responsible for the industrial epidemic that you choose to compare it to.

Your topic is due in class on September 21, and a draft of Part 1 is due October 7. Failure to turn in either a topic or part 1 will result in a deduction of 2 percentage points off of your final grade for each week that it is late. On October 26 you will need to upload your first 10 sources to

moodle. Each day late will incur a 0.5% penalty against the grade for the research paper. On November 23 you will upload the second set of 10 sources to moodle. The same penalty for late work applies. The final paper (part 1 and part 2) is due in class on December 7th, and the student must also submit a version to moodle (to check for plagiarism).

Section 1: Capitalism and Health

September 2: Introduction and discussion: how is the economy organized? What effect does this have on population health? What explains the US health crisis (the divergence of life expectancy in the US compared to other rich countries since the 1980s)?

September 7: : Class cancelled due to Rosh Hashanah. You are responsible for reading: Angus Deaton. *The Great Escape: health, wealth, and the origins of inequality*. Pp.59-100. ([Download](#))

You must answer the following set of questions, and send them to the instructor via email by 5 PM on September 7. Make sure the subject reads “Econ 340 Sept 7 (your name)”.

1. Is life expectancy the same thing as how long people live on average?
2. What is the relationship between economic growth and life expectancy?
3. Why did life expectancy fluctuate more pre-1950 than post-1959?
4. What factors influence the mortality gap between men and women?
5. What health advantages did paleolithic people have over people in the neolithic age? Over people living in industrial capitalism?
6. What could be responsible for the growing health gap in England from 1750 onwards?
7. What is responsible for the increase in life expectancy from 1850 to 1950?
8. What impact did the Industrial Revolution have on public health?

Section 2 : Social Determinants of Health

September 9: Before class watch: Unnatural Causes, episode 1: “In Sickness and in Wealth” ([Download](#))

Prior to class read: Williams et al. (2016). “Understanding Associations Among Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health: Patterns and Prospects.” *Health Psychology* Vol. 35, No.4, 407-411. ([Download](#))

September 14: Prior to class read Reich, M. “Who benefits from racism?” *Journal of Human Resources* Vol. 13, No.4 (1978): 524-544. ([Download](#))

Section 3: The Corporate Determinants of Health

September 16: Prior to class watch “The Corporation” (2003). Directors: Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbot. Write a 2 page double-spaced summary and comment, due in class and on moodle. ([Download](#))

September 21: Prior to class watch “The Tobacco Conspiracy: The Backroom Deals of a Deadly Industry.” Director: Nadia Collot. 2006. ([Download](#))

Research topic is due in class. Prepare a short document that includes your name, email, your comparator industry, and a brief statement motivating the topic. Failure to submit a topic results in a 1% penalty deduction per day from the final paper grade.

Section 4: Ideology and health behavior

September 23: Prior to class read Crawford, R. (1977). “You are Dangerous to Your Health: The Ideology and Politics of Victim Blaming.” *International Journal of Health Services*, 7(4), 663–680. ([download](#))

Prior to class watch Dan Ariely. 2008. “Are we in control of our own decisions?” TED Talk. ([Link](#))

Section 5: Addiction

September 28: Prior to class read Bruce K. Alexander and Linda S. Wong. 2010. “The Myth of Drug-Induced Addiction.” ([Link](#))

September 30: Prior to class read: “The Extraordinary Science of Junk Food”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/magazine/the-extraordinary-science-of-junk-food.html>
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David Jernigan et al. 2016. “Alcohol marketing and youth alcohol consumption: a systematic review of longitudinal studies published since 2008” *Addiction*, 112 (Suppl. 1), 7–20

Section 6: Sugar

October 5: Prior to class watch Robert Lustig. Sugar: The Bitter Truth. ([Link](#))

October 7: Prior to class read Gary Taubes. “Chapter 8: Defending Sugar” in *The Case Against Sugar*. 2016. Pp. Pp. 145-183. ([Download](#)).

A draft of Part 1 of the research paper is due in class.

Section 7: The war on drugs and mass incarceration

October 12: Prior to class watch: “The House I Live In” (2012). ([Download](#)) You may have to rent this for \$2. Director: Eugene Jarecki. Write a 2 page double-spaced summary. Bring a hardcopy to turn in during class, and submit it to Moodle by class time.

October 14: Prior to class read: Johann Hari. 2015. *Chasing the Scream*. “The Spirit of 74” Pp.233-255. Endnotes: 351-353. ([Download](#)).

Section 8: Capitalism and depression

October 19: Prior to class read Johann Hari. 2018. Chapters 5-9 in “Part II: Disconnection: Nine Causes of Depression and Anxiety” in *Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression – and the Unexpected Solutions*. New York: Bloomsbury. Pp. 61-105. ([Download](#))

October 21: Prior to class read Johann Hari. 2018. Chapters 10-13 in “Part II: Disconnection: Nine Causes of Depression and Anxiety” in *Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression – and the Unexpected Solutions*. New York: Bloomsbury. Pp. 106-143. The reading is in the last download.

Section 9 : Pharmaceuticals

October 26: Read Light, D.W. (2010) “Bearing the Risks of Prescription Drugs” in *The risks of prescription drugs*. Edited by Donald W. Light. New York: Social Science Research Council. Pp. 1-29. ([Download](#))

Turn in the first 10 sources for the research paper on moodle. Each day these sources are not turned in results in a 1% deduction from the final grade for the research paper.

October 28: Prior to class read Roy, V. and King, L. (2016) “Betting on hepatitis C: how financial speculation in drug development influences access to medicines.” *BMJ*; i3718 ([Download](#))

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Prior to class watch “The Problem with Antibiotics” 2014. Frontline and PBS. Produced by Rick Young and Anthony Szulc. ([Link](#))

Section 10: The Political Economy of Health Insurance

November 2: Prior to class watch “Sicko” (2007). Director: Michael Moore. Write a 2 page double-spaced summary and comment. Bring a hardcopy to class, and submit to Moodle by class time. ([Link](#)) You may have to rent for \$5.

November 4: Prior to class read: Krugman, P. and Wells, R. “The Health Care Crisis and What to Do About It.” March 23, 2006. *The New York Review of Books*. 10 pages. ([Download](#))

Section 11: The Global South and Eastern Europe

November 9: Watch the documentary “Fire In the Blood” (2013) Dylan Mohan Grey. Write a 2 page summary and comment. Bring a hardcopy to class, and submit to Moodle by class time. ([Link](#))

“In Town With Little Water Coca-Cola is Everywhere. So is Diabetes.” Lopez, O and Jacobs, A. NYT. July 14, 2018. ([Link](#))

November 16: Prior to class read: Kentikelenis et al. “The International Monetary Fund and the Ebola Outbreak” *Lancet Global Health*, December 22, 2014. ([Download](#))

November 18: Prior to class read Stuckler, David, Lawrence King and Martin McKee. 2009. “Mass privatisation and the post-communist mortality crisis: a cross-national analysis.” *The Lancet* 373 (9661): 399–407. ([Link](#))

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Azarova, Aytalina, et al. 2017. “The effect of rapid privatisation on mortality in mono-industrial towns in post-Soviet Russia: a retrospective cohort study.” *Lancet Public Health* 2 (5): e231-8. ([Link](#))

Section 12 Alternative Health Care Systems

November 23: Prior to class watch the documentary *Salud!* 2006. Directed by Connie Field. Write a 2 page double-spaced summary and comment. Hardcopy due in class and you must submit to Moodle by class time. ([Link](#))

Prior to class read: Champion, E. W., & Morrissey, S. (2013). “A different model—medical care in Cuba.” *New England Journal of Medicine*, 368(4), 297–299. ([Download](#))

Turn in the second batch of 10 sources for the research paper to Moodle.

Section 13: Capitalism and the return of infectious diseases: the political economy of pandemics

November 30: Mike Davis. 2020. “Introduction: The Monster Enters” in *The Monster Enters: COVID-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism Book*. OR Books. Pp. 1-25. ([Download](#))

December 2: Prior to class read Mike Davis. 2020. “Introduction: The Monster Enters” in *The Monster Enters: COVID-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism Book*. OR Books. Pp. 26-44. The previous week’s download includes these pages.

December 7: Concluding discussion: What is to be done?

Research paper due in class. No late papers accepted.