Osaka Gakuin University 2026-2027 Fall Semester

Health Economics, Policy, and Business in Japan

Instructor :

Yi GONG
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Lesson: Wednesday & Thursday 13:30~15:15
Subject code : 1049

Course Description:

This course gives international students a comprehensive understanding of Japan's healthcare system and the economic implications of its super-aging society. By integrating health economics, public policy, and business case studies, students examine how Japan balances universal care with economic sustainability, and how demographic change drives innovation in the eldercare market.
The course is organized into four modules — the foundations of Japan's healthcare system; health policy in a super-aging society; comparative health economics; and the eldercare industry and corporate innovation. Teaching emphasizes data-driven discussion, cross-country comparison, and real-world corporate case studies, with group work, a midterm group presentation, and a final individual presentation.

Resources

No single textbook is required; weekly readings and slides are distributed in class. Key references and data sources include the following. OECD Health Statistics and Health briefly, for cross-country comparison of expenditure and outcomes. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) white papers and materials on the Community-Based Integrated Care System (地域包括ケアシステム) and the Regional Healthcare Vision (地域医療構想). Corporate IR and case materials from Sompo Care, Benesse Style Care, and Kawasaki Heavy Industries.

Evaluation

Grading:
Module reflection papers (one per module, 4 in total) — 40%
Midterm group presentation and report (Week 7) — 30%
Final individual presentation (Week 13) — 30%

Notes:

Language of instruction: English. The course uses both group and individual work. The midterm (Week 7) is a group presentation; the final (Week 13) is an individual presentation. For the midterm, each group defends one lever for sustaining social security in an aging society — (1) raising revenue (consumption tax or insurance premiums), (2) containing spending (higher co-payment for higher-income elderly or benefit adjustment), (3) expanding the working population (women, seniors, and foreign workers), or (4) shifting spending toward prevention — and presents its mechanism, trade-offs, and an evidence-based recommendation. The weekly schedule may be adjusted to reflect current policy developments.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Course Introduction & Orientation — Japan's super-aging society and the health–economy nexus; course roadmap and expectations
Week 2: Foundations of Japan's Healthcare System (1)—architecture and history of Universal Health Insurance (1961) and the insurer structure
Week 3: Foundations (2)—the nationally uniform fee schedule (診療報酬): price-setting and biennial revision as a cost-control mechanism
Week 4: Foundations (3) — public funding vs. private providers; the free-access principle and Japan's world-leading UHC index (discussion)
Week 5: Health Policy in a Super-Aging Society (1) — the demographic challenge: the 2040 elderly peak and fiscal pressure on social security
Week 6 Super-Aging Society (2) — Long-Term Care Insurance (介護保険, 2000): design, financing, benefits, and reforms
Week 7: Super-Aging Society (3) — Community-Based Integrated Care (地域包括ケア) and the Regional Healthcare Vision (地域医療構想); Midterm Group Presentation
Week 8: Comparative Health Economics (1) — three models compared: Bismarck (Japan), Beveridge (UK), and the market-driven model (US)
Week 9: Comparative Health Economics (2) — why higher spending doesn't guarantee better health
Week 10: Comparative Health Economics (3) — healthcare in global context: the health–politics–culture nexus
Week 11: The Eldercare Industry (1) — market landscape and business models (Sompo Care, Benesse Style Care)
Week 12: The Eldercare Industry (2) — labor shortage and solutions; technology-driven care (robotics and AI)
Week 13: Final Individual Presentations; course synthesis and wrap-up