

COURSE SYLLABUS  
HSC 4608L: CRITICAL THINKING IN HEALTH CARE  
FALL SEMESTER, 2008 – T-TH Sections  
4 CREDIT HOURS

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***COURSE DESCRIPTION:*** This course is designed to facilitate the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in health care by requiring the student to analyze and solve conceptual and practical problems confronting the health care professional. A problem-based learning approach is used in which students are provided with carefully selected clinical, legislative, ethical, and professional problems and are provided guidance in problem solution by the faculty instructor and teaching assistants. Students work independently or in small groups to collect information relevant to problem solution, and take a hypothesis-oriented approach to dealing with each task.

***COURSE OBJECTIVES:*** By the end of the course, the student should:

- (a) Develop a knowledge base that enables the critical evaluation of a wide variety of problems and that encourages the use of a systematic approach to problem appraisal, data collection, and problem-resolution.
- (b) Develop firm decision-making and critical reasoning skills that include knowledge of how to use available informational resources to test hypotheses about problem solution.
- (c) Develop self-directed learning skills, clinical skills, and group and interpersonal skills that foster productive activity within the interdisciplinary health care team.
- (d) Develop an appreciation of the need for health care assessments, interventions, and decisions to be evidence-based, and for health care practitioners to know how to find, appraise, and apply the best evidence supporting the decisions they make.

***COURSE OUTLINE:*** The course begins with a general overview of critical thinking and problem-based learning led by the instructor. After this initial introductory module, students become more active in their own learning. The majority of the course consists of small-group-based problems the students must solve. The problems are first presented to the group, and the group members ask questions and generate hypotheses about the major issues presented within. They also identify “learning issues”, which are informational items, concepts, or issues about which more information is needed. The need for additional information forms the basis for individual study and research. Students bring the results of their information gathering back to the group, which assesses the resources brought back by each member and, with the guidance of

the faculty instructor, integrates the new information into the evolving problem solution. The entire process places the primary focus of learning on the student, rather than on the instructor. It is this emphasis that builds self-directed problem-solving skill. Students learn how to ask questions, how to find answers, and how to assess what is, and is not known about a problem. They also learn to work effectively in small groups; this teaches valuable skills useful for effective function within an interdisciplinary health care team.

The course outline consists of the following activities:

### ***COURSE SCHEDULE***

<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Topic/Activity</i></b>
Aug 26	Introduction Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving (Lectures) Essentials of Problem-Based Learning
Aug 28	
Sept 2	
Sept 4	QUIZ ON LECTURE MATERIAL Orientation to Informational Resources
Sept 9	<b><i>Introduction to Patient Problem I:</i></b> An 82-year-old Caucasian female is admitted to a nursing home.
Sept 11	Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Patient Problem I
Sept 16	Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Patient Problem I
Sept 18	<b><i>Reports on Patient Problem I due at beginning of class</i></b> <b><i>Introduction to Patient Problem II:</i></b> 27 year-old male is admitted to a rehabilitation hospital
Sept 23	Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Patient Problem II
Sept 25	Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Patient Problem II
Sept 30	<b><i>Reports on Patient Problem II due at beginning of class</i></b> <b><i>Self/Group Evaluations I</i></b> <b><i>Introduction to Patient Problem III:</i></b> A 6-year-old is brought to the emergency room by her father, who says she fell down the stairs
Oct 2	Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Patient Problem III
Oct 7	Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Patient Problem III
Oct 9	<b><i>Reports on Patient Problem III due at beginning of class</i></b>

**Introduction to Professional Problem I:** Because of a clerical error, an insurance company denies authorization for interdisciplinary rehabilitation of a stroke victim at the facility where you function as a case manager

Oct 14 Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Professional Problem I

Oct 16 Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Professional Problem I

Oct 21 **Reports on Professional Problem I due at beginning of class.  
Self/Group Evaluations II**

**Introduction to Professional Problem II:** You are charged with managing a patient who has significant issues with treatment compliance, but who must do so as he awaits a liver transplant.

Oct 23 Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Professional Problem II

Oct 28 Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Professional Problem II

Oct 30 **Reports on Professional Problem II due at beginning of class.**

**Introduction to Legislative Problem I:** The Florida Legislature considers a bill to make seat belts (for automobile drivers) and helmets (for motorcyclists) optional so as to preserve individual freedom

Nov 4 Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Legislative Problem I

Nov 6 Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Legislative Problem I

Nov 11 NO CLASS – VETERAN’S DAY

Nov 13 **Reports on Legislative Problem I due at beginning of class.  
Principles of Ethical Problem-Solving**

**Ethical Problem I:** A terminally ill patient of yours tells you that she is considering assisted suicide and asks you not to tell anyone

**Ethical Problem II:** A seriously ill patient of yours is engaged in a research study that requires him to wait 3 weeks in a no-treatment condition before beginning needed treatment

**Ethical Problem III:** A stroke victim’s ex-wife seeks to take over decision-making for him, including financial and legal matters

Nov 18 Group Meetings/Interim Findings on Ethical Problems

Nov 20 Group Meetings/Final Discussion on Ethical Problems

Nov 25-27	No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec 2	<b><i>Reports on Ethical Problem due at beginning of class Self-Group Evaluations III</i></b>
Dec 4	Review
Dec 9	Quiz, Wrap-up and Debriefing

## ***GRADING***

Grading/evaluation of student performance is based on the quality of student contributions to their group and to problem solutions, student performance products (papers), and scores on an in-class QUIZ (6 Sept) and a Final Examination

The weightings of these components are itemized below.

- 1) Each problem-solving group observes not only the knowledge that each of its members brings to the problem-solving process, but also the results of each member's self-directed learning, and the individual interactions each student has with his/her group. Three times during the semester, each group member performs a self-evaluation and is evaluated by the tutorial group on the degree to which they have reached curricular goals. ***The results of these three formal assessments make up 10% of the student grade.***
- 2) Students are required to submit a report on two of the patient problems, one of the Professional Problems, and either the Legislative Problem or one of the Ethical Problems (a total of 4 reports are required). Although the performance product for each problem is achieved within the group, the reports must be written individually by the student to summarize their learning experience. Each report (4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins) will (a) itemize the key issues in each problem, (b) present the student's proposed solution to the problem, and (c) contain a brief rationale for their proposed solution. Reports must be in APA format, and after the first paper, points will be deducted for failure to format papers and references appropriately. APA style will be covered briefly in class, but it is the student's responsibility to learn and understand the key elements of this style of reporting. Reports are due according to the schedule above. Papers that are not turned in at the class they are due will be regarded as late. Late papers will lose 10 additional points for each day late (papers turned in later the day of class will have a maximum score of 90, if turned in the next day, the maximum score is 80, etc.). ***Taken together, the point value of the four reports is worth 60% of the final grade.***
- 3) Assessments of the knowledge base that each student acquires as a result of participation in the Problems are also important at this stage of learning. The Quiz will assess knowledge of basic information delivered during the introductory lecture series. The Final Examination will assess knowledge acquired from analysis of the Clinical, Professional, Legislative, and Ethical problems. Both will consist of a mixture of objective (e.g., multiple choice, short answer) and

short essay questions. ***Combined performance on the quiz and final examination is worth 30% of the final grade.***

In summary, the following weighting of group participation, written reports, and final examinations will be used in determining the final grade:

Cumulative Results of Self & Group Evaluations:	10%
Written Reports:	60%
Quiz and Final Examination:	30%

Each component will be assigned a number of points in proportion to its contribution to the final grade. At the end of the course, points will be summed, and letter grades will be assigned according to the percentage of total possible points earned. A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, E = 59% or below. Scores will be rounded to the nearest percent for grade determination.

In addition to numerical grades, students will be provided substantial written feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their problem-based performance, along with directions for improvement.

### ***CLASS ATTENDANCE***

In this class, students take primary responsibility for their own learning. ***Attendance during the lectures and group meetings is expected. Attendance will be taken.*** Once the group meetings start, students will bear some specific responsibility or role within their small group so that absences from the group meetings may have a direct impact on other students. ***If you must miss a class or a group meeting, inform your group and your instructor ahead of time.*** If you have an assigned task for that day, make sure you make appropriate arrangements with the group, and have a fellow group member bring your finished work to class in your absence. You must make prior arrangements with the instructor or group leader if an absence will cause a paper to be late; if you do not do so, you will lose points as indicated above.

### ***HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM***

Academic integrity and honesty is the foundation of everything positive you accomplish as a student and as a professional. Success in critical thinking depends on your ability to evaluate arguments and sources used to support such arguments. This activity requires honest attribution for the source of ideas. This means that students should show care in referencing literature sources in their papers, and should learn appropriate manuscript style for doing so. ***Students are responsible for their own work***, even though most of the class operates in group format in which students work together to solve problems. ***It is not permissible to write a “group” paper*** in which individuals divide up responsibilities for the final product. It is expected that papers turned in by group members will have similar content, but ***each student is expected to work independently in drafting their final paper.*** Students are expected to be familiar with, and abide by the University of Florida Honor Code (which can be accessed via the web at: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html> ) in all aspects of this class.

***Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated, and papers will be checked, both within and across sections, for evidence thereof.***

### ***STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES***

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students, Office of Student Disability Services. That office will provide documentation to the student regarding allowable accommodations. The student must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

### ***ASSIGNED READINGS/COURSE MATERIALS:***

There are no assigned readings for the course, due to the nature of the problem-based learning approach. One of the instructor's/tutor's primary duties is to help direct students to appropriate sources of information available in the University Library System, referencing databases, and other sources. The effectiveness with which students are able to research and locate appropriate sources to document and support their thinking will be assessed within the Problem-Based Performance Evaluation. ***Because content on the Internet is not peer-reviewed, it is expected that students will go beyond Internet sources in formulating their problems and will directly consult peer-reviewed articles and summary chapters on topics relevant to their research.***

### ***EXTRA CREDIT***

Students will have the opportunity to improve their performance by a maximum of half a letter grade by the submission of an additional paper during the course of the semester. The paper will be graded as if the submission was one of the four "required" papers, and if the resulting grade improves the student's course grade, it will be factored into the student's final grade at the end of the course. If the resulting grade does not improve or hurts the student's grade, it will not be factored into the final course grade. More details on additional extra credit opportunities that may become available will be provided to students as the course progresses.

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