



**GEOG 38311: Health Equity in the U.S.: Policies and Politics
Spring 2021 Syllabus**

**Wednesdays, 9:10am-12:00pm
Via Zoom**

**Office Hours: By appointment
Via Zoom or Phone**

Instructor: Ram Raju, M.D., Former President and CEO at New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation and former CEO of Cook County Health and Hospitals System

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Overview:

Despite increasing financial investment and the recent advances in medical technologies, health outcomes in the United States have stagnated. The current policy and healthcare delivery model is not working. A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation supported study showed that social determinants of health predict 80% of clinical outcomes, while only 20% of clinical outcomes are influenced by actual clinical care.

Course Learning Goals:

This course will explore how to transform the current federal, state, and local regulatory and operational framework from one that focuses on “sick care” to one that keeps patients and their communities healthy. The emphasis will be on integrating the “social context,” i.e. social determinants of health into care delivery, and developing policies that blend public health, health care, and human services to address the whole patient. The course will also consider how best to align incentives for patients, payers (commercial and government), care providers, community-based organizations, and pharmaceutical companies. Case studies will examine vulnerable communities, including those who are homeless, involved in the criminal justice system, and undocumented immigrants.

Course Format and Expectations:

The course will combine in-depth reading, discussion, lectures, and oral and written assignments (e.g. policy memo, Op-Ed for the NY Times, presentations, and research paper) that will allow students to practice implementing policy. Readings will be drawn from current health policy literature, state and local government sources, and news analysis.

The course will include guest speakers who are active practitioners, who will share their expertise with the students and provide insight into policymaking in their field. Some examples of the types of speakers include:

- Judy Salerno, *President of New York Academy of Medicine*
- Oxiris Barbot, *Former Commissioner of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*
- Marjorie Cadogan, *Executive Deputy Commissioner, NYC Human Resources Administration*
- Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, *Senior Advisor to the Hunter College President (Former NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services)*
- Allison Sesso, *Executive Director, RIP Medical Debt*
- Robert Doar, *President, American Enterprise Institute*

Prior to each session, students will be expected to complete the assigned readings, materials, and resources (totaling approximately 50-85 pages per week) and be prepared to actively engage with the specific topics and questions provided for instructor-facilitated, student-driven class discussions/presentations.

Written assignments will be due at the start of class on the specified date. Specific format guidelines and content expectations by which the assignments will be graded will be provided at the start of the course.

Course Requirements and Grading:

The distribution of weights for each course requirement is as follows:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Class Participation | (25%) |
| 2. Written Assignment 1 - Social Determinants of Health Policy Memorandum | (20%) |
| 3. Written Assignment 2 - Health System CEO Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed) | (20%) |
| 4. Final Assignment - Health Policy Think Tank Report | (35%) |

Course Outline at a Glance:

Week One: February 3: Introduction to health equity (First class)

Week Two: February 10: Introduction to social determinants of health

Week Three: February 17: Root causes of poor health in vulnerable populations

Week Four: February 24: Social determinants of health in health policy - Part One

Week Five: March 3: Social determinants of health in health policy - Part Two + Guidelines on how to write a policy memorandum

Week Six: March 10: Stakeholders involved in health policy, politics, and care delivery

Week Seven: March 17: Geographies of health and health care access

Written Assignment 1 - Social Determinants of Health Policy Memorandum Due

Week Eight: March 24: Public-private partnerships and the role of anchor institutions

MARCH 31 – NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Week Nine: April 7: Addressing social determinants of health within the health care system + Guidelines on how to write an Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed)

Week Ten: April 14: Changing incentives through payment reform

Week Eleven: April 21: Health policy in non-health sectors

Written Assignment 2 - Health System CEO Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed) Due

Week Twelve: April 28: Intersectoral public policies for social and health equity

Week Thirteen: May 5: Community-led solutions + Guidelines on how to write a Think Tank Report

Week Fourteen: May 12: Aligning medical care, public health, and social services systems to achieve health equity (Final class)

May 19: Final Written Assignment - Health Policy Think Tank Report Due

May 28: Final grade submission deadline

May 31: College closed

Written Assignments:

(1) POLICY MEMORANDUM: You are the senior policy advisor to the Mayor of New York City. Construct a 3-page decision memorandum to be distributed within the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to argue in favor of pivoting towards a social determinants of health framework in order to achieve health equity for the homeless population in the city. Define social determinants of health and explain why addressing the specific social determinants of this population's poor health would improve their health outcomes, and thus should become a priority for the department.

Your goal is to effectively express a succinct thesis and subsequent analysis to advance a clear argument (and address potential counter-arguments) to this defined audience using the format guidelines provided, while properly citing (in footnotes) at least 4 of the assigned readings thus far.

Memo writing guidelines: <https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/students/NYU%20Wagner%20Memo%20About%20Memos.pdf>

(2) OPINION EDITORIAL (OP-ED): You are the CEO of a large health system that spans multiple states. From your unique stakeholder perspective and bully pulpit, write an 800-word, New York Times style opinion editorial (op-ed) to call for the uniting of all stakeholders in health policy, politics, and healthcare delivery towards addressing the social equity needs of people and communities in order to achieve health

equity. Descriptively cite factual data and at least 2 specific examples (from the assigned course readings thus far) of burgeoning policies and programs in both non-health sectors and within the health care system to advance your opinion.

Your goal is to deliver a convincing message to a broad audience, including the public at large, in a style free of jargon, to articulate a distinct opinion from your unique perspective, using the format guidelines provided.

Op-ed writing guidelines: <https://commskit.duke.edu/writing-media/writing-effective-op-eds/>

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: You are the research director of a nationally renowned health policy think tank focused on advancing health equity through social equity in the United States. Write a 20-page thematic report presenting a thorough and cohesive argument for developing an integrated policy framework at the local/community level that would engage different sectors and align incentives of stakeholders towards effectively improving health disparities and achieving a culture of health and better health equity within the next 5-10 years.

Your goal is to apply all of the course readings, materials, resources, and class discussion content to compose this report, and you are expected to appropriately cite at least 15 of the course readings (in endnotes) to corroborate all of the details and data you present.

Detailed Syllabus

Week One

FEBRUARY 3: Introduction to health equity (First class meets)

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. RWJF_What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?
2. Health Affairs_Health Policy Brief - Achieving Equity in Health
3. American Journal of Public Health_Health Disparities and Health Equity - The Issue Is Justice
4. Journal of Health Politics Policy and Law_The Many Roads toward Achieving Health Equity
5. JAMA_Social Policy as Health Policy
6. Grant Makers in Health_Health Equity and Social Justice - A Health Improvement Tool

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. What are the sources of health inequities within our communities, and across our country?
- b. What is the role of social equity in achieving health equity?
- c. What are the benefits and challenges of applying a justice framework toward achieving health equity?

Week Two

FEBRUARY 10: Introduction to social determinants of health

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. WHO_Health equity through action on the social determinants of health_Commission on Social Determinants of Health_Final Report
2. Lancet_Achieving Health Equity - From Root Causes to Fair Outcomes

3. Health Affairs_Health Policy Brief - The Relative Contribution of Multiple Determinants to Health Outcomes

4. Annual Review of Public Health_The Social Determinants of Health - Coming of Age

5. National Academies of Medicine_Social Determinants of Health 101 for Health Care - Five Plus Five

Be prepared to discuss:

a. What are the primary determinants of health in your lives?

b. What (if any) are the differences between social determinants of health and socially determined health inequities (as discussed last week)?

c. Who should address social determinants of health?

Week Three

FEBRUARY 17: Root causes of poor health in vulnerable populations

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Urban Institute-Center on Society and Health_How Are Income And Wealth Linked to Health And Longevity?

2. Health Affairs_Health Policy Brief - Housing and Health_An Overview of the Literature

3. America's Essential Hospitals_The Social Determinants of Health - Homelessness and Unemployment

4. Health Affairs_How Health Care Reform Can Transform The Health Of Criminal Justice—Involved Individuals

5. American Journal of Industrial Medicine_Undocumented Status as a Social Determinant of Occupational Safety and Health

Be prepared to discuss:

a. Participate in an exercise detailing the social determinants of health for a particular vulnerable population

b. Participate in an exercise detailing the social determinants of a particular health condition afflicting vulnerable populations

Week Four

FEBRUARY 24: Social determinants of health in health policy - Part One

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Shi_Introduction to Health Policy - Chapter One - Overview of Health Policy

2. Health Affairs_Where Health Disparities Begin - The Role of Social and Economic Determinants - And Why Current Policies May Make Matters Worse

3. WHO_The need to monitor actions on the social determinants of health

4. Kaiser_Beyond Health Care-The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity

5. HHS_Health People 2020 Framework + Social Determinants of Health | Healthy People 2020

Be prepared to discuss:

a. How are recent health policy changes being utilized to promote health equity through action on the social determinants of health? At the state level? At the national level?

Week Five

March 3: Social determinants of health in health policy - Part Two + Guidelines on how to write a policy memorandum

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. WHO_The Economics of Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities - A Resource Book: Executive Summary and Chapters 4-6
2. RWJF_A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. What are effective arguments to be made in favor of focusing on social determinants of health in local health policy?

Week Six

MARCH 10: Stakeholders involved in health policy, politics, and healthcare delivery

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. RAND_Stakeholder Perspectives on a Culture of Health
2. Navigating the Politics of Health_ A Systematic Review of U.S. Policymakers' Views on the Social Determinants of Health, Health Equity, and Health in All Policies

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. Who are the key stakeholders to engage in order to affect change within health policy, politics, and healthcare delivery? At the community level? At the state level? At the national level?

Week Seven

MARCH 17: Geographies of health and health care access

DUE: Written Assignment 1 - Social Determinants of Health Policy Memorandum

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. 2011 Health Affairs_Higher Risk of Death in Rural Blacks and Whites than Urbanites is Related to Lower Incomes, Education, and Health Coverage
2. AJPH_ Investigating Neighborhood and Area Effects on Health
3. IJHG_A spatial analysis of variations in health access
4. Health & Place_Measuring Food Deserts in New York City's Low-income Neighborhoods
5. IJHC_Spatial accessibility of primary care
6. Grantmakers in Health_Tackling SDOH Through Place-Based Initiatives

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. How should place-based health disparities affect policy approaches to health equity?
- b. Who should be involved in addressing place-based health disparities?

Week Eight

MARCH 24: Public-private partnerships and anchor institutions

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Health Affairs_Identifying Policy Levers And Opportunities For Action Across States To Achieve Health Equity
2. The Guardian_Five ways public-private partnerships can build healthier cities
3. Democracy Collective_Anchor Mission Playbook
4. 2017 JICSP_Exploring public private partnerships in health and education: a critique

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. How can public-private partnerships and anchor institutions promote health equity at the community / local level to address place-based disparities and social determinants?

MARCH 31 – NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Week Nine

APRIL 7: Addressing social determinants of health within the health care system + Guidelines on how to write an Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed)

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Commonwealth Fund-KPMG_Investing in social services as a core strategy for health organizations - Developing the business case
2. Academy Health_Paying for Population Health - Case Studies on the Health System's Role in Addressing Social Determinants of Health
3. Health Affairs Blog_Defining The Health Care System's Role In Addressing Social Determinants And Population Health_November 17, 2016
4. AHA_Food Insecurity and the Role of Hospitals
5. AHA_Housing and the Role of Hospitals

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. What role does the health system have within a community? vs. within a state or nationally?
- b. What responsibility does the health system have to address health inequity?
- c. What opportunities does the health system have to promote health equity through social determinants of health?

Week Ten

APRIL 14: Changing incentives through payment reform

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. NYSDOH_VBP Social Determinants of Health and Community Based Organizations Informational Webinar (+ watch at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjX-Z8cUjvM&feature=youtu.be>)
2. JAMA_Social Determinants of Health in Managed Care Payment Formulas
3. National Quality Forum_A Framework for Medicaid Programs to Address Social Determinants of Health - Food Insecurity and Housing Instability

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. How can stakeholders be incentivized to address health equity? How can these incentives be aligned to satisfy all stakeholders?
- b. Who should be paid for which health care services vs. health outcomes and by whom?

Week Eleven

APRIL 21: Health policy in non-health sectors

DUE: Written Assignment 2 - Health System CEO Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed)

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Public Health Institute_Health in All Policies - A Guide for State and Local Governments - Parts 1 & 8
2. New York Times_ A Focus on Health to Resolve Urban Ills
3. Health Affairs_Examine Whether the Health-in-all Policies Approach Promotes Health Equity

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. Does the Health-in-all Policies approach promote health equity? What are its limitations?

Week Twelve

APRIL 28: Intersectoral public policies for social and health equity

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Health Affairs_Health Policy Brief - Community Development and Health
2. JAMA_Investing in Housing for Health Improves Both Mission and Margin
3. Health Affairs Blog_Funding For Local Public Health: A Renewed Path For Critical Infrastructure_August 22, 2017
4. Health Services Research_Impact of a New York City Supportive Housing Program on Housing Stability and Preventable Health Care among Homeless Families
5. Health Affairs_Social Determinants As Public Goods_A New Approach to Financing Key Investments in Healthy Communities
6. CDC_ Communities in Action - Pathways to Health Equity: Chapter 6

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. How can Community development and Health fields collaboratively improve the health outcome of a population?
- b. What do you understand by affordable housing seen as drug prescription and in what ways can affordable housing be likened as prescription drugs?
- c. How can supportive housing placement impact communities?
- d. How can policies create structural barriers in achieving health equity, and how can these barriers be addressed?

Week Thirteen

MAY 5: Community-led solutions + Guidelines on how to write a Think Tank Report

Readings, materials, and resources

1. CDC_ Communities in Action - Pathways to Health Equity: Chapters 4-5

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. How can communities be motivated and empowered to achieve health equity?
- b. What are the limitations of community based interventions?

Week Fourteen

MAY 12: Aligning medical care, public health, and social services systems to achieve health equity
(Final class)

Readings, materials, and resources:

1. Putnam Consulting Group_The Road to Achieving Equity - Findings and Lessons from a Field Scan of Foundations that are Embracing Equity as a Primary Focus
2. Astho A Transformed Health System in the 21st Century White Paper

Be prepared to discuss:

- a. Discuss topics for your final written assignment (central claim you plan to make), useful readings you plan to cite, counterarguments you plan to address.

May 19: *DUE: Final Written Assignment - Health Policy Think Tank Report*

May 28: Final grade submission deadline

May 31: College closed

Accessing Course Materials via eRes

Electronic Reserve materials can be accessed electronically, on or off campus. For full details about the eRes system, please visit: <https://libguides.library.hunter.cuny.edu/reserves#Accessing%20E-Reserves>

To access materials, go directly to: http://libguides.library.hunter.cuny.edu/er.php?course_id=47208.

1. If a copyright agreement box appears, type your course specific password* with no spaces and caps.
a. The password is: raju383
2. Click Go.
3. Select appropriate folder.
4. Select title of work needed.

Incomplete and Credit/No Credit Requests

There will be NO INCOMPLETES (with the exception of a death, serious illness, or work-related issues such as travel). Incompletes must be requested in writing prior to the last class session (unless of an unforeseen emergency as outlined above) and will be given only if student's grade is at "C" or above at the time the IN is filed, and with evidence of a satisfactory reason. At the time you request an IN you must also complete a Contract to Resolve an Incomplete Grade (form available at the college) and get my signature. Otherwise, I will average your existing grades based on the course grading rubric and record the grade you have earned.

To receive a CR/NC you must have completed all course requirements (exams, quizzes, etc.) and request the CR/NC option prior to beginning the final exam. Based on your final score you will be assigned a letter grade based on the numerical standards that can be found on the Hunter College homepage at <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/advising/how-to/file-credit-no-credit-cr-nc> (where you can also download a copy of the Credit/No Credit form) or in the undergraduate catalog at <http://catalog.hunter.cuny.edu/content.php?catoid=37&navoid=10489>.

Hunter College Policies

Academic Integrity Statement: “Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.”

ADA Statement: “In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College’s students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.”

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct: “In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>