

COURSE OUTLINE: Health Economics

Course coordinator: Ronelle Burger, Room 613a, rburger@sun.ac.za

Other course lecturers:

Cobus Burger, email: cobus.burger@sun.ac.za

Anja Smith, email: anjasmith@sun.ac.za

Course time slot: Thursdays, 4-6; Tutorials will be scheduled separately

Venue: TBD

Learning objectives:

After completion of the module the student will be able to:

1. Discuss the basic concepts and frameworks in health economics
2. Explain how health policy problems are examined using recent empirical techniques
3. Evaluate the appropriateness of existing theories to health systems in developing countries
4. Apply microeconomic theory to real world problems
5. Formulate ideas verbally at an advanced graduate level and lead a discussion on an advanced level academic reading
6. Have a broad idea of the structure and functioning of the South African health system and the problems facing the system
7. Critically reflect on theoretical assumptions (Masters level)
8. Interpret applied research findings (Masters level)

General information:

The course is aimed at Honours and Masters level economics students. Honours level Microeconomics is a requirement.

The required preparation time for lectures will be at least 3 hours per lecture (there are typically two prescribed readings per lecture). We will share readings on the departmental shared drive that has been created for the course.

This year's module will select and overall theme that will be brought into or mentioned during most lectures. South Africa is facing a very large burden of non-communicable diseases (heart disease, hypertension as risk factor, diabetes, etc.) that is imposing large pressures on the health system.

The lectures will be complemented by monthly seminars on health economics topics. We will place all of your on the invitation list for the seminars. Depending on circumstances this may either be in person or over zoom.

Lecture	Date	Lecturers
The demand for health, health outcomes and health services	5 August	RB
Health outcomes and health inequality in a historical perspective	12 August	AS & RB
Health for all? Considering equity in health services and health outcomes in African countries	19 August	AS
Measuring health inequality [Tutorial]	TBD	TBD
Interactive lesson: Environmental and community health	26 August	Jo Barnes
Nutrition	2 September	RB
Anthropometric measurements, BMI and nutrition measures [Tutorial]	TBD	TBD
Solving moral hazard in African countries: Nudges to promote responsible behaviour	9 September	RB
Health insurance, adverse selection and the moral hazard problem	16 September	RB
The tools of health economics: IVs and interrupted time series [Tutorial]	TBD	CB
The principal agent problem, health worker behaviour, supply-induced demand and payment design	30 September	RB
The problems of quality measurement and quality improvement in African countries	7 October	AS
Reading critically: Vested interests and bias in research findings in health	14 October	CB

Valuing life and health: DALYs, QALYs and the concept of a statistical life	21 October	RB
Policy making amidst uncertainty: savings lives and livelihoods during the pandemic	28 October	TBD

The tutorials will be held in a computer lab so that you can work in Stata. We will provide the arrangements and details of these lectures closer to the time.

The interactive lecture on environmental health will either feature a slide show from a field visit or will be a field visit, depending on the COVID-19 risk at the time. If it is a field visit, transport will be arranged. Participation is voluntary.

Assessment

- 10% of the course mark will be based on class participation and
- Students will have a choice between a structured empirical assignment (with specific questions and cleaned data provided) or writing an empirical essay of their own choice. The aim of this assignment and essay will be to deepen understanding by applying the concepts and frameworks in a real world setting.
- The essay/ assignment will need to be submitted by 27 September and will account for 40% of the course mark
- An end-of-term examination will test whether students mastered the material. This will represent half of the course mark

Assessment of Masters vs. Honours students

In terms of the last two more advanced learning outcomes (only applicable to Masters students: Critically reflect on theoretical assumptions and interpret applied research findings) the difference will be reflected in terms of expectations for the exams and for assessing essays and assignments. Masters and Honours students will face different exam questions. Assignments will have an additional optional question for Masters students. Furthermore, we will require empirical work for the essay from Masters students, whereas there will be no such requirement for the Honours students.