HS 308EPA - Healthcare Systems and Medical Practices in Panama

Program: Health Practices in English
Total scheduled hours: 32
Instructional contact hours: 30
Final examination: 2 hours
Course level: Introductory undergraduate course
English language prerequisite: None
Institution: ¡EPA! Español en Panamá
Program location: Panama City, Panama
Language of instruction: English

COURSE OVERVIEW

ENG 125EPA is a 32-hour introductory course comprising 30 hours of classroom instruction and a separate 2-hour final examination. Delivered entirely in English, it is designed for undergraduate students in pre-medicine, nursing, biological sciences, and other health-related fields. The course introduces healthcare systems, professional roles, ethical principles, patient-centered communication, cultural awareness, health documentation, and basic concepts of patient safety. Selected chapters from Introduction to Health Care & Careers provide the foundation for readings, discussions, case analysis, and applied tasks.

The textbook's predominantly U.S. context is complemented by current materials on healthcare in Panama. Students compare selected aspects of healthcare organization, access, professional practice, and communication across the two settings. When medical visits form part of the wider program, classroom activities may help students prepare for and reflect on those experiences. The course requires no previous clinical training. It develops introductory understanding and professional awareness through academic activities and educational simulations; it does not qualify students to diagnose, prescribe, provide treatment, or perform clinical procedures.

TARGET POPULATION AND PREREQUISITES

The course is intended primarily for U.S. undergraduate students aged approximately 19 to 21 who are studying pre-medicine, nursing, biological sciences or other health-related fields. Students are expected to be native or fully proficient English speakers. No English language placement test or language-learning prerequisite is required. This is a healthcare content course delivered in English. No previous coursework in medicine or healthcare and no clinical experience are required. Readings and activities will be selected and adapted to an introductory undergraduate level. Students are not expected to make diagnoses, recommend treatments or demonstrate clinical competence.

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

The course consists of 30 instructional contact hours and a separate 2-hour final examination. Instruction combines selected readings, introductory explanations, guided discussion, comparative analysis, case studies, professional communication practice and applied group tasks. The course draws on selected chapters from Introduction to Health Care & Careers, Enhanced Edition, by Roxann DeLaet. It does not attempt to cover the entire textbook. Topics are selected according to the students' academic preparation, the program's objectives and the available instructional time.

The textbook provides a foundation in healthcare organization, professional conduct, communication, and workplace practices. Supplementary materials introduce the Panamanian healthcare context and update information on healthcare policy, technology, financing, and professional practice where necessary. U.S. legal and regulatory information is discussed as U.S. context and is not presented as applicable law in Panama. Clinical topics are addressed at the level of introductory concepts, professional awareness and interpretation of educational examples. All patient scenarios use fictional or de-identified information. The course does not include clinical skills certification or independent patient care.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To develop students' introductory understanding of healthcare systems, professional roles and selected healthcare practices, together with their ability to analyze basic healthcare situations, communicate clearly and respectfully, and compare relevant aspects of the U.S. and Panamanian healthcare contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe the main types of healthcare facilities, services and professional roles introduced in the course.
- Compare selected aspects of healthcare organization, access and financing in the United States and Panama using assigned sources.
- Recognize introductory principles of ethics, professionalism, confidentiality, and respect for patients.
- Explain how cultural differences, individual needs and communication barriers may affect healthcare interactions.
- Demonstrate clear, empathetic and respectful communication in simulated interactions with patients, families and healthcare personnel.
- Use questioning, active listening, clarification and confirmation to organize and communicate essential information.
- Interpret selected healthcare terms, abbreviations and simplified documentation examples.
- Explain basic principles of safety and infection prevention and recognize the importance of seeking appropriately qualified assistance.
- Distinguish the responsibilities and limits of selected healthcare professions.
- Analyze a guided case using course concepts, identify information gaps and support conclusions with assigned materials.
- Produce concise written reports and oral presentations using accurate introductory terminology.
- Relate classroom learning to the Panamanian healthcare context through guided research, case discussion, and, where applicable, reflection on program visits.

COMPETENCES DEVELOPED

The course develops introductory healthcare knowledge together with professional communication, intercultural awareness, and evidence-informed academic reasoning.

Students develop:

- Understanding of healthcare organization, access and professional roles.
- Accurate use and interpretation of selected healthcare terminology.

- Patient-centered communication, active listening and clear explanation.
- Awareness of cultural differences and individual needs in healthcare settings.
- Recognition of ethical principles, confidentiality and professional boundaries.
- Critical reading and comparison of healthcare information from different contexts.
- Clear organization of information in brief reports and presentations.
- Collaborative analysis, problem-solving and teamwork.
- Awareness of basic safety and infection-prevention principles.
- Reflective understanding of the distinction between introductory academic learning and clinical competence.

METHODOLOGY

The course uses an active, case-based and task-based approach appropriate for an introductory undergraduate healthcare course. English is the language of instruction and academic interaction throughout the course.

Instruction combines short instructor-led explanations, selected textbook readings, guided discussion, visual materials, comparative activities, case analysis, educational role-plays, brief documentation tasks, and collaborative presentations. Students use healthcare concepts and professional communication strategies to complete clearly defined tasks.

Learning progresses from understanding basic concepts to analyzing situations and explaining decisions in an educational context. The instructor provides reading guidance, introduces unfamiliar terminology and adjusts the complexity of tasks to the students' prior knowledge.

Activities connect the textbook's U.S. context with healthcare in Panama through current supplementary readings and guided comparison. When visits are included in the wider program, students may complete preparatory questions and subsequent reflections. Visits are not automatically counted within the course's 30 classroom hours.

Role-plays and case activities use fictional or de-identified information. Students practice communication, observation, interpretation, and appropriate escalation of concerns. They do not diagnose, prescribe, perform clinical procedures or provide independent patient care.

COURSE MATERIALS AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Primary instructional reference:

DeLaet, Roxann. Introduction to Health Care & Careers. Enhanced Edition. Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2020. ISBN 978-1-28432-229-3.

Selected chapters provide the foundation for healthcare systems, professional roles, ethics, communication, cultural diversity, documentation and basic workplace safety. The textbook is used selectively; completion of all chapters is not required.

The instructor will supplement the textbook with current, appropriately sourced materials on healthcare in Panama. These may include official institutional information, healthcare system summaries, professional guidelines, public health materials and selected comparative readings.

Information on legislation, financing, technology and healthcare trends will be checked against current sources.

Additional learning resources may include fictional patient profiles, simplified documentation examples, diagrams, case studies, audiovisual materials and instructor-created activities.

The publisher describes student resources and instructor materials that may include study activities, presentations, teaching outlines, answer keys and assessment resources. Their use is subject to confirmed availability and authorized access for the edition purchased. The course can be delivered using the print textbook and instructor-prepared materials without depending on unconfirmed digital access.

COURSE CONTENT AND HOUR DISTRIBUTION

The course comprises 30 instructional contact hours distributed across five modules of six hours each, followed by a separate 2-hour final examination. The sequence draws on selected chapters from Introduction to Health Care & Careers and current supplementary materials on healthcare in Panama.

Chapter selections indicate the principal reference for each module; the instructor will assign specific sections rather than require complete coverage of every chapter. Applied tasks, discussion, guided reading and comparative activities are included within each module's six instructional hours.

- **Module I: Healthcare systems, services and professional roles (6 hours)**
    - ***Content and selected chapters*:** Healthcare facilities, services, professional roles, access, financing and use of resources. Selected sections from Chapters 1, 2 and 17. Supplementary sources on healthcare organization and access in Panama.
    - ***Learning focus*:** Describe healthcare settings and roles; distinguish selected types of services; compare basic features of the U.S. and Panamanian healthcare contexts; identify the sources and limits of available information.
    - ***Applied task*:** Healthcare system comparison: produce a brief comparison of selected U.S. and Panamanian healthcare services, supported by assigned sources, and present the roles of the professionals involved.
- **Module II - Ethics, professionalism and cultural awareness (6 hours)**
    - ***Content and selected chapters*:** Introductory ethical principles, professional behavior, respect for patients, cultural and individual differences. Selected sections from Chapters 3, 4 and 6. Supplementary contextual materials for Panama.
    - ***Learning focus*:** Recognize ethical issues and professional boundaries; distinguish U.S. legal context from Panamanian requirements, discuss cultural assumptions and individual needs; justify respectful responses to guided situations.
    - ***Applied task*:** Professional conduct case: analyze a fictional scenario involving privacy, cultural differences or professional behavior and explain an appropriate response, including when to seek guidance.
- **Module III - Patient-centered communication, teamwork and documentation (6 hours)**
    - ***Content and selected chapters*:** Communication with patients and colleagues, questioning, listening, clarification, teamwork, critical thinking and basic documentation. Selected sections from Chapters 5, 7, 8 and 11.
    - ***Learning focus*:** Communicate clearly and empathetically; organize questions, confirm understanding, distinguish reported information from observation, prepare a concise factual record and communicate relevant information to a team.

    - ***Applied task:*** Communication and documentation simulation: complete a scripted interaction, clarify essential information, prepare a brief factual note and provide a structured summary to a colleague.
- **Module IV - Healthcare terminology, safety and infection prevention (6 hours)**
    - ***Content and selected chapters:*** Selected terminology and abbreviations; workplace safety; infection-prevention principles; introductory understanding of vital signs and emergency response. Selected sections from Chapters 10, 13, 15 and 16. Procedural content is discussed for awareness rather than clinical performance.
    - ***Learning focus:*** Interpret selected terms and documentation examples; explain basic safety principles; identify concerns in a scripted scenario; recognize limits of competence and the need for qualified assistance.
    - ***Applied task:*** Safety awareness task: review a fictional healthcare situation, identify safety and communication concerns, explain relevant prevention measures and prepare a clear escalation message.
- **Module V - Healthcare professions and integrated practice in Panama (6 hours)**
    - ***Content and selected chapters:*** Selected medical, nursing and allied health roles, teamwork, professional boundaries and integration of course concepts. Selected sections from Chapters 17, 18 and 19, with additional profession profiles chosen according to student interests. Supplementary Panamanian cases and institutional information.
    - ***Learning focus:*** Distinguish professional responsibilities; connect healthcare organization, ethics, culture, communication and safety; support analysis with sources; reflect on the Panamanian context and any relevant program observations.
    - ***Applied task:*** Integrated case presentation: analyze a guided case situated in Panama, identify the relevant services and professional roles, discuss ethical and cultural considerations, and present a concise written and oral report.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is continuous and combines introductory content understanding with applied analysis and professional communication. Students are evaluated on their understanding of the concepts studied, their ability to use assigned sources, and their performance in guided academic tasks and educational simulations.

Assessment does not measure clinical competence or authorize clinical practice. The course concludes with a separate 2-hour final examination integrating the healthcare systems, professional roles, ethical principles, communication strategies and safety concepts developed during the 30 instructional hours.

The final grade is calculated as follows:

Assessment Component	Weight	Evidence
Attendance and active participation	20%	Preparedness, engagement and constructive participation in guided discussions, case analysis and collaborative activities during the 30 instructional hours.
Applied module tasks	50%	Five brief tasks demonstrating introductory content understanding, comparison of healthcare contexts, professional communication, source use and concise written or oral reporting.
Final integrated examination	30%	A two-part examination comprising a 60-minute written case-analysis component and a 60-minute oral and applied component using guided healthcare scenarios. It assesses introductory understanding and communication rather than clinical performance.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Accurate understanding and explanation of the introductory healthcare concepts studied.

- Completion of the assigned task and relevance of the response.
- Appropriate use of course terminology and professional conventions.
- Clear distinction between source-based information, observation and inference.
- Meaningful comparison of selected U.S. and Panamanian healthcare contexts.
- Recognition of ethical issues, cultural considerations and professional boundaries.
- Clear, organized and accurate written and oral communication.
- Appropriate questioning, active listening, clarification and confirmation.
- Respectful and empathetic interaction in educational simulations.
- Recognition of safety concerns and the need for appropriately qualified assistance.
- Constructive collaboration and reflection on feedback.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Because the course is intensive, cumulative and participation-based, attendance and punctuality during the 30 instructional hours are essential. Students are expected to complete assigned readings, contribute to guided discussions, participate in case analysis and educational simulations, complete the five applied module tasks and take the separate 2-hour final examination.

Any make-up work, attendance consequence or accommodation will follow the policies established by the academic program and the student's home institution.

ACADEMIC CREDIT AND SYLLABUS REVIEW

Students seeking academic recognition through a home institution or School of Record must complete all course requirements. The course code, instructional contact hours, learning outcomes, content, assessment procedures and final documentation may be reviewed by the corresponding academic institution. Credit equivalency, transferability and final approval, if applicable, are determined exclusively by that institution.

INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

¡EPA! Español en Panamá is an accredited center of the Instituto Cervantes. The course is delivered in Panama City and coordinated by the Academic Department of ¡EPA! Español en Panamá.

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