



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore



**Franklin University Switzerland
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Forum-Nexus Program
Course Syllabus**

**PMED 490-SIS
Healthcare Systems and the Medical Profession
in the European Union**

Course Description

This course provides a comparative analysis of healthcare systems and the medical profession across the European Union. Students will examine how different EU member states organize, finance, and deliver healthcare, and how these systems shape the roles, autonomy, and responsibilities of medical professionals. The course addresses key issues including public vs. private provision, universal coverage, health workforce mobility, professional regulation, ethics, patient rights, and the impact of EU-level policies on national healthcare systems. Through case studies from multiple European countries, students will critically assess challenges such as inequality, sustainability, aging populations, and healthcare reform.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

- Compare major healthcare system models operating within the European Union
- Analyze how healthcare financing and governance affect access, quality, and equity
- Evaluate the role, regulation, and professional autonomy of physicians and healthcare workers in Europe
- Assess the impact of EU policies on national healthcare systems and medical professions
- Critically examine current challenges facing European healthcare systems, including workforce shortages, aging populations, and digital health transformation

Course Requirements

This course requires independent research, organization, and academic discipline. Students are expected to complete the required and additional readings in pace with their assignments and the course outline. Each student is required to participate in a minimum of three professional visits and eight independent cultural visits (ICVs). Students are expected to meet with their SIS Coordinator regularly throughout the course for consultation and assistance. Please note that your SIS Coordinator may ask you to attend a regularly-scheduled class when that material is relevant. Grading will consist of four essay assignments, a midterm, an oral presentation, and a final, handwritten exam.

Participation in “Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar”

All students also attend **Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar**, a daily session with occasional distinguished guest lectures. In this seminar, students learn about the culture of each country, gain an understanding of essential European geography and current events, discuss their experiences and cross-cultural interactions, get language tips, and identify ways to have an even more immersive study abroad experience. The material covered in the seminar complements the syllabus for this course, and there will be some exam questions based on the seminar. Knowledge from and participation in the International IQ Seminar is factored into the grade for this course.

Assignments and Grading:

Essays

After completing the reading assignment for the unit, students are expected to write 900-1300 word essays responding fully to the prompts listed below. Students are expected to make explicit reference to the readings and to cite their references properly (Chicago footnotes style). An essay should have an introduction and conclusion.

Essay #1 Comparing Healthcare System Models

Compare two EU healthcare systems (e.g., Beveridge vs. Bismarck models).

- How are healthcare services financed and delivered?
- What are the implications for access, efficiency, and equity?

Essay #2 The Medical Profession and Professional Autonomy

Analyze how the role, status, and autonomy of physicians differ across two EU countries.

- Consider regulation, licensing, working conditions, and professional ethics.
- How do system structures shape doctors’ decision-making and accountability?

Essay #3 EU Policy and National Healthcare Systems

Assess the influence of EU-level policies (e.g., cross-border healthcare, workforce mobility, digital health initiatives) on national healthcare systems.

- To what extent does the EU shape healthcare governance despite healthcare remaining a national competence?

Essay #4 – Contemporary Challenges and Reform

Evaluate a major challenge facing European healthcare systems today (e.g., aging populations, healthcare workforce shortages, privatization, or digitalization).

- Use at least two country examples to assess policy responses and future risks.

Presentation

Deliver a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation summarizing the main findings of your independent study. You should reflect not just on the material from the essays, but also from all the assigned readings. Presentations are expected to be synthetic, and placing all the knowledge learned in context. After your presentation, the professor will ask questions to assess your knowledge.

Midterm & Final Exams

The midterm and final exams will assess your overall progress throughout the study abroad semester. You will be asked not only to demonstrate knowledge based on the readings, but also to make connections between the various course units and reflect holistically on the knowledge you have gained in this independent study.

Required Textbook

Comparative Health Systems - A New Framework, Federico Toth, 2021

[Kindle version](#)

Healthcare Systems in Europe: A Comparative Study ([link](#))

Additional Readings

Healthcare Systems in Europe and Asia, 2012

[Kindle version](#)

Comparative Healthcare Systems in North America and Europe: Similarities and Differences ([link](#))

Lacko, Roman, Zuzana Hajduová, Tomáš Bakalár, and Henrieta Pavolová. 2023. "Efficiency and Productivity Differences in Healthcare Systems: The Case of the European Union" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 1: 178. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20010178>

North, Jonathan. *The Changing Role of the Hospital in European Health Systems*. Edited by Martin McKee, Sherry Merkur, Nigel Edwards, and Ellen Nolte. of *European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Course Outline:

Module 1 – Introduction to European Healthcare Systems

- Healthcare as a social right
- Comparative frameworks
- Overview of EU diversity in healthcare provision

Module 2 – Models of Healthcare Systems in Europe

- Beveridge, Bismarck, National Health Insurance, mixed models
- Historical development and institutional differences

Module 3 – Financing, Governance, and Regulation

- Public funding, social insurance, private expenditure
- National vs. regional governance structures

Module 4 – Access, Equity, and Health Outcomes

- Universal coverage and inequality
- Regional and socio-economic disparities

Module 5 – The Medical Profession in Europe

- Professional regulation and licensing
- Medical education and career paths
- Professional autonomy and ethics

Module 6 – Health Workforce Mobility and EU Integration

- Free movement of healthcare professionals
- Brain drain, shortages, and policy responses

Module 7 – Public vs. Private Healthcare Provision

- Privatization debates
- Role of private insurance and providers

Module 8 – Healthcare Reform and System Resilience

- COVID-19 lessons
- System sustainability and reform agendas

Module 9 – Digital Health and the Future of European Healthcare

- Telemedicine, data governance, AI
- Ethical and regulatory implications

Components of Final Grade

Essay #1	10%
Essay #2	10%
Essay #3	10%
Essay #4	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Final Presentation	20%

Grading Scale

93-100 %	A
90-92.9 %	A-
87-89.9 %	B+
83-86.9 %	B
80-82.9 %	B-
77-79.9 %	C+
73-76.9 %	C

70-72.9%	C-
67-69.9 %	D+
63-66.9 %	D
60-62.9 %	D-
Below 60 %	F

Academic Integrity

Franklin University Switzerland, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore place a high value on the integrity, good 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.

AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, Grammarly, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your creative ideas for specific writing assignments;
- Finding information on relevant topics related to the course;
- Checking spelling on your writing assignments and presentations.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Generating a draft of your writing assignments and final presentation.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or responses to complete class assignments.

In sum, any content that you hand in must not be generated by AI software, but it has to represent your intellectual contribution. Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course and will result in a failing grade on the assignment.