The United States tops the world in health care spending, yet over 11% of the population lacks health insurance. American health care deploys the latest technological advances but other countries have better health outcomes. Closer to home, some Milwaukee neighborhoods have the dubious distinction of infant mortality rates on a par with developing nations.

How can we explain these paradoxes of American health care? This course finds that the answers lie in American politics, and views our health care system as a product of such politics. To see how this is so, the course first delineates the organization and financing of health care in the US at national and state levels. It then explores how political institutions, political parties, interest groups, and dominant values have shaped our health care system and health policies. We will also analyze the major health care reform law of 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and Republican alternatives to it. The final part of the course covers health policies toward special populations.

The goal of this course is to provide you with the knowledge and analytical tools to understand the political dynamics that underpin health care policies in the United States. Such knowledge will help you to participate intelligently in health policy debates, evaluate various health care reform approaches in the United States, and bring this knowledge of the political realities of health care to your future careers in the world of health sciences, public policy, and politics. Hopefully, you will come away with a better understanding of our broader political system and will hone your skills of critical analysis.

Course Requirements

Your course grade is based on the completion of the following assignments, which involve a mix of written work and in-class participation. I will distribute study guides ahead of each exam. I will distribute instructions for the policy memo assignment later in the semester.

Assignments:
In-class exam: 30%
Policy memo: 30%
Final exam: 30%
Class participation: 10%

Grading scale:
A 93-100
AB 88-92
B 83-87
BC 78-82
C 73-77
CD 70-72
D 65-69
F 64 or below
Please be aware that there is a significant reading and writing component to this course. I will grade written assignments on the content and clarity of the argument, organization and evidence, use of relevant sources, and writing style (grammar rules, punctuation, spelling, etc.). Therefore, I encourage students to seek out advice and help from the Writing Center in completing these assignments. The Writing Center is located in Raynor Library R240; tel. 288-5542. (You need to call them to make an appointment.)

Students are expected to read all assigned readings from required books, articles on reserve, and class handouts. It is not sufficient for you to rely only on a few of the assigned readings. If you do, it will be apparent in your written work and class participation and your course grade will reflect this deficiency. Exams will draw on both class material and assigned readings. Class meetings will not simply recapitulate the readings but will often bring in additional material, so it is in your interest to attend class regularly and take notes in class.

Please note that some of the topics covered in this course are happening in real time. As a result, I may make substitutions and updates to the assigned readings to reflect this, and may alter some of the syllabus topics. During the course of the semester I may schedule an occasional guest speaker on a current topic in US health policy. I will announce these changes in class and on D2L.

Class Participation and Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a requirement of this course and counts as part of your class participation grade. The class participation grade is more than merely attending class; it also entails that you do the readings ahead of time so that you can contribute insightful comments and questions to class discussions. All of you have something important to say and contribute to the class discussions. Doing so not only enriches the classroom experience, it is also in your interest to do so, as the class participation portion of your grade can affect your overall course grade, especially in borderline cases.

Be here now: During class, please turn off your cell phones or set them to silent. If you have an emergency call that cannot wait, please leave the room discreetly to take the call, but only do this as a last resort. Please do not use the web during class unless asked to so as part of a class discussion. Such behavior may be distracting to your colleagues, and it certainly is to me. If I see you texting or surfing, I will count you as absent for that class session and it will affect your participation grade.

Policies on Late Assignments and Academic Dishonesty

I expect you to turn in all assignments on time, unless you are experiencing a genuine illness, individual or family emergency, or unless it is the result of an officially sanctioned, scheduled university activity. In such cases, notify me as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements in a timely fashion for you to complete the coursework for this class. If you turn in an assignment late without a legitimate excuse, I will downgrade it ½ grade (e.g. B to BC) for each day that it is late.

I do not tolerate academic dishonesty by students (including plagiarism, copying, or cheating). I will follow all University policies on academic dishonesty. Please see the University’s Academic Integrity page for more information on such policies: http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academicintegrity.
Readings

The following REQUIRED book is available for purchase or rental at BookMarq.


I realize that textbooks are expensive, so you may find it cheaper to purchase the book from amazon.com, or rent it from the publisher or from BookMarq. You MUST use the current edition of the book listed here.

In addition to the textbook, required readings will be on reserve on D2L, ARES electronic reserve at Raynor Library, or on regular library reserve. These readings are noted in the syllabus with an asterisk (*).

I require that you upload any take-home writing assignments to turnitin.com. For both turnitin.com and ARES, the course name is Politics of US Health Care and the password is health.

I will note on D2L the location of all reserve readings, as well as any updates or changes to assignments. You must CHECK D2L REGULARLY for any updates on or changes to assignments and their location. The “real time” nature of health policy may necessitate such modifications to the readings.

Regularly consulting a reputable news source is part of informed citizenship. Doing so also helps you to get beyond your immediate world and to develop critical analytical skills that will serve you well throughout your life. For national news on health politics (and especially national level health care reform politics), I recommend that you read the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *Wall Street Journal*. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* provides excellent state and local coverage of health policy issues. *The Economist* and the *Financial Times* provide excellent coverage of international health care policies. Finally, the journals and websites listed below provide a wealth of information on health policy and politics in the US and other countries. Most or all of these publications are in Raynor Library or available online. Student discount subscriptions for these newspapers and magazines are also available.

Occasionally I will recommend additional readings if you wish to explore a topic in greater depth than this course allows. I will list recommended readings in the syllabus or will announce them in class. These readings are not required. If you wish to read further on health policy, I suggest that you consult the following lists of leading health policy journals and websites.

**Leading health policy journals:**
Health Affairs
Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law
Milbank Quarterly
The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJOM)
Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)
American Journal of Public Health
Websites for reports and statistics on health care policies:

www.healthcare.gov This is a federal government website that provides information, timelines, and updates concerning the Affordable Care Act.

Kaiser Family Foundation (www.kff.org). An excellent site that provides a wealth of reports and statistics on health policies and reforms at national and state levels. See also their site that provides health care information on all 50 states: www.statehealthfacts.org.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.rwjf.org) provides regular issue briefs and reports on particular areas of health policy.

The Commonwealth Fund (www.commonwealthfund.org) provides regular reports on health policy.

The Urban Institute (www.urban.org) provides regular reports and briefs on health policy matters.

The Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (www.dartmouthatlas.org/) provides illuminating health care statistics by topic and region.

Congressional Budget Office (CBO) www.cbo.gov/ This is the nonpartisan research arm of Congress, which provides cost estimates of every bill in the House and Senates. It also does analyses and reports on health policy issues.

US Government Accountability Office www.gao.gov/ is a government research office that conducts reports on various policy questions, including health care, at the request of members of Congress or the executive branch.

US Census Bureau www.census.gov/ provides health statistics on the US and on subgroups of the population.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services CMS) www.cms.gov/is the agency within DHHS that administers the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

The Center for Disease Control is an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services and its domain is public health. www.cdc.gov

The National Conference of State Legislatures www.ncsl.org/ provides regular reports on state policies.

European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, World Health Organization (WHO) (www.euro.who.int/observatory). This site issues cross-national reports, so it may be less relevant for a US topic.

Research institutes:

Some of these institutes have a clear ideological orientation, so you should be aware of this when using these sources.

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities is a progressive research institute that analyzes policies and policy proposals for their likely effects on low- and moderate-income persons.

The Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute are conservative research institutes that favor private sector and market-based solutions to public policy problems.

The Brookings Institute is a progressive research institute that is more amenable to a government role in social policy.
Class Schedule and Assignments

*denotes required readings on reserve

I. INTRODUCTION
A. Course introduction

B. US health care system performance in comparative context
Sept. 2:

Sept. 4:

Sept. 7: No class; Labor Day

II. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE US HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
A. Financing US health care:
   1. Government programs
      Sept. 9:
      Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 2.
      *“What is the Donut Hole?” healthcare.gov

      Sept. 11:

         2. Financial and nonfinancial barriers to health care access
            Sept. 14:
            Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 3.

         3. The precariousness of employment-based private insurance
            Sept. 16:

Note: We will view excerpts from Michel Moore’s film, *Sicko*, in several class meetings.

Sept. 18:
*T. R. Reid, chap. 3."
4. Safety net providers in trouble
Sept. 21:

B. Delivering health care
1. The structure of the delivery system
Sept. 23:
Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 5 and 6.

2. Paying providers; medical practice patterns
Sept. 25:

Sept. 28:

Sept. 30:
Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 4.

Oct. 2, 5: In-class film: *Escape Fire*

**Oct. 7: No class**

**Oct. 9: IN-CLASS EXAM**

III. THE POLITICS OF HEALTH CARE IN THE UNITED STATES
A. The fragmented American polity: Political institutions, parties and interests, values and ideas
1. Institutions and interests
Oct. 12, 14:
Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 16.

2. Values and public opinion
Oct. 16:
B. The historical path of health policy in the US

1. Failed NHI attempts in US history

Oct: 19:
*Donald L. Madison, “From Bismarck to Medicare – A Brief History of Medical Care Payment in America,” in Jonathan Oberlander, ed., The Social Medicine Reader, pp. 45-66 are required; the rest of the chapter is optional.

Oct. 21:

Oct. 23: No class; midterm break

IV. THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (PPACA) AND ALTERNATIVES

A. PPACA and the politics of enactment

Oct. 26:

Recommended (on D2L recommended readings module):

B. Content of PPACA

Oct. 28, 30:
*Jacobs and Skocpol, chap. 4.

Nov. 2:
*Allan H. Goroll and Stephen C. Schoenbaum, “Payment Reform for Primary Care within the Accountable Care Organization,” JAMA Aug. 8, 2012, 308 (6) 577-78.

Nov. 4:
*DHHS, “What is a medical home? Why is it important?”
C. The politics of implementation: Medicaid expansion optional
Nov. 6:

C. Republican alternatives for health care reform
1. Republican proposals for those under age 65:
Nov. 9:

Nov. 11:
*Critiques of Ryan-Wyden and Path to Prosperity health care provisions (pro and con).

Recommended (on D2L recommended readings module):
Medicare reform excerpts from Path to Prosperity, FY 2012 House Budget Committee, pp. 44-59.
CBO analysis of Ryan’s Path to Prosperity budget.

3. Ryan’s Medicaid reform proposals
Nov. 13:
*Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of Ryan’s Medicaid proposals. Read pp. 1-2 of executive summary. (Full report is on D2L for those who wish to read it.)

Additional reading TBA.

Nov. 16:

Nov. 18: POLICY MEMO DUE
V. SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND POLICY RESPONSES
A. Social determinants of health and implications for policy

Nov. 20, 23, 30, Dec. 2:
*“Empty Cradles” series on infant mortality in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Additional reading TBA.
In class: excerpts of the PBS documentary, Unnatural Causes.

Nov. 25, 27: no class; Thanksgiving break

B. Long-term care and end of life care
Dec. 4:
Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 12.

Dec. 7, 9:
*Atul Gawande, Being Mortal (excerpts).
Additional readings TBA

VI. COURSE CONCLUSIONS
Dec. 11:
Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 17.

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, Dec. 15, 8-10 AM, Wehr Physics 209