



**Purpose** - South Carolina is a rural state with well-documented health disparities across the lifespan. Inadequate access to care exacerbates disparities in rural parts of the state. HSPM 709 takes a practical approach to cultivating expertise on rural health disparities and policy in future leaders. The purposes of HSPM 709 are: (a) to enhance students' knowledge of demographic, economic, and political forces affecting access to care and community health in rural America and; (b) to impart communication, analytical, and decision-making skills necessary to provide leadership in rural community health settings. These purposes are achieved through a variety of instruction techniques with an emphasis on multidisciplinary approaches to rural community health improvement and self-directed learning.

**Course Objectives** - Course content is organized in four parts:

Part I Orientation to Rural Communities

Part II National Rural Health Policy & Program Infrastructure

Part III State Infrastructure: The Providers & Policymakers

Part IV Manifestations of Rural Healthcare Infrastructure: Community & Public Health Disparities

At the conclusion of the course, students are able to:

1. Identify key policy issues & historical factors that distinguish rural populations from urban.
2. Describe national infrastructure and resources for rural health programs.
3. Describe state infrastructure for facilitating rural health programs and policies.
4. Identify essential components of rural community healthcare systems.
5. Describe opportunities and barriers for recruiting healthcare providers to rural.
6. Identify rural safety net providers and describe their contributions to the local system of care.
7. Describe the complex issues faced by special populations in rural communities.

**Teaching Methods** - Readings, group discussions, lectures by national and state rural health leaders, field trips, writing assignments, and group projects are used to develop competencies.

**Reading Materials** - Students read a variety of journal articles, policy briefs, and governmental publications. Students are required to read Pat Conroy's [The Water is Wide](#), a personal account by the author of his time as a young school teacher in the newly desegregated South. While the story centers on education, there are stark parallels to addressing the healthcare needs of rural, minority populations.

**Learning Assessments** - In addition to a midterm examination and classroom participation, the following assignments are used to assess competencies:

- a. *Rural Culture Paper* - Students reflect on their 'experiential read' of Pat Conroy's [The Water is Wide](#). They examine the role rural cultures play in the health status of communities, as well as the socio-political and access to care issues influencing rural community health, using Conroy's book as a basis from which to frame the paper.
- b. *Scholarship* - Students select one rural policy, program, or health challenge on which they develop a scholarly poster to be presented at the Annual SC Rural Health Conference.
- c. *Field Trips and Assessments* - Students participate in field trips, which involve interviews of leaders from rural hospitals, networks, federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, and free clinics. These activities result in additional scholarly products such as case studies.

**Student Outcomes** - Many students go on to choose practicum and residencies in rural settings or begin their careers serving rural communities. The 2007 HSPM 709 class worked under the direction of the USC Media Department to develop "Rx," a film about rural health issues which has one several independent film awards. The trailer can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoszCb4ZB8w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoszCb4ZB8w).

Additional information can be obtained from the instructor, Amy Brock Martin, Dr.P.H. at [brocka@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:brocka@mailbox.sc.edu) or 803-251-6317.