

## U. course invites public to discuss health care reform, health policy

By [Wendy Leonard](#), Deseret News

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SALT LAKE CITY — Utahns interested in learning about ongoing changes to the health care industry are invited to attend a free weekly course at the University of Utah.

"Health care is something that affects every single one of us and the people we care about," said Jennifer Coombs, a physician assistant and assistant professor in the U.'s department of family and preventive medicine. She and Dr. David Sundwall, former director of the state's health department, co-teach the health policy and leadership course, which is open to the public every Wednesday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

"Given the importance of health policy in the national discourse at this time, especially implementation of the Affordable Care Act, I believe it is timely and of considerable general interest," Sundwall, a professor of public health at the U., said.

The duo has retained teaching assistance from a variety of local health industry leaders, health department workers, lawmakers, faculty from other departments, and others, who have insight in the landmark health care reform legislation contained within the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010.

"These are people who are responsible for some really profound decisions and who have been wrestling with one of the most contentious and difficult issues perhaps of our generation," Coombs said.

About 20 students attend the weekly course as part of their master-level or doctoral education. But because public health involves so many branches of the population, the professors wanted to give the public access to answers.

"Players in various areas of expertise are all trying to improve the health of the citizens of this country," Coombs said. "And that is difficult to do."

The more input they have, the better, she said.

"We all have the same goal in mind. It's going to take everyone."

Information in textbooks that were considered to pair with the course is already outdated, as health care is in a state of flux in America, Coombs said. As a clinician, she said, "You get this feeling that in order to really make a difference, you have to take care of the health of populations."

The course promises to delve into the legality of some aspects of the Affordable Care Act, health care financing, the public health system, the role of government, health information technology, a comparison between the U.S. and other country's health care systems, as well as debate about the challenges the country faces with implementation of the new law.

Coombs said America hosts the "best medical system in the world, but it is also one of the worst of the developed countries in the world. How can both be true?"

The [class](#) meets in classroom 203 at the U.'s Division of Public Health building at Research Park, 375 Chipeta Way, in Salt Lake City.

Email: [wleonard@deseretnews.com](mailto:wleonard@deseretnews.com)