

**Politics of US Health Care  
BISC/POSC 4381-101  
Marquette University**

**Dr. Susan Giaimo  
Fall 2015**

Course time and location:

MWF 10-10:50 AM, Wehr Physics 209

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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	C	73-77
AB	88-92	CD	70-72
B	83-87	D	65-69
BC	78-82	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.

Thomas S. Bodenheimer and Kevin Grumbach, *Understanding Health Policy: A Clinical Approach*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Lange Medical Books/McGraw-Hill, 2012.

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](http://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](http://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](http://www.statehealthfacts.org).
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ([www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)) provides regular issue briefs and reports on particular areas of health policy.
- The Commonwealth Fund ([www.commonwealthfund.org](http://www.commonwealthfund.org)) provides regular reports on health policy.
- The Urban Institute ([www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)) provides regular reports and briefs on health policy matters.
- The Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care ([www.dartmouthatlas.org/](http://www.dartmouthatlas.org/)) provides illuminating health care statistics by topic and region.
- Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [www.cbo.gov/](http://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/](http://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/](http://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/](http://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](http://www.cdc.gov)
- The National Conference of State Legislatures [www.ncsl.org/](http://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](http://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

Aug. 31: Bodenheimer and Grumbach, *Understanding Health Policy*, chap. 1.

#### B. US health care system performance in comparative context

Sept. 2:

\*T. R. Reid, *The Healing of America*, New York: Penguin Books, 2010, "Appendix: The Best Health Care System in the World" pp. 252-268.

Sept. 4:

\*Karen Davis, Kristof Stremikis, David Squires, and Cathy Schoen, *Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall: How the Performance of the U.S. Health Care System Compares Internationally, 2014 Update*, Washington DC: Commonwealth Fund, 2014.

**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](http://healthcare.gov)

Sept. 11:

\*Colleen Grogan, "Medicaid: Designed to Grow," in James A. Morone and Daniel C. Ehlke, Eds., *Health Politics and Policy, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.*, Cengage, 2013, pp. 142-163.

##### 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:

\*Susan Starr Sered and Rushika Fernandopulle, *Uninsured in America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, Introduction.

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

Sept. 18:

\*Deborah A. Stone, "The Struggle for the Soul of Health Insurance," *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law (JHPPL)* (Summer 1993), 286-317.

\*T. R. Reid, chap. 3.

#### 4. Safety net providers in trouble

Sept. 21:

\*Bruce C. Vladeck, "Paying for Hospitals' Community Service," *HA*, 25 (1) Jan/Feb. 2006, 34-43.

\*Rick Romell, "Hospital losses hit city heart," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (MJS)*, May 14, 2006 (also see accompanying map).

#### 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:

\*Miriam J. Laugesen and Sherry A. Glied, "Higher Fees Paid to US Physicians Drive Higher Spending for Physician Services Compared to Other Countries," *HA*, 30:9 (Sept. 2011)1647-56.

Sept. 28:

\*Gerard F. Anderson, et al., "It's the Prices, Stupid: Why the United States Is So Different from Other Countries," *Health Affairs (HA)*, 22 (3): May/June 2003, pp. 100-105 only.

\*G. F. Anderson, et al., "Health Spending in the United States and the Rest of the Industrialized World," *Health Affairs (HA)* 24 (4): July/August 2005, pp. 909-914 only.

Sept. 30:

\*Atul Gawande, "The Cost Conundrum," *The New Yorker*, June 1, 2009.

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:

\*Paul Starr, *Remedy and Reaction*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 1-11.

Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 16.

##### 2. Values and public opinion

Oct. 16:

\*Molly Ann Brody and Robert J. Blendon, "Public Opinion and Health Policy," in *Health Politics and Policy*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage, 2008, pp. 249-270.

## 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:

\*Susan Giaimo, "Interest Group, Think Tanks, and Health Care Policy, 1960s-present," in Thomas R. Oliver, Ed., *CQ Press Guide to U.S. Health and HealthCare Policy*, Los Angeles and Washington DC: Sage/CQ Press, 2013, read only pp. 375-378 (stop at Medicare/Medicaid) and pp. 380-384 (stop at Bringing stakeholders back in).

**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:

\*Jonathan Oberlander, "Long time coming," *HA*, 29:6, June 2010, 1112-1116.

Recommended (on D2L recommended readings module):

Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, *Health Care Reform and American Politics*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, chap. 2. (on D2L).

### B. Content of PPACA

Oct. 28, 30:

\*Jacobs and Skocpol, chap. 4.

\*"Health Reform: Implications for Women's Access to Coverage and Care, Kaiser Family Foundation," August 2013. [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)

Nov. 2:

\*Atul Gawande, "Overkill," *The New Yorker*, May 26, 2015, read section on McAllen TX revisited.

\*Health Policy Brief, "Next Steps for ACOs," *HA*, Jan. 31, 2012.

\*Ezekiel Emanuel, "Why Accountable Care Organizations are Not 1990s Managed Care Redux," *JAMA* June 6, 2012, vol. 307 (21): 2263-64.

\*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?"

\*AHRQ, "Ensuring that Patient-Centered Medical Homes Effectively Serve Patients with Complex Health Needs," 2011.

\*Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative and Milbank Memorial Fund, *The Patient-Centered Medical Home's Impact on Cost and Quality: Annual Review of the Evidence, 2013-2014*, January 2015, pp. 6-11 and 26-30 only.

### C. The politics of implementation: Medicaid expansion optional

Nov. 6:

- \*The Coverage Gap: Uninsured Poor Adults in States that Do Not Expand Medicaid, An Update,” Kaiser Family Foundation, April 17, 2015. See link: <http://kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/the-coverage-gap-uninsured-poor-adults-in-states-that-do-not-expand-medicaid-an-update/>
- \*Patrick Marley, “Decision on BadgerCare to cost state \$206 million,” *MJS*, August 17, 2014.
- \*“The ACA and Medicaid Expansion Waivers: An Update,” Kaiser Family Foundation, Feb. 2015.

### C. Republican alternatives for health care reform

#### 1. Republican proposals for those under age 65:

Nov. 9:

- \*Henry J. Aaron, “Republican Control of Congress: What Does It Mean for Health Care Reform?” Brookings Brief, Dec. 22, 2014.
- \**The Patient Choice, Affordability, Responsibility, and Empowerment Act: A Legislative Proposal*, Jan. 2014. Senators Burr, Coburn, and Hatch (Patient CARE Act).
- \*Timothy S. Jost, “Beyond repeal—A Republican Proposal for Health Care Reform,” *NEJOM*, 370 (10) March 6, 2014, 894-896.
- \*Sarah Kliff, “Republicans have an Obamacare replacement,” Wonkblog, *Washington Post*, Jan. 27, 2014.

#### 2. Rep. Paul Ryan’s proposals for Medicare reform

Nov. 11:

- \*Ron Wyden and Paul Ryan, *Guaranteed Choices to Strengthen Medicare and Health Security for All*, Dec. 15, 2011, [www.budget.house.gov/bipartisanhealthoptions](http://www.budget.house.gov/bipartisanhealthoptions); [www.wyden.senate.gov/bipartisanhealthoptions](http://www.wyden.senate.gov/bipartisanhealthoptions)
- \*Critiques of Ryan-Wyden and *Path to Prosperity* health care provisions (pro and con).
- \*Uwe Reinhardt, [Economix: Would Privatizing Medicare Lead to Better Cost Controls?](#) May 13, 2011.

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:

- \*Paul Ryan and House Budget Committee, *Path to Prosperity: FY 2013*, March 2012, pp. 5-9, 39-43 on Medicaid.
  - \*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:

- \*T. R. Reid, *The Healing of America*, chap. 12.

**Nov. 18: POLICY MEMO DUE**



## **V. SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND POLICY RESPONSES**

### A. Social determinants of health and implications for policy

Nov. 18: \*Paul Tough, "The Poverty Clinic," *New Yorker*, March 21, 2011, pp. 25-32.

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**