

Academic Year/course: 2022/23

67522 - Health social determinants and public policies

Syllabus Information

Academic Year: 2022/23

Subject: 67522 - Health social determinants and public policies

Faculty / School: 109 - Facultad de Economía y Empresa

Degree: 523 - Master's in Sociology of Public and Social Policy

ECTS: 4.0

Year: 1

Semester: First semester

Subject Type: Optional

Module:

1. General information

1.1. Aims of the course

The course and its expected results respond to the following approaches and objectives:

The general objective of this subject is to offer the student a socioeconomic perspective of health policies and their social determinants from the models of social capital. This implies vindicating the relational role, community participation and the importance of the community context in which our health and quality of life are settled.

These approaches and objectives are aligned with the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/>), in such a way that the acquisition of the results of learning of the subject provides training and competence to contribute to some extent to its achievement: Goal 3: Health and well-being, Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

1.2. Context and importance of this course in the degree

In a master dedicated to the sociology of public and social policies, this subject represents the thematic specialization and the recognition of the social conquest of health as a universal right. Since the Declaration of Human Rights, health has been part of multiple political claims and international strategies since it represents the basis that allows people to assume an individual, social and economically productive quality of life (for example, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)).

The World Health Organization itself in its current agenda (Eleventh General Program of Work (2006-2015) Objective 7 of the WHO Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP)) highlights as priorities for the international community the integration of said right based not only in health as a result but as a process. This implies explicitly recognizing in public health policies: community participation, the defense of equity, information and access to health resources, the social determinants of health, and ultimately, the social capital of our communities.

The contents that are proposed in this matter are directly related to the compulsory subjects of the master: Sociology of the law of public and social policies (67502); Methodology, research, analysis and evaluation of public policies (67503); Economics and politics of public intervention (67504) and with those other subjects that emphasize social development and the necessary intersectionality of its policies.

1.3. Recommendations to take this course

The subject starts from a multidisciplinary perspective of health and the inference of its corresponding public policies. To do this, theoretical-empirical studies from the economy, sociology and social psychology of health will be presented. The student is expected to be able to integrate the different discursive levels in a coherent and critical synthesis. In order to adequately analyze the international literature that is proposed in the subject, it is recommended that the student have minimum skills in reading texts in English.

2. Learning goals

2.1. Competences

- Identify the sociological elements of the social system that enable and limit public policies, managing with precision the theoretical perspectives and their practical consequences.
- Identify the challenges and social problems to which to respond from public policies.
- Know and accurately manage the tools of economic analysis that allow the analysis of public and social policies.
- Evaluate the social and cultural consequences of public and social policies.

2.2. Learning goals

- Identify the social and economic agents that determine the health of citizens, and by extension, those responsible for public health.
- Differentiate in public health policies, the underlying paradigms (eg biomedical and psychosocial model), their corresponding dimensions of analysis and intervention, and the social consequences of their implementation.
- Being able to defend health as a universal right that entails intersectoral policies to reduce inequality and intervene in its social determinants eg. gender, ethnic origin, income level, housing, lifestyles, community integration, etc.
- Study the relationship between community health and social capital, considering the importance of relational aspects eg. citizen security, community support and social integration, civic and social network, citizen participation, integrating them in the planning of interventions and interrelating them with knowledge from other disciplines.

2.3. Importance of learning goals

The learning results obtained in the subject will allow the student to understand the implications of the bio-psycho-social model in public health policies and in the study of health and disease, enabling them to attend to the multiple determinants of health and initiating reflection on the importance of relational and participatory skills.

The gradual aging of the population, together with the economic crisis, is calling into question the sustainability of the European welfare system. While government revenues and debt capacity are shrinking, the need for public investment in health and social issues is increasing. Public authorities have to face challenges on how to design cost-effective policies and even prioritize between public interventions.

If it is necessary to train social agents in the field of health, it is no less necessary to train social researchers. The approach of strategic lines of action goes through answering open questions such as the definition of frailty and its determinants, the impact of the economic crisis on the health of citizens or the economic assessment that citizens make of public health goods and services. This subject provides tools for the performance of professional and academic activities oriented to the social field in general, and health in particular.

3. Assessment (1st and 2nd call)

3.1. Assessment tasks (description of tasks, marking system and assessment criteria)

a) The continuous evaluation will take into account:

- Participation in class activities: one minute paper, readings, questions (50% of the grade)
- Preparation of a scientific poster and public exhibition (50% of the grade).

The poster must be made following the indications of the following text: Lozano-Sánchez, J. (2012). Poster presentation of research papers. *Research in Medical Education*, 1(2):96-98 ISSN: 2007-5057

This work is intended to assess the capacities or abilities of reflection and analysis of multidimensional realities. As the work is done personally, autonomous learning and student creativity are encouraged to deepen the research topic. The use of suitable resources for the preparation and presentation of the topic is also left to the student's discretion.

b) The students of the subject will have the right to a **global evaluation** test, coinciding on the date with the call proposed for the individual written test. In this single test, six open-response questions, a development topic and 3 theoretical-practical exercises will be posed. The duration of the test will be three hours. Knowledge of the theoretical framework, the practical application of the contents, the expansion of bibliographic sources and the correct wording of the answers will be taken into account.

4. Methodology, learning tasks, syllabus and resources

4.1. Methodological overview

The methodology followed in this course is oriented towards achievement of the learning objectives. A wide range of teaching and learning tasks are implemented, such as:

- Lectures
- Team work: discussions, text analysis and audiovisuals and presentation of cases
- Individual work: written and public presentation

4.2. Learning tasks

The learning activities are structured according to the following sections, subject-matters and sessions:

Topic I (Session 1): Approach to a social definition of health

In this introduction, the definition of health is part of the critical sociology and social psychology perspectives. Public health is currently at a crossroad between social policies and control of individual behaviors. This can be understood in part as the historical dualism of medicine which prioritized health as a treatment and cure of diseases and new public health models which consider health as promotion and social development.

The Commission of the Social Determinants of the World Health Organization is an interesting example of how to research on the relationship between health and social inequity. Variables such as sex, age, educational level, employment status, access to housing, urban living conditions, which impact differently on the health of the population are addressed. The social support network, integration and civic participation are factors that can contribute to alleviate situations of social vulnerability. In this sense, health policies in relation to equity emphasize the importance of community environment (primary care).

Topic II (Sessions 2 and 3): Public health policies regarding lifestyles

Health risks are socially constructed. For example, we are afraid of mobile phone towers impact on health but we are not so aware about the unhealthy consequences of genetic manipulation of daily food. Why certain risks sensitize us more than others?, What is the role of public authorities and especially the media in communicating them?, What consequences has the perception of threat in our lifestyles in relation to health? The lifestyle is a function of the relationship between the person and their environment. The position of the person in this vital space and configuration of forces that perceives its environment, will model their behavior (ie. The diet assumed, physical exercise practice). Cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of this way of living generate constellations of behaviors that directly affect health and often are associated in the same direction (positive or risk), eg. rest properly, avoid negligent or addictive behaviors. If the lifestyles determine the health of people, How could we promote health public policies on individual, social and community levels?

The top ten causes of death in developed countries are associated with our lifestyles. This figure could be reduced if people: improve diet and physical exercise, reduce their smoking habit, abuse of alcohol and use of antihypertensive drugs. These patterns of individual behavior are learned and developed in a social and cultural context that we must also consider. This section addresses these questions from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Education for Health can become a tool for social and cultural change within and outside the health care system. Health Education methodology claims that the health care professional should integrate new knowledge about the environment, groups and idiosyncrasy that affect their patients.

Topic III (Session 4): Public health policies for households and communities

In this section we analyze the state of health as an evolutionary process that is determined through the cycle of life and which is consolidated with personal relationships either pairs (as a couple or friends) or intergenerational (children, parents and grandparents).

The fact that individuals make rational decisions, does not imply that make the best decisions for your health. For example, available information products helps consumers making their decisions. However on certain occasions, the product information can be completely different, even opposite depending on the source. If the information circulating on the market is not correct, then the market failures justify government intervention. In an increasingly global world, international cooperation is essential to protect the health of citizens, and educate them providing safe information.

Does the existence of health universal coverage facilitate individuals to make decisions for their health?, What do citizens economic assessment of public health care services? The attitudes of aversion / risk help us understanding the behavior and decisions of citizens. The study of the health market and the diligence of citizens in their behaviors is completed by performing economic valuation of health goods and services. At this point, we will discuss the responsibility of the various actors in health: individual, family, community and public agents (local, national and international).

Topic IV (sessions 5 and 6): Examples of good practices

About this topic, we will have a research collaboration with a World Bank agent, which will describe some of the work carried out. In the first place, it will exemplify cases of good practices in the institution, so that will describe two projects that have been carried out recently and have obtained positive assessments. One of them focuses on promoting equity and the other in promoting a public health insurance based on performance. Part of the session it will be devoted to debate how to design projects related to the field of health.

Health is a multidisciplinary subject that is determined by several factors, including the economy. Public policy makers meet the challenge of keeping the welfare system for an increasingly aging society. The economic crisis also favors the sustainability of the welfare state, such that government revenues are lower, while the need for spending increases. We must explore alternative solutions to traditional system, and the third sector claims its presence in today's society.

4.3. Syllabus

The course will address the following topics:

Topic I: Approach to a social definition of health

1. Evolution of the concepts of health and social effects
2. Social determinants of health

Topic II: Public health policies regarding lifestyles

1. Socio-political approach to risk behaviors to health
2. Conceptualization and dimensions of lifestyles
3. Theoretical models explaining the research / intervention in lifestyles
4. Public Health Policy

Topic III: Public health policies for households and communities

1. Production of health
2. Advertising, consumer information and health
3. Aversion to risk, health care coverage and citizen behavior
4. Public health agents

Topic IV: Examples of good practices

1. Good international practice: The World Bank
2. Good local practice: Volunteering in relation to health

4.4. Course planning and calendar

The course lasts 30 hours (100% workload) distributed as follows:

- Approach to a social definition of health (5 hours). 12.5% workload.
- Public health policies regarding lifestyles (10 hours). 25 % workload.
- Public health policies for households and communities (5 hours). 12.5% workload.
- Examples of good practice (10 hours). 25 % workload.

4.5. Bibliography and recommended resources

<http://psfunizar10.unizar.es/br13/egAsignaturas.php?codigo=67522>