

American Health Policy – Political Science #282

Illinois Wesleyan University
Greg Shaw

About the content of the course:

This course examines health politics in the United States. It is designed to help students understand how Americans seek, consume, and pay for health services, and how some parts of health care policy are made. In the course of this class we will examine how federal and state governments, private employers, and individuals are implicated in the numerous financing systems our country has, and we will study some of the real-world consequences for tens of millions of people lacking regular access to health services. The course covers the three major payment systems of Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance and how these systems have evolved over time. We will place the U.S. in international context as we briefly study the health systems of some of the world's other developed nations. We will examine the Affordable Care Act, how and why it was designed as it was, and the successes and failures of its implementation since 2010. Students will also have opportunities to discuss these issues in depth with various health professionals who will visit our class virtually. Small-group work will allow students to identify problems with the nation's current health systems and propose practical solutions.

About the workload:

Weekly readings cover both the mechanics of how health care systems work, how patients and providers tend to use (and sometimes over-use) those systems, how organized interests pressure the federal and state governments to provide particular policies and funding, how the public learns about health care policy (and sometimes fails to learn), and other topics. Students will make several short presentations to class throughout the semester. They will also write one short policy proposal, in addition to staging one organized debate and taking a pair of exams and a couple of quizzes. Toward the end of the semester small groups will develop and present proposed solutions to key problems facing the nation under the Affordable Care Act. This project will require significant work outside of class, so you will need to find some available time to work with your small group. Regular and thoughtful class participation is expected and rewarded.

You will find on our Moodle page a list of study preparation questions resembling those you will see on exams. I encourage you to think carefully about these study terms, as they will give you a good indicator of the topic material that will appear on the exam questions. Taking an exam at a time other than the regularly scheduled time requires advance approval from me. A make-up quiz will only be provided in the event of a documented illness. On our Moodle page you will find an Excel spreadsheet that you can use to track your grade.

About grades and academic integrity:

Your overall course grade consists of the following components:

Peer evaluation – international comparison	5%
Peer evaluation – debate	5%
Peer evaluation – policy solutions	5%
2 quizzes	10%
Individual policy paper	20%
Remote mid-term exam	20%
Remote final exam	25%
Class participation	10%

Final course grades will be assigned on the following basis: 90-100% = A/A-; 80-89% = B+/B/B-; 70-79% = C+/C/C-; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F. Taking a grade of incomplete in this course is very strongly discouraged. Under no circumstances will a student be granted a grade of incomplete without discussing the matter with me well in advance of the end of the semester.

Regular attendance is expected and necessary if you are to do well in this class. Each unexcused absence beyond the first will result in a 1 percentage point reduction in your overall grade. Excused absences – such as for illness, varsity athletics, and music performances – are perfectly understandable but require timely documentation. While I will accept late assignments, such lateness will cost you 5 percentage points per day late, starting with the day the assignments are due. In the event you find yourself in this situation, be sure to email the assignment to me as soon as possible so as to stop the penalty clock. I will not accept late exams.

I am aware that academic dishonesty has become common at some institutions. While I am sure that very few, if any, Illinois Wesleyan students would cheat on class assignments, the university's policy and my policy on academic dishonesty bear repeating. Academic dishonesty fundamentally undermines the mission of the university and cheapens our collective enterprise. Students caught cheating on an exam or engaging in plagiarism on written assignments will receive a failing grade for the course. In these cases I will also file a formal complaint with the administration. The university's academic dishonesty policy states that the administration will move to expel from the university any student who is the object of two such substantiated complaints. See the university catalog for further explanation.

About the course readings:

The following texts are required reading and are highly recommended for purchase:

Paul Starr, *Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle over Health Care Reform, Revised edition* (2013), Yale University Press

Grace Budrys, *Our Unsystematic Health Care System, 4th edition*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2016

Greg Shaw, *The Dysfunctional Politics of the Affordable Care Act*, Praeger Publishers, 2017.

All other readings listed below appear on our course Moodle page, along with various resources.

Topics	
Week of:	Readings
January	
W: Introduction and course overview	Budrys, chapt. 1
F: What does it mean to have right to health care?	Mahajan, “The Right to Health ...”
M is ML King Day – no classes. Instead of coming to class, take some time to craft a couple of really good questions that you can bring to class on Wednesday for our guest.	
W: Zoom visit with Stephanie Whyte, IWU alumna and administrator with Aetna Medicaid	
F: The big issues: cost, quality, access	<i>Crossing the Quality Chasm</i> , executive summary and chapter 1 Starr, chapt. 1 & 2
M&W: Health policy in an international context	Budrys, chapt. 8
<i>After class on Monday, meet with your group to develop a brief presentation. Pick a developed country that Greg did <u>not</u> discuss. Develop a PowerPoint summary describing the administration, payments, revenue sources, delivery mechanisms, and an overview of health outcomes for the nation’s population. Aim for about 6 or 7 slides.</i>	
F: Small group presentations: 3 groups, 15 minutes per presentation, use the peer review form found in Moodle	
February	
MWF: History of health politics in the U.S.	Budrys, chapt. 2 Oberlander, chapt. 1 & 2
<i>Build teams for our first debate: Should the U.S. have a national health care system that guarantees basic coverage for all? (let’s settle ahead of time on a format for the debate)</i>	
MWF: Medicare and Medicaid basics	Oberlander, chapt. 6, 7
F: Quiz covering material through this week.	
M&W: How does private health insurance work?	Budrys, chapt. 5 & 6 Shaw, chapt. 3 & 5
F: Debate – Should the U.S. have a national health system that guarantees basic coverage for all? (peer evaluation for in Moodle used for grading)	
M&W: Confronting costs: the market metaphor	Herzlinger, chapt. 1 Schneider & Hall article (optional) Finkelstein chapter (optional)

F: Mid-term exam – covering all material presented up through the debate in the previous week. Format is short to mid-length answers. Access the exam via Moodle. This is a MS Word document that you will fill in and turn in no later than 9:55am via email. You are honor-bound to complete this work entirely on your own.

March

M&W: The creation of the ACA

Shaw, chapt. 1
Starr, chapt. 6 thru 9
Budrys, chapt. 7

F: Zoom visit with Mike Allen, Chief Financial Officer at OSF-St. Joseph Hospital

MWF: A decade of experience w/ the ACA

Brill, chapt. 16, 18 – 23
Shaw, chapt. 4
Patel & West chapt. 3
Bishop chapt. 4

F: Quiz #2 covering material from the mid-term exam up through this week

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M & W: Resisting the ACA

Shaw, chapt. 2
Klein, *Overcoming Obamacare*

After class on Wednesday, begin work with your team. (We will form 4 teams) Identify 2 specific problems with the ACA and begin to develop your proposed remedy. You and your group will present the problems. Further instructions to follow.

F: Zoom visit with Colleen Kannady, President, Carle-BroMenn Medical Center: how has the ACA affected hospital operations?

M: What would it look like to repeal the ACA?

House, chapt. 9
Selker & Wasser, chapt. 14
KFF guide to *California v. Texas* (2020)

<https://www.kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/explaining-california-v-texas-a-guide-to-the-case-challenging-the-aca/>

W&F: 4 small groups each present 2 significant problems with the ACA. Your presentations need to demonstrate that you understand both the causes and consequences of the problem. Give us a PowerPoint presentation that runs about 15 minutes long, plus time for Q&A.

April

M: Public health education and promotion

W & F: Health and public learning:

Shaw, chapt. 6

when does the public learn, and when does it not?

M: Zoom visit with Mollie Ward, Director of Spiritual Care and co-chair of the ethics committee, Carle-BroMenn Medical Center Institute of Medicine
W: Efforts to reduce Medicare readmissions reports on vaccines (Moodle)
F: Summation and course evaluations White essay on vaccines (Moodle)
read KFF report at:
<http://files.kff.org/attachment/Issue-Brief-Fewer-Hospital-U-turns-The-Medicare-Hospital-Readmission-Reduction-Program>

M & W

Each student presents her / his solution to one of the ACA's problems (with really well done slides, please). This presentation must accomplish at least 3 things: identify the problem, present your proposed solution, and discuss how to overcome (or at least address) likely political opposition to your proposed solution. An individual grade will be earned for this class presentation. Your written version of this assignment will be due by 4pm on Thursday the 22nd. See rubric in Moodle. It's important that your paper conform to the structure laid out in the rubric.

In-person final exam: *this focuses on the second half of the course. Format is short to mid-length answers, similar to the mid-term exam. You will have 75 minutes to complete the final exam. Bring a couple of blue books.*