

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCE  
SPRING QUARTER, 2009

**HS 491: Vulnerable Populations**

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11:40-1:20, SH C368  
Professor: Walter Zelman PhD, Chair, Department of Health Science  
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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2-3  
Advising: Monday, 1-3, Appointments can be made in HS office

**Course Description:** This course reviews how the US, California, and local health care systems provide services to vulnerable populations, the health problems experienced by those populations, the social-economic-political value systems that underlie approaches to caring for vulnerable populations, and various options for addressing concerns relating to the care provided to vulnerable populations. The course will review several frameworks for studying vulnerable populations. It will focus on some of the programs and institutions that provide services to these populations. It will also focus on several specific vulnerable populations chosen for study by student groups.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Describe and programs and institutions created to service vulnerable populations
- Describe some of the socio-economic-political roots underlying the health care vulnerability of various populations.
- Understand and outline various frameworks that facilitate the study and understanding of vulnerable populations.
- Describe and evaluate the programs, systems and institutions that address the needs of vulnerable populations
- Describe the specific nature of vulnerability and the causes of it for several specific populations.
- Outline and analyze some options for addressing the needs of specific vulnerable populations and of vulnerable populations in general.

**Class and University Policies:**

1. Students with disabilities will be accommodated according to the American with Disabilities Act. Please contact me and/or the Office for Students with Disabilities at 323-343-3140 ASAP.
2. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism please ask the professor.

**Required Course Text:**

There are no required texts for this course. Reading materials will be posted on Blackboard, placed on reserve in the university library, or distributed in class.

Students will be required to read about 80 pages of the novel, *The Tattooed Soldier*. The book is available in the book store. There are also some copies on reserve in the library, and the professor has two copies he can circulate to students.

Students are all expected to review the Los Angeles Times or another daily source of health care information and to report on relevant stories in class. (See below for further details).

Some course readings will be selected by student groups making presentations. These readings will be assigned as the course progresses and students determine the populations they wish to study.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **1. Attendance:**

Students are expected to attend every class session. Please contact the professor prior to the week of an excused absence from class.

#### **2. Participation:**

Class discussions will consume a good deal of class time. Students are encouraged to participate in class discussions and to share ideas, experiences, and information freely. Students are expected to have read the assigned reading before coming to class to be prepared to discuss that reading. Students are also expected to occasionally report on relevant news stories. (See “required course text” above). Up to 20 points will be awarded to students who attend all classes and participate effectively. Effective participation includes making a good faith effort to answer questions posed, expressing views, describing relevant experiences, and asking questions. Quality as well as quantity of participation will be considered. Students who do not participate may receive points for attendance, but will not be eligible for participation points. A maximum of 20 points will be given for attendance and participation.

#### **3. Writing Assignments and Group Presentations**

Each student will be required to either:

a. Participate fully in a group presentation focused on a vulnerable population. Students who choose this option must propose a topic (population) to the professor by the start of the third week of class. Groups may consist of up to six students. All students will be expected to participate in the presentation and make substantive contributions that include analysis as well as the presentation of information. The group must also select at least one assigned reading for class preparation for that presentation and explain why that selection was made. If the assigned reading is not from a peer-reviewed journal the group should have particularly compelling justification for choosing it.

**Or**

b. Write a five page, double-spaced paper focused on a vulnerable population **not** covered in a class presentation. The paper should include some analysis as to the causes of vulnerability of that population, the challenges faced by that population, and the nature and adequacy of the services provided to that population by public or private entities or programs. Students may propose alternative topics to the professor. All paper subjects must be approved by the professor. All papers should be spell-checked and grammar-checked prior to submission.

## 5. Examinations

There will be two examinations: a short mid-term, and a final examination. A primary purpose of the mid-term will be to provide students with feed-back on their performance. The final examination will include all the material covered in the course. However, to the extent it covers pre-mid-term material it will do so in a manner that focuses on broad frameworks and conceptualization. In the final, students may be asked to apply frameworks and constructs from pre-mid-term course material to the material more related to specific vulnerable populations.

Make-up examinations will be given only when there is a valid reason for the student's having missed the examination.

## 6. Reading assignments:

All reading assignments will be posted on Blackboard. It is the student's responsibility to read all assignments prior to the scheduled discussion of those materials. Only some of the assignments for the second half of the course are not provided here. Other readings will be assigned by student groups making presentations.

## 7. Los Angeles Times and class presentations

All students are expected to look at the Los Angeles Times or its website on a regular basis, focusing on the sections labeled: California, National, and Local news. Students should look for stories and reports that address the subject areas of the course and be prepared to raise them during the first part of each class, providing a brief, summary of the article and raising any questions they may have about it. Efforts in this area will be part of the 10 points awarded for class participation.

## 8. Blackboard materials: Slides and readings

The professor will place reading materials on Blackboard. All such readings will be posted at least a few days prior to the class in which the material will be covered.

The professor's slide presentations will be posted on Blackboard prior to each lecture.

## 9. Student email:

All students are expected to routinely check their CSULA email. The professor will expect that emails sent to CSULA addresses will be received and read.

### Class Evaluation:

Class Attendance and participation

*Class presentation: group grade*

*Class presentation: individual grade*

*Or*

*Individual Paper*

Mid-term:

Final Exam:

**Total:**

### Maximum Points:

20

**10**

**15**

**25**

20

35

**100**

**Grading Scale:**

A	93%+	B+	87%+	C+	77%+	D+	67%+
A-	90%+	B	83%+	C	74%+	D	64%+
		B-	80%+	C-	70%+	D-	60%+

**Course Outline:**

**Note: Guest speakers are expected. Dates may change. Additional readings may be assigned. The professor will announce these in class and all readings will be posted on Blackboard, placed on reserve or distributed in class**

**Part I Introduction and Three Frameworks****April 2, 7:**

Wilenski, Gail, "Don't Forget about the Social Determinants of Health," *Health Affairs*, January 16, 2009. (On Blackboard)

Mechanic, David, "Disadvantage, Inequality and Social Policy," *Health Affairs*, March/April, 2002

**Part II Systems, Programs, and Institutions****April 9, 14****Medicare**

Kaiser Family Foundation, "A Medicare Primer, 2007."

**April 16, 21, 25****Medicaid, and Long Term Care**

Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, "Medicaid Program at a Glance," March, 2007

Rowland, Diane, "Health Care and Medicaid –Weathering the Recession," *New England Journal of Medicine*, March 26, 2009

United States General Accounting Office, "Long Term Care Financing," April 27, 2005

Weil, Alan, "There is Something About Medicaid," *Health Affairs*, Volume 22, Number 1, January-February, 2003.

**April 28, 30****Safety Net Institutions**

Staiti, Andrea B, et. al, "Stretching the Safety Net to Serve Undocumented Immigrants," Center for Studying Health System Change, Number 104, February, 2006

O'Malley, Ann S. et al., "Rising Pressure: Hospital Emergency Departments as Barometers of the Health Care System," Center for Studying Health System Change, Number 101, November 2005.

**May 5; Mid-term**

**Part III Vulnerable Populations:**

**May 5, 7:  
The uninsured**

Kaiser Family Foundation, "The Uninsured, A Primer," October 2008  
Commonwealth Fund, "The Path to a High Performance Health Care System,"  
Executive Summary, February 9, 2009

**May 12, 14:  
Racial and Ethnic minorities**

Institute of Medicine, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, 2003, Executive Summary

**May 19: The Homeless**

Tobar, Hector, *The Tattooed Soldier*, Part I (This novel can be purchased in the book store. There are also several copies on reserve in the library. The professor also has two copies that can circulate in class.

**May 21, May 26, May 28, June 2:  
Schedule to be determined by class presentations  
Reading assignments to be selected by student presenters**

Populations to be considered for class presentations include those facing challenges with regard to: Behavioral health, HIV-AIDS, Chronic illness, Prison health care, Native American health care, Immigration, other

**Review June 4**

**Final Examination: June 9, 10:45-1:15**