BHSc Inquiry III: Advanced Inquiry in Health Sciences
C02 – Economics & Health Care

Fall 2017 Syllabus
Tuesday Evenings from Sept 6 to Dec 7, 6:00 PM to 8:50 PM in MDCL 3413
(excluding October 10)

Instructor: Barb Bloemhof
barbara.bloemhof@learnlink.mcmaster.ca

(This outline has been adapted from outlines developed by several McMaster Inquiry instructors whose valuable contributions cannot be adequately acknowledged here.)

Course Description
The purpose of this course is to help you develop skills in conducting research in health care economics. These inquiry skills include:

Problem Identification
- Curiosity about issues in health care economics
- The ability to ask good questions

Problem Exploration
- The ability to determine what needs to be learned in order to answer those questions
- The ability to identify appropriate resources for learning
- The ability to use resources effectively

Peer Persuasion
- The ability to report on and discuss what was learned
- The ability to present evidence that is compelling in support of at least one view of an issue

Critical Reflection
- The ability to self-evaluate your work and your learning process
- The ability to grow as an independent learner and researcher.

Course Objectives
The core inquiry skills translate into specific learning objectives that you will have an opportunity to achieve throughout the course:

1. Setting priorities and managing time (staying on track and on schedule);
2. Posing a good inquiry question and refining it;
3. Identifying sources of information in the library, on the web and in on-line data-bases, and from expert interviews;
4. Evaluating the relevance and validity of information from websites, journals, books, emails, interviews and presentations;
5. Integrating information;
6. Using information to answer a question;
7. Presenting and “selling” the answer in writing and verbal/visual presentation;
8. Working with others, including identifying individual strengths, dividing responsibility, following through, providing feedback and dealing with problems in group interaction;
9. Evaluating your strengths and weaknesses in each area.

In addition, like many courses in university, you will be expected to support the learning environment by collaborating, facilitating peer learning and demonstrating leadership in classroom interaction.

Problem Area – Economics and Health Care
While the course is focused on the process of inquiry, the theme of economics and health care provides the raw material which you will use to develop analytical and critical thinking skills that are applicable to any subject or theme.

Economists have many different lenses for examining health care. It can be thought of as a pure private consumption good, or as a service institution, or as a public good, or as a social investment, or it can be broadened in a number of ways to include social or cultural elements that people value. These lenses define different ways to view the key economic questions arising when considering health care.

Health economics is relevant to health sciences, and the issues it raises, including the ways in which health care impacts individuals, how much health care they wish to access, the amount they actually CAN access, and the special issues which arise in a publicly funded system when financing health care involves government policy decisions about who gets what, all can be explored using economic analytical methods. The design of this course can accommodate any issue that you find interesting as a central theme for you to develop a better understanding of the economics of health care in Canada. The only rule is that the inquiry question that you focus on must be interesting and motivating to you.

Overview of Course Format
Each section of 3E03 Inquiry III is facilitated by a different instructor, so the exact classroom experience will vary. However, we have consistent expectations. You will be a member of a group with no more than twenty-five students. Consistent with a third-year inquiry course, you will have opportunities for exploration into the methods and approaches of this subdiscipline of economics and discussions with economists, health economics specialists and other students; also, you will have a significant role in determining the specifics of many of your assessments. The main emphasis, however, and what you will be assessed on, will be inquiry: your skills and activities in the process of following a research question through to its fruition, using scholarly (academic) methods. Your assessment is based on the evidence of your skills development acquired over the term, and discussed in an individual interview at the end of the course, as well as the public evidence for your progress during class and on LearnLink. A mid-term practice interview will be available, but will not count towards your final grade.
We may as a group wish to choose a subtheme within health economics, to focus our collaborative work. Some ideas might be:

- Population health
- Overcoming economic challenges to providing comprehensive health care services in remote and northern communities
- Vaccine program cost benefit
- Information flow and privacy in large OHIP-funded screening quasi-experiments.

**Academic Honesty**

There are two McMaster University Senate policies that together outline how knowledge work is fostered. Please read the university’s Academic Integrity Policy (https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf) and consult the Academic Integrity website for examples and processes (http://mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html).


*In accordance with McMaster Senate regulations on Academic Dishonesty, please also note:* “You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.”

*In this course you will have access to a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty, and in hard copy for instructor review. If you do not wish to*
submit a copy to Turnitin.com, I totally understand that! We can find an alternative way to get you some formative feedback on your effectiveness with scholarly attribution and paraphrasing -- just send me a quick email. There will never be an obligation to use it, nor any penalty to you for exercising your right to keep your ideas out of the Turnitin database. To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please see http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The instructor, program and the university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If modifications become necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given. Students will be provided with an explanation and an opportunity to comment. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and the course website/LearnLink weekly during term. Any significant changes will be made in consultation with the BHSc Assistant Dean.

In accordance with McMaster Senate policy on courses with an on-line element, please also note: “In this course we will be using LearnLink. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.”

Finally, students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program coordinator at the start of each term of study by phone (905-525-9140 ext. 28652) or email (sas@mcmaster.ca). You do not need to discuss the personal reasons for your accommodation with your professor. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

Course Text

Other resources that may be helpful:
Evaluation

There are four elements to the evaluation in this course.

- Learning Contract for individual inquiry: 30%
- Group Activity: 25%
- Individual Inquiry Skills Portfolio: 30%
- Reflection: 15%

Each student will have the opportunity to create a learning contract with the course facilitator that will list the assessments and expectations for their individual inquiry course assessment. A wide range of products or deliverables could be proposed for the outcome of the individual inquiry, as long as it showcases the inquiry skills of presenting and selling the answer in written form. Learning contracts must be submitted for feedback by October 6 and finalized by October 13 with the benefit of facilitator feedback during individual meeting.

For clarity and consistency of expectations, a submission reflecting research should explicitly show the inquiry question (as it has evolved to be) at the top of the first page, and no cover page is required. Submissions will be due December 4, and students should expect to share findings with the class in an informal and fun “symposium” to be held on that day. Submissions will be graded individually according to the inquiry rubric included in this syllabus. Students will also maintain and periodically update on LearnLink an annotated bibliography of their evolving research, to the end that students can helpfully expand awareness of health economics resources.

A group activity is planned for November 28 in groups of 4 or 5. Time will be given in class during the term for each group to collaboratively plan an appropriate presentation activity or learning opportunity to share with the class, not to exceed about 30 minutes in length. All students in the group will receive the same grade on this activity.

Throughout the term, students will have many opportunities to add evidences of skills proficiencies to their individual inquiry skills portfolio, which they will use to self-evaluate their inquiry skills during a half-hour individual interview to be scheduled at a mutually convenient time during the examination period in December. In most cases, evidences should be from Inquiry class. An opportunity to practice interviewing skills and get feedback on progress will be provided at midterm – this interview will not be graded in any way.

Finally, students will submit a one-page reflection at three points over the term. A private notebook, .docx file or EverNote space or similar system may be used to record reflection entries on current class happenings that will not be read by the facilitator. The student will choose two points during the term to share a reflection with the instructor using the “Reflection Stationery” in the LearnLink course space. Click on the “Reflection Stationery icon and cut and paste your reflection into the space provided, and click “send” to submit it to a private locked folder that only the instructor can access. The third reflection will be submitted at the end of the term (again using the Reflection Stationery), and should synthesize insight(s) from the course.
Reflections are graded for completion only, and all three must be done for the full 15% (rather than a grade of 5% for every submitted reflection). Reflections should embody the skills of information integration, self-reflection and effective written communication. In general, reflections should not exceed 2 pages, but there can be defensible reasons to relax this guideline in some situations.

A number of other activities have been scheduled to be completed during the course including:

- Guest speakers on topics of interest to the class
- Peer feedback on inquiry projects
- A “triple jump” or critical thinking and research opportunity on an unfamiliar health economics topic;
- Benchmarking at the start and end of the term.


A - EXCELLENT (80 - 100) - A Markedly Exceptional Performance
- originality, insight, and creativity are demonstrated; the paper goes beyond repeating what others have said and contributes something new to our understanding of the topic
- a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter is demonstrated, including an in-depth understanding of the relevant concepts, theories, and issues related to the topic addressed
- an awareness of differing viewpoints is demonstrated and a rigorous assessment of these undertaken where relevant
- an ability to think critically is demonstrated in the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of relevant information
- a thoughtful statement of position is presented and defended through logical arguments and carefully selected supportive detail; the arguments presented build to a consistent conclusion
- a clear, fluent, and concise style highlights a well written, tightly argued, and logically structured essay
- a virtually flawless mastery of all aspects of grammar, structure, and style is demonstrated

B - SUPERIOR (70 - 79) - Clearly Above Average Performance
- a thorough grasp of the subject matter is demonstrated
- an awareness of differing viewpoints is demonstrated and an assessment of these attempted where relevant
- the paper goes beyond description to interpretation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation
- a Position is adopted and logically argued; appropriate supporting detail is supplied
- a clear style that communicates well (but may contain occasional or minor flaws in the mechanics of spelling, grammar, sentence structure, etc.) is evident in the logical presentation of a reasonable argument

C - SATISFACTORY (60 - 69) - A Fully Competent Paper
• a basic grasp of the subject matter is demonstrated
• accurate information incorporating relevant sources and references is conveyed
• a position is adopted and logically argued
• an adequate attempt at analysis, synthesis, interpretation or evaluation is evident
• an acceptable style demonstrates an awareness of, and attention to, the principles of paragraph development, sentence structure, grammar and spelling, etc.

D - POOR (50 - 59) - A Marginally Acceptable Paper
• a lack of familiarity with the subject matter is demonstrated through the omission of key material, or through the misinterpretation of important concepts, theories or issues
• a lack of critical thinking is evident in a paper which is more descriptive than interpretive; or in which the analysis and synthesis are logically flawed; or in which there is a reliance on assertion; or in which the relevance of supporting detail is questionable
• a position is not taken, is hard to determine, or is inconsistent with arguments or information presented in the paper
• there is a lack of originality and an over-reliance on material presented in class or in the assigned readings
• written expression requires improvement in basic communication skills; or written communication is marred by inflated diction, overly complex sentence structures, or an obtuse style.

F - FAILING (0 - 49) - An Unacceptable Performance
• a basic lack of understanding of the subject matter is demonstrated through gross misinterpretation or omissions
• there is little attempt to go beyond description; or interpretation and analysis demonstrates gross error in logic or supporting detail; or little or no factual material is presented; or material presented contains gross factual error; or is completely irrelevant
• written expression is disorganized, incoherent, poorly expressed, and contains unacceptably frequent or serious errors in grammar, sentence structure, and spelling
  OR
• an attempt is made to use others' work without providing proper acknowledgment *
• an attempt is made to hand in a paper from another course *
• an attempt is made to write a paper on a topic other than that approved in writing by the instructor.

* Note that, at McMaster University, these two criteria carry other consequences, as outlined in the Senate regulations on Academic Dishonesty. See McMaster University Academic Integrity Policy (accessed 22 September 2011 at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf).