The Politics of Health Policy
POS 4931, Sect. 3305
Department of Political Science
University of Florida
Spring 2009

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Class Web Page: http://www.michaeltheaney.com/HealthPolicy/
Class Times: Tuesdays 3:00pm-4:55pm (periods 8 and 9) – Weimer Hall 1094
Thursdays 4:05pm-4:55pm (period 9) – Matherly Hall 0016
Final Exam: Thursday, April 30, 3-5pm (Exam Group 30D)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The American health care system is sick. The United States spends 15.3 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on health care – more than any other nation in the world – yet it ranks toward the bottom of the most economically developed nations in health outcomes. The reasons why the U.S. lags behind nations are complex and numerous. Some of these reasons include:

- Over 47 million Americans (including 8.7 million children) do not have health insurance.
- The United States has the highest rate of obesity in the world.
- The complex interaction of public and private provision of health care drives up the cost of services, limits the supply of health professionals, and inhibits efficient coordination among providers.

Just as there is no single cause of the problems in the American health care system, there is no simple solution. A wide range of new policies have been debated, from a federal government-led universal health care solution of “Medicare for All” to market-driven solutions, such as tax-deductible Health Savings Accounts. In order to understand these proposed solutions, it is necessary to situate them in relevant historical, economic, political, and cultural contexts. This course explores the political and economic development of the American health care system. It considers the emergence of government programs (especially Medicare and Medicaid) and the evolution of the private marketplace. With the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, along with increased majorities of Democratic Party in the Congress, national health reform promises to be one of the nation’s most prominent agenda items. This course will evaluate contemporary policy developments in the context of longer-term forces in health care.
REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Attendance, Active Participation, and Short Writing Assignments (10% of grade).
   - Students are expected to read the assigned material, attend class regularly, and contribute constructively to class discussions, small-group exercises, and the online blog available at http://grove.ufl.edu/~mtheaney/HealthPolicy/
   - All students are allowed three absences with no questions asked.
   - Once a student misses more than three classes, attendance has the possibility of lowering the student’s course grade. In the event that a student misses more than three classes, then s/he should contact the professor at the end of the semester to discuss the reasons for the absences. (Please do not contact the professor on this matter before the end of the semester.) Absences for which a student has a legitimate and documented excuse (e.g., sickness, death in the family, academic competition) will not count against the student. Unexcused absences will lead to reductions in the course grade at the discretion of the professor.
   - Any student missing more than 10 classes – unless these carry legitimate excuses – will receive a failing grade for the course.

2. Midterm and Final Exam (70% of grade; 35% each).
   - Students are expected to take two exams on Tuesday, February 24 (in class) and Thursday, April 30, 3-5pm (Matherly Hall 0016).
   - The exams will address both theoretical and practical issues in health policy and involve a mix of short answer and essay questions.

3. Research Paper (20% of grade).
   - Students are expected to write a research paper of 4,000 to 5,000 words (about 16 to 20 pages, plus charts and references) on a topic relevant to health policy.
   - The paper should demonstrate the student’s original analysis of the problem and be based on appropriate research.
   - All references should be documented in a standard format chosen by the student (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago Style), using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations.
   - Research paper proposals (one page) are due on Tuesday, February 3. Outlines and bibliographies are due on Tuesday, March 3.
• A short update is due on Thursday, April 9.

• Students will present a poster summarizing their analysis on Tuesday, April 21 during class time (location to be announced).

• The final paper is to be submitted to turnitin.com by 11:55pm on Tuesday, April 21.

4. E-mail. Students are expected to provide the professor with an e-mail address that they check regularly. Announcements or updates may be sent to the class via email.

REQUIRED READINGS

The following books have been ordered for purchase through the university’s on-line textbook adoption system:


All other readings are available on-line and are on e-reserve through the U of Florida libraries.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines of the University of Florida. Among other things, this means: (1) Students must submit only their own, original work in fulfillment of course requirements; (2) Consulted works must be cited using an accepted documentation style; and (3) Students must provide truthful representations to the professor on issues such as reasons for missing class. Violating this policy may cause a student to suffer severe grade penalties, failure of the class, academic probation, or expulsion from the university.
POLICY ON LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Students seeking letters of recommendation are advised to seek out letters from faculty who know them well and are able to write knowledgably on their behalf. It is my policy only to write only for students for whom I am able to submit a strong, persuasive letter.

For external letters of recommendation (e.g., letters for graduate school, law school, Teach for America), I require the following:

- I must have known the student for one calendar year at the time that the letter is written.
- The student must have successfully completed two classes with me or participated in a mentoring experience under my supervision (e.g., University Scholars, Senior Thesis). One of the two classes may be an independent study.
- It must be my judgment that the student is aptly suited for program for which the recommendation is sought.

For internal letters of recommendation (e.g., letters for the Certificate of Public Leadership, a University of Florida scholarship, residence staff position), I require the following:

- I must have known the student for six months at the time that the letter is written.
- The student must have successfully completed one class with me or participated in a mentoring experience under my supervision (e.g., University Scholars, Senior Thesis).
- It must be my judgment that the student is aptly suited for program for which the recommendation is sought.

MISCELLANEOUS

- The use of wireless communication devices (such as cell phones or pagers) during class is prohibited, unless specifically authorized by the professor. Please turn them off. (Do not put your cell phone on “vibrate.”) The professor reserves the right to confiscate devices operating in violation of this policy.
- Students requiring any special accommodation for this course are responsible for making an appointment to see the professor at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to meet your needs in accordance with University guidelines.
- The lectures and handouts of this course are the intellectual property of the professor. You do not have the right to sell your notes or recordings from this class for profit without the express written consent of the professor. No recording devices are permitted in class without the consent of the professor.
PART I – American Health Policy and the World of Health Care

1. Tuesday, January 6 – The Problem that Won’t Go Away

2. Thursday, January 8 – The Political Context of Health Care in the United States
   - Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 1
   - Mechanic et al., Introduction and Chapter 1

3. Tuesday, January 13 – Health Policy in Comparative Context – 1

4. Thursday, January 15 – Health Policy in Comparative Context – 2

5. Tuesday, January 20 – Health Policy in Comparative Context – 3

• In-class screening of Michael Moore’s film “Sicko.”

• David U. Himmelstein, Elizabeth Warren, Deborah Thorne, and Steffie Woolhandler, “Illness And Injury As Contributors To Bankruptcy,” *Health Affairs* (February 2, 2005)


PART II – Major Federal Health Programs and Prospects for Reform

6. Thursday, January 22 – The Historical Progression of Health Policy

• Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 2

7. Tuesday, January 27 – Medicare

• 3pm – Guest Speaker: Joseph Simone, MD, U of Florida-Shands Cancer Center

• Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 4 (Not a mistake – we are reading out of order)

• Mechanic et al., Chapter 13

8. Thursday, January 29 – Medicaid

• Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 3 (Not a mistake – we are reading out of order)
9. Tuesday, February 3 – The Uninsured
   
   - Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 5 (Not a mistake – we are reading out of order)
   - Mechanic et al., Chapter 3

   **ONE-PAGE PAPER PROPOSAL DUE IN CLASS**

10. Thursday, February 5 – Health Disparities
    
    - Mechanic et al., Chapters 5, 8, and 9

11. Tuesday, February 10 – Cost Containment – 1
    
    - Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 6
    - Aaron et al., Chapter 1-3

12. Thursday, February 12 – Cost Containment – 2
    
    - Aaron et al., Chapter 4-8
    - Mechanic et al., Chapter 16

13. Tuesday, February 17 – Prospects for Systemic Reform
    
    - Patel and Rushefsky, Chapters 9, 10, and 11
    - Mechanic et al., Chapter 2

14. Thursday, February 19 – Prospects for Systemic Reform
    
    - Recent Popular Articles – To be Announced

15. Tuesday, February 24 – **MIDTERM EXAM** in Class
PART III – Challenges to Health Systems

16. Thursday, February 26 – Medical Malpractice 1
   - Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 7

17. Tuesday, March 3 – Medical Malpractice 2
   - Mechanic et al., Chapter 11
   - **ONE-PAGE PAPER OUTLINE PLUS BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN CLASS**

18. Thursday, March 5 – Health Care Technology
   - Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 8

19. Tuesday, March 17 – Quality Care – 1
   - Mechanic et al., Chapters 10 and 12

20. Thursday, March 19 – Quality Care – 2
   - Mechanic et al., Chapters 14

PART IV – The Politics of Public Health

21. Tuesday, March 24 – Gun Violence
   - Mechanic et al., Chapter 6

22. Thursday, March 26 – Tobacco and Obesity
   - Mechanic et al., Chapter 7

23. Tuesday, March 31 – Mental Illness
   - Mechanic et al., Chapter 8
24. Thursday, April 2 – HIV/AIDS


25. Tuesday, April 7 – The Politics of Breast Cancer – 1

- Casamayou, Chapters 1-4


- Casamayou, Chapters 5-8

- ONE-PAGE STATUS UPDATE ON PAPER DUE IN CLASS

PART V – Looking Forward in Health Care

27. Tuesday, April 14 – Medicalization of Society – 1

- Conrad, Chapters 1-4

28. Thursday, April 16 – Medicalization of Society – 2

- Conrad, Chapter 5-8


29. Tuesday, April 21 – Poster Session of Student Research – Location to be announced

- STUDENTS PRESENT POSTERS summarizing their research papers

- FINAL PAPER due at 11:55pm to turnitin.com

30. Thursday, April 30, 3-5pm (Matherly Hall 0016) – FINAL EXAM