SOC POL 351
Topics in Social Policy: Social Policy and the US Health Care System
Winter Quarter, 2006
Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00 p.m. to 5:20 p.m.
Location: Annenberg G01

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Office hours by appointment

Course Description: This course will introduce the student to the health care delivery system in the United States through a review of US health policy issues. A construct for review of major health policy issues will be introduced and current health policy issues will be examined through this lens. Special attention will be paid to health disparities for low-income and minority populations; and how policy decisions exacerbate or relieve these disparities. Interactive lecture, focused discussions and student exploration and presentation will be the format for the course.

Requirements:

SESP students must have completed SOC POL 201, Introduction to Social Policy, or SESP 202, Introduction to Community Development. Others may enroll with permission from SESP or the instructor.

Students are expected to attend and participate in class sessions. Bring assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them.

One paper and one presentation will be assigned. The paper will be assigned on topics related to health disparities, and teams of students writing on the same issue will make group presentations.

Students will also be assigned to groups to research and discuss solutions to the problem of uninsurance, and the health policy platforms of the major political parties in the U.S.

Additionally, there will be an essay exam for the mid-term and a final paper analyzing a national or state health policy issue.

Readings:

Required:

A packet of copied readings will be available in Annenberg 123, Student Affairs Office. A copying fee will be charged for this packet.
Some of the required readings are available on the internet; instructions for accessing these documents are included in this syllabus. Internet readings are marked with an asterisk (*).

**Optional:**

It is recommended that students read a daily newspaper or news website for articles related to health policy. National Public Radio is also a good resource for information on health policy issues.


**Course Grading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Disparities Paper and Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparative Health Systems, Solutions to Uninsurance and Party Platform Discussions</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Attendance is expected and missing class without prior notice to the instructor will affect class participation grade. Students are responsible for all material and assignments presented in class, as well as in required readings. Lectures may supplement, highlight or bring something completely different from what is in the required readings.

All work assigned is due at 4:00 p.m. on the specified due date. Assignments are submitted by delivering a hard copy to the instructor, and sending an electronic copy via electronic mail. In the event of a documented emergency, late assignments will be accepted. **Any student with a legitimate excuse for missing class or submitting a late assignment must contact the instructor prior to class time.** Unexcused late assignments will be downgraded, and participation grade will be downgraded for unexcused absences.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all
programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent website which is viewable at: http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/

Academic Integrity

Northwestern University students are expected to comply with policies found in the booklet Academic Integrity at Northwestern. A copy of this booklet is found in section four of the SESP handbook or on-line at http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/. Infractions may result in a grade of ‘F’ and/or probation or dismissal from the university.

Plagiarism

All papers submitted for credit for this course must be sent as electronic mail attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content.

Course Calendar and Assignments

Winter, 2006

January 4 Session 1
Introductions
Review Syllabus and Assignments
What do you want to get out of this course?
Overview of the US Health Care System

January 9 Session 2
Typhoid Mary and Health Policy

Readings


Assignment

Divide into groups to explore comparative health systems for discussion on January 18 (Session 5).

Countries: United States, Germany, Canada, Great Britain
What to Explore:
Financing
Health Care Delivery System (hospitals, physicians)
Outcomes (cost, health indicators)

January 11 Session 3
Health Disparities

Readings

(*) Institute of Medicine (2002). Unequal Treatment.

‘Diverse Communities, Common Concerns: Assessing Health Care Quality for

(*) Key Facts: Race, Ethnicity and Medical Care. The Henry J. Kaiser Family
Foundation. Access www.KFF.org/minorityhealth/upload/Key-Facts-Race-
Ethnicity-Medical-Care-chartbook.pdf

Click on ‘Health Literacy,’ then ‘Health Literacy Videos.’

Assignment

Divide into groups to write individual papers and do group presentations on health
disparities. Identify issue to instructor by January 18. Group presentations are
February 1 and February 6, individual papers are due February 6.

Diabetes/Latinos
Asthma in Urban Populations
Infant Mortality/Low-income and minority
AIDS in Africa

January 16 Session 4 (Martin Luther King Day)
Health Disparities

Readings

(*) Steelfisher, Gillian K. ‘Addressing Unequal Treatment: Disparities in Health
Care,’ The Commonwealth Fund, November, 2004. Access


(*). Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions. www.sullivancommission.org Read Executive Summary

January 18 Session 5
Arrange groups for health disparities presentations and papers
Discussion: Comparative Health Systems

January 23 Session 6
Construct for review of social policies/health policies


January 25 Session 7
Federal Health Policy-Making
Researching Federal Health Policy

Assignment

Mid Term Essay Exam assigned due February 8


January 30 Session 8
Health Insurance: Basic Concepts and History

Readings


February 1 Session 9
Health Disparities Presentations

February 6 Session 10
Health Disparities Presentations

INDIVIDUAL PAPERS ON HEALTH DISPARITIES DUE

February 8 Session 11
Health Insurance: Basic Concepts and History

Readings


MIDTERM EXAM DUE

February 13 Session 12
Health Insurance: Medicare

Readings


Assignment

Research health policy issue at federal level. Identify issue to instructor by February 20. Research plan due February 27. Final paper due March 15.

February 15 Session 13
Health Insurance: Medicaid
Readings


Assignment

Divide into groups to research different solutions for the uninsured. Discussion on February 27 (Session 16).

National Health Insurance
Employer Tax Credits
Individual Tax Credits
Expansion of Medicare and Medicaid

February 20 Session 14
Discussion: Solutions to the Uninsured

Guest Speaker
Margie Schaps, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group

Readings


FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE

February 22 Session 15
Discussion: Medical Malpractice ‘Crisis’

Readings


Assignment

Divide into groups to research US major political party platforms on health care (issues, interest groups). Discussion on March 1.

February 27 Session 16
Special Populations: Homeless

Guest Speaker
Bechara Choucair, MD, Medical Director, Heartland Health Outreach

Readings


FINAL PAPER RESEARCH PLAN DUE
March 1 Session 17
Discussion: Health Care Platforms of Major US Political Parties

March 6 Session 18
Special Populations: Immigrants/Refugees

Guest Speaker
Elizabeth Colon, Director, Cross-Cultural Interpreting Services, Heartland Health Outreach

Readings


March 8 Session 19
Group Discussion: Health Policy Final Paper Topics
Careers in Health and Health Policy
CTEC Evaluation

March 15

FINAL PAPER DUE