Too Big to Fail?: Hospitals and the Changing Landscape of Health Care Provision in America

Tufts University
Spring 2020

Wednesdays, 1:30pm – 4:00pm
574 Boston Avenue, Room 316

Instructor: Prof. Alecia McGregor
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2pm – 3:30pm
574 Boston Ave, Room 208J

Course Description
The 2008 government bailout of big banks sparked an ongoing debate over whether we are privileging the profits of "Wall Street" over the needs of "Main Street." A similar discourse exists around the configuration of health care provision in America. In this seminar, we will trace the evolution of the hospital as a community-based institution with a social mission to its increasingly common location as part of large, integrated hospital systems that operate as business enterprises. We will explore questions such as: How has hospital care in the United States evolved over the last century? How have federal and state public policies (including the Affordable Care Act) influenced the frequency of hospital mergers, reconfigurations and closures? How does the arrangement of hospital systems affect access to acute care locally and nationally, in rural and in urban areas? What role do smaller non-hospital entities, such as ambulatory surgical care centers and community health centers play in providing care? What implications do hospital business decisions have on equity of access across race, class and place?

Course Objectives
Over the course of the semester, we will:

- Trace the social, economic and technological evolution of the U.S. hospital over the last 150 years
- Examine the role of social, political, and economic forces in shaping the organization of contemporary hospital care
- Develop skills to clearly and rigorously explain the causes and consequences of hospital reconfigurations from a multidisciplinary lens and using different mediums.
Course Readings
Most course readings will be posted to Canvas for students to download. In cases when they are not, students are expected to download the readings on their own through the Tufts Library online resources.

Optional Texts
We will read excerpts from several of these texts throughout the semester.


Assignments & Grading

Participation (25%): Class discussions are an integral part of the course and all students are expected and encouraged to participate. Each week, students will submit a brief (1 to 2 paragraph) discussion post to Canvas highlighting one or two main points from the week’s readings. In your posts, highlight what you feel are the most compelling points for discussion for the upcoming seminar. Responses are due Tuesday nights at 11:59pm. You may skip one discussion post (of your choice) during the course of the semester.

Op-Ed (20%): A 700 word (max) Op-Ed article on a topic to be announced.

Literature Review (25%): A 10 - 12 page review of the research literature on a topic of your choice.

Video Project (30%): In groups, students will create an 8 - 10 minute video, documenting the transformation of a specific aspect hospital care. Include a 1 page précis that summarizes the process and especially your contribution to the group project.
Grading Policy
All assignments will be given a letter grade on the A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc scale. Throughout the semester, any assignment received after the deadline will receive a reduction by one grade for each day late. For example, an A- paper submitted one day late will receive a B-.

Final assignments will not be accepted after the deadline.

Office Hours
If for any reason, you would prefer to discuss an issue or theme one-on-one, please don’t hesitate to visit during office hours. My office hours are held on Thursdays from 2pm to 3:30pm in 574 Boston Ave, Suite 208J.

I look forward to getting to know all of you this semester!

Resources
Please consider the Tufts Digital Design Studio on the third floor of Tisch Library a great resource as you prepare your video projects. They have cameras, equipment, a recording studio and green screen. Schedule appointments for studio space in advance!

Week 1 (1/15): Introduction: Hospital Care in America

Assigned Readings
Hospitals warn Trump, Congress of massive losses with Affordable Care Act repeal
Hancock, Jay. Hospital Group Mum as Members Pursue Patients with Lawsuits and Debt Collectors. Kaiser Health News. December 28, 2019
https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/25/medicare-for-all-health-1436763

1/22 – NO CLASS- Substitute Monday’s Classes
**PART I: HISTORY**

**Week 2 (1/29): Almshouses and Asylums: The Charitable Roots of Hospitals**

**Assigned Readings**

*In-Class: Approaching the Op-Ed Assignment*

**Week 3 (2/5): Visit to MGH Russell Museum of Medical History and Innovation**

**Assigned Readings**
http://www.americanheritage.com/content/genealogy-mass-general
“The Advent of Anesthesia”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqU6Wmb0RIY&feature=youtu.be
“INHALATION OF ETHER IN SURGERY.” The Lancet
The *Anglo American, a Journal of Literature, News, Politics, the Drama, Fine Arts, Etc. (1843-1847)* Mar 6, 1847; 8, 20; American Periodicals

**Week 4 (2/12): Separate but Equal is Inherently Unequal: The Entrenchment of Segregation in Hospital Care**

**Assigned Readings**

**Optional:**
PART II - CONTEMPORARY SHIFTS IN CARE

Week 5 (2/19): Hospital Payments and Pricing – A Primer

Assigned Readings

*Op-Ed Article due this Week

Week 6 (2/26): Hospital Closings and Hospital Desertification

Assigned Readings

In-Class FILM: “Big Charity”

Week 7 (3/4): The Urge to Merge

Assigned Readings


OPTIONAL:

Horwitz, Jill R. “Making Profits and Providing Care: Comparing Nonprofit, For-Profit, and Government Hospitals.” Health Affairs 24, no. 3 (May 1, 2005)

**Week 8 (3/11): The Affordable Care Act and Hospitals**

**Assigned Readings**


**3/18- NO CLASS - Spring Recess**

**Week 9 (3/25): The Teaching Hospital: Benefits and Concerns**

**Assigned Readings**


**Week 10 (4/1): The Psychiatric Hospital: Relics of an Oppressive Past or a Contemporary Necessity?**

**Assigned Readings**


**OPTIONAL**
“Tragic Chapter of Crownsville State Hospital.”

“From the archives: Crownsville State Hospital.”

**Week 11 (4/8): The Extinction of the Hospital? Ambulatory Surgical Centers and Other non-hospital actors**

**Assigned Readings**

**Literature Review Due**

*No Discussion Post*
Week 12 (4/15): The Spatial Arrangement of Hospitals and Access to Acute Care

Assigned Readings

Week 13 (4/22): Indispensable or Obsolete? The Future of the Hospital

Assigned Readings

Final Video Project due during Final Exam Period