Announcement for New HPMB Winter Session Topics Course

Topics in Health Policy and Management – Universal Health Care in Costa Rica (3 credit hours)

Summary Course Description: In this course students will become familiar with the function and importance of the key building blocks of health care systems (as defined by the World Health Organization) and learn firsthand Costa Rica’s universal health care system. Through a mix of course readings, online lectures, and field-based experiences, students will also develop a deep understanding of the cultural and historical underpinnings of the Costa Rican health care system and of the value placed on principles/concepts such as social justice, equity, and health as a human right in Costa Rica. This unique blended-learning course consists of online modules delivered through Blackboard and a study abroad experience in Costa Rica organized and delivered in partnership with the University of Costa Rica’s School of Public Health.

This course will compare the health care systems of the United States and Costa Rica. Costa Rica, a middle-income country, has health status indicators, including longevity and infant mortality rates, rivaling those of the U.S. while spending much less money as measured by per capita expenditures or percentage of GDP. The Costa Rican system focuses on primary care and health promotion to improve the health of vulnerable and poor population groups resulting in improved health for all. Health is regarded as a human right in Costa Rica but not in the U.S. National histories, philosophies, and cultural influences will be examined in light of the development of each country’s health care system.

Course Learning Modules and Schedule:

Module 1 (December 20-21, 2016): The Building Blocks Required for Any National Health Care System (World Health Organization)

Module 2 (December 22-23, 2016): The Social Determinants of Health and Health as a Human Right

Module 3 (December 27-28, 2016): Foundations and Overview of the U.S. and Costa Rican Health Care Systems


Module 5 (January 2-6, 2017): Culminating Project Paper

Module 6 (January 7-18, 2017): Experiential Learning / Exchange Visit to Costa Rica / Field Presentations

Final Grades Due: January 20, 2017

Note: This new Study Abroad course is offered to both upper level undergraduate and graduate students in good academic standing. Graduate students enrolled in the course will be required to complete and be graded on additional activities/assignments during the exchange program travel portion of the course and their culminating Project Paper assignment will be more comprehensive and require a higher level of analysis.

To find out more about this new course, the associated fees and travel costs, and how to enroll, please contact John Justino (jjustino@albany.edu) or Carol Whittaker (cwhittaker@albany.edu). Additional information is also available on the University at Albany’s Education Abroad website (see the link below).