Course Syllabus

PMED 490-04
Independent Study: Healthcare Systems and the Medical Profession in the European Union

Course Description
Most countries in the European Union have healthcare systems that rank among the best in the world. However, in recent years, they have been seriously strained by the financial crisis and by the political drift away from “cradle-to-grave” socio-economic systems. The purpose of this course is to analyze the structure and functioning of the European healthcare system, the significant differences that exist among EU member countries, the important policies of the European Commission that affect health, the working conditions for doctors and nurses, the quality of the hospital system, and an in-depth analysis of the healthcare systems in Spain, France and Italy.

Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the role of the main institutions of the European Union in developing and implementing health policies
2. Evaluate the impact on health of supra-national, national, and regional policies
3. Appreciate the importance of specialized agencies, such as the European Center for Disease Control
4. Understand the functioning of the social-security system in various countries
5. Compare and contrast health status statistics throughout Europe
6. Acquire an in-depth familiarity with the healthcare systems in Spain, France and Italy
7. Appreciate the significant impact of the financial crisis on health budgets and health outcomes
8. Become familiarized with the most important public health initiatives
9. Understand the progress achieved by the numerous instances of healthcare reforms in various countries
10. Learn about the peculiarities of the medical profession in Europe and evaluate the main differences with other countries, most notably with the U.S.
**Recommended Readings**

Most of the following are available for free online.

**Health at a Glance: Europe 2014**  
OECD, Paris, 2014

**Everything you Always Wanted to Know about European Union Health Policies but Were Afraid to Ask**  
by Scott L. Greer, Nick Fahy, et al.  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2014

**Cross-Border Health Care in the European Union**  
Edited by Matthias Wismar, Willy Palm, at al.  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2011

**Economic Crisis, Health Systems and Health in Europe: Impact and Implications for Policy**  
by Sarah Thompson et al.  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2014

**Hospitals in a Changing Europe**  
by Marlin McKee and Judith Healy (eds.)  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
Open University Press, 2002

**Assuring the Quality of Healthcare in the European Union**  
by Helena Legido-Quigley et al.  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2008

**Spain: Health System Review**  
Health Systems in Transition  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2010

**France: Health System Review**  
Health Systems in Transition  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2010

**Switzerland: Health System Review**  
Health Systems in Transition  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2010

**Italy: Health System Review**  
Health Systems in Transition  
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies  
World Health Organization, Copenhagen, 2014
Course Requirements

- Five essays (minimum length: 1,000 words per essay)
  - **Essay #1**: An introduction to the healthcare system and the medical profession in the **European Union** (due July 2, before the start of the program)
  - **Essay #2**: The healthcare system and the medical profession in **Spain**: characteristics, achievements, challenges (due July 13)
  - **Essay #3**: The healthcare system and the medical profession in **France**: characteristics, achievements, challenges (due July 20)
  - **Essay #4**: The healthcare system and the medical profession in **Italy**: characteristics, achievements, challenges (due July 29)
  - **Essay #5**: A **comparative analysis** of the healthcare system and the medical profession in Spain, France, and Italy (due August 4)
- A 15-minute PowerPoint **presentation** which will summarize the main findings of the five essays

Components of Final Grade

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Grading Scale

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Course Outline

Healthcare policies in the European Union

- Historical overview

- The main EU political institutions
  - The Commission
  - The Council of Ministers
  - The European Parliament
  - The Court of Justice

- Specialized agencies
  - European Center for Disease Control (ECDC)
  - European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
  - European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction
  - European Environment Agency
  - European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

- National and supra-national policies

- Public health

- Health and the environment

- Health and safety at work

- Consumer protection

- Coordination of social-security systems

- Comparative statistics and benchmarking

- The impact of the ongoing economic crisis in Europe
Analysis of the healthcare system of select European countries

- Spain
- France
- Italy

For each of the above countries the analysis should be structured in the following way:

- Country characteristics
  - Geography
  - Demography
  - Economic environment
  - Political environment
  - Health status

- Organization and governance
  - Overview of the health system
  - Historical background
  - Centralization and decentralization
  - Regulation
  - Health information management
  - Patient empowerment

- Budgets and financing
  - Health expenditure
  - Sources of revenue
  - Out of pocket payments
  - Health insurance

- Physical resources
  - General hospitals
  - Mental health hospitals
  - Medical equipment
  - Information technology

- Human resources
  - Physicians
  - Nurses
  - Dentists
  - Pharmacists
  - Other specialists
  - Training of health workers
  - Professional mobility of health workers

- Public health
  - Communicable diseases; vaccinations
  - Occupational health and safety
  - Environmental health
  - Food security and healthier food choices
  - Screening programs
  - Smoking bans
  - Health promotion
• Provision of services
  o Typical patient pathway
  o Primary care
  o Specialist care
  o Emergency care
  o Pharmaceutical care
  o Rehabilitation care
  o Long-term care
  o Mental health care
  o Dental care
  o Alternative medicine

• Reforms to the healthcare system
  o History of reforms
  o Analysis of recent reforms
  o Expected future developments

• Assessment of the healthcare system
  o Quality
    ▪ Effective care
    ▪ Safe care
    ▪ Coordinated care
    ▪ Provider–patient communication
    ▪ Preventive care
  o Access
    ▪ Safe Universal access
    ▪ Financial obstacles
    ▪ Timeliness of Care
  o Efficiency
  o Equity
  o Outcome indicators
    ▪ Life expectancy
    ▪ Infant mortality
    ▪ Preventable deaths

The Medical Profession in Europe
• Medical education
• Professional mobility of physicians within Europe
• Comparative analysis of physicians’ income
• Malpractice insurance
• Private practices
• The hospital system

Academic Integrity
Ramon Llull University, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and Franklin University Switzerland place a high value on the integrity, appropriate conduct, and academic honesty of all students. Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity at all times. Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of F for the course.