Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Epidemiology 9540R - Health Services Research Methods
Fall 2017

Class: Thursdays 1:30 to 4:30 pm
Dates: November 2 to December 7
Location: Kresge Building, K116
TA: TBD
Instructor: Dr. Kelly Anderson
Office Hours: After class or by appointment
E-mail: kelly.anderson@schulich.uwo.ca
Phone Extension: 81001

“Health services research is a multidisciplinary field of scientific investigation that studies how social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and process, health technologies, and personal behaviours affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and ultimately our health and well-being. Its research domains are individuals, families, organizations, institutions, communities, and populations.”
- Academy for Health Services Research and Policy (2000)

Course Information

Co-Requisite Information:
Concurrent enrollment in Foundations of Epidemiology (9551A) and Principles of Biostatistics (9509A). Unless you have the requisites for this course or written special permission from the Graduate Chair to enrol, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Syllabus

This course aims to provide graduate students in epidemiology with a broad overview of the basic concepts and methods for undertaking health services research. The emphasis is on the application of epidemiologic methods to topics related to the delivery, utilization, and outcomes of health services. Students will also gain exposure to applications of these concepts and methods through the use of critical appraisal discussions of published research on health services research. The intent is to familiarize students interested in conducting health services research with key concepts, tools, and ideas that can support them in assessing the quality of existing studies and developing their own research proposals.
Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply epidemiologic methods to health services research questions
- Examine issues impacting the quality, access, and utilization of health services
- Discuss and critically appraise published health services research

Weekly Topics:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>An Epidemiologic Framework in Health Services Research and Introduction to Critical Appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>Defining the Research Question I - Organization of Services</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>Defining the Research Question II - Access and Utilization</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>November 23</td>
<td>Defining the Research Question III - Quality</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>November 30</td>
<td>Potential Data Sources in Health Services Research I: Health Administrative Data and Electronic Medical Records</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Potential Data Sources in Health Services Research II: StatsCan and the Research Data Centre</td>
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<td>Exam Period</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Student Presentations of Policy Briefs</td>
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Course Structure:
The first two hours of class sessions will involve a presentation of background information on the weekly topic, with discussion of the weekly readings and other interactive learning activities. The final hour of class sessions will involve a critical appraisal discussion of published research papers, led by a different student each week. The expectation for both components of the class is that students will come prepared to engage and actively participate in the discussion and activities.

Course Materials

Articles for reading and discussion will be assigned weekly, and class materials will be uploaded to OWL. Students are expected to read all assigned papers before coming to class.
Methods of Evaluation

A. Participation (15% of grade)
   - Students are expected to actively participate in all class discussions and are encouraged to
     apply concepts and issues being presented in relation to their own research interests.
   - Additional participation marks can be earned each week by contributing “Health Services
     Research in the News” articles at the start of each class. Articles must be Canadian and describe
     the results of a health services research study.
   - Note that participation will be assessed by the instructor on a weekly basis. Absences without a
     valid reason will be assigned a mark of zero.

B. “Health Services Research in the News“ Assignment (10% of grade)
   - Students will be asked to find a news article that reports the results of a health services
     research study and answer a series of questions.
   - Please note that these articles cannot also be used for bonus participation marks (see above).
   - Assignment Due: November 9 by 5:00 pm

C. Critical Appraisal Discussion (25% of grade)
   - Each student will co-lead a critical appraisal discussion at some point throughout the term. 
     Articles from the published literature will be assigned in advance and will relate to the weekly
     topic. Students are expected to apply the critical appraisal template that will be used to guide
     all discussions (available on OWL).
   - Dates to be assigned the first week of class

D. Policy Brief and Presentation (50% of grade)
   - This assignment will involve the completion of a policy brief (2 to 4 pages) on a health services
     topic. Students are encouraged to select an issue related to their thesis topic (without
     overlapping directly with the thesis), or the instructor can assign a topic if needed.
   - Students will give a presentation to their classmates on the main points of the policy brief (15% 
     of grade) and submit the written brief (35% of grade).
   - Topics must be approved by the instructor by November 16
   - Presentations: During Exam Period, Date TBD
   - Written Assignment Due: December 21 by 5:00 pm

Late Assignment Policy
   Please negotiate an alternative deadline with the instructor in advance if you foresee difficulties
   meeting the assigned due dates.
Marking Reassessments

Should you have concerns about a mark you have received on an assignment, you are welcome to request a reassessment from the instructor. In order to request a reassessment, please write one paragraph explaining why you believe you deserve a different mark from the one that you received. This will be read in conjunction with your original submission. The instructor will reassess your assignment based on this information. Requests for changes in marking made in any other manner will not be considered.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical and Non-Medical Absences

For assignments worth 10% or more, refer to Western University’s Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm.

All non-medical absences must be approved in advance. In the case of an unexpected absence on compassionate grounds, documentation may be requested. If documentation is required by the instructor for either medical or non-medical academic accommodation, then such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean’s office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean’s office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence:

Undergraduate:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Graduate:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

The policy brief assignment will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).
Support Services

As part of a successful student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western’s Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page [http://www.music.uwo.ca/](http://www.music.uwo.ca/), and our own Mcintosh Gallery [http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/](http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/). Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/](http://www.health.uwo.ca/)

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate or undergraduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html)

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html). This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.

Department & Faculty Offices

The Epidemiology & Biostatistics main office is located in K201 in the Kresge Building on main campus.

For undergraduate academic counseling assistance, students will need to speak with the Bachelor of Medical Sciences Office: [http://www.schulich.uwo.ca/bmsc/general-counselling](http://www.schulich.uwo.ca/bmsc/general-counselling).

Technology Requirements

You are responsible for all required course materials and announcements posted to the course’s OWL website. Please ensure after the first class that when you log in you are able to access the course site. A copy of the course outline will be available on both OWL and the departmental website.