

**SOC POL 351**  
**Topics in Social Policy: Social Policy and the US Health Care System**  
Winter Quarter, 2010  
Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00 p.m. to 5:20 p.m.  
Location: Annenberg G02

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**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 presented and current 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 and the instructor. Juniors and seniors only.

Students are expected to attend and participate in class sessions. Be prepared to discuss required readings.

One 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 comparative international health systems, solutions to the problem of uninsurance, and the health policy platforms of the political parties, candidates and representatives in the U.S. Congress.

Occasionally students will be assigned a question to answer in writing during class. The question will be based on the required readings.

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

**Readings:**

A packet of copied readings will be available at Quartet Copies.

Instructions for accessing internet 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.

Theda Skocpol, Boomerang: Clinton's Health Security Effort and the Turn against Government in US Politics. New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Paul Starr, The Social Transformation of American Medicine. New York, Basic Books, 1984.

**Course Grading:**

Class Participation	10%
Required Readings	10%
Health Disparities Paper and Presentation	15%
Comparative Health Systems, Solutions to Uninsurance and Party Platform Discussions	15%
Mid-term	15%
Final Paper	35%

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 readings.

**Submitting Assignments:**

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 847-467-5530 or [ssd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ssd@northwestern.edu). SSD is located in 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 on-line at <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/>.

## **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, 2010**

### **January 4 Session 1**

*Introductions*

*What do you want to get out of this course?*

*Review Syllabus and Assignments*

*What this course is, and isn't*

*Driving Forces in Health Care Today*

### **January 6 Session 2**

*Comparative Health Systems*

*'We're Number 37'*

*'Sick Around the World'*

### Required Reading

Anderson, G., and Frogner, F. (2008). "Health Spending in OECD Countries: Obtaining Value per Dollar," *Health Affairs*, Vol. 27(6):1718-27.

### Supplemental Readings

'Key Industry Facts,' Healthcare Executive, Sept/Oct, 2009, 1-4.

Hartman, M, et al. (2009). "National Health Spending in 2007: Slower Drug Spending Contributes to Lowest Rate of Overall Growth Since 1998," Health Affairs, Vol. 28(1):246-61.

(\*) 'Health Care Costs,' Kaiser Family Foundation,  
<http://www.kff.org/insurance/upload/7670.pdf>

(\*) Explore the website [globalhealthfacts.org](http://globalhealthfacts.org)

### Assignment

Select a country for comparative health systems discussion on January 13 (Session 4).

Countries: Great Britain, Japan, Germany, Taiwan, Switzerland, Australia, Mexico, Netherlands, United States, others?

What to Explore:

Health Care Delivery System (hospitals, physicians)

Financing

Outcomes (cost, health indicators)

SELECT COUNTRY AT THIS CLASS SESSION

### **January 11 Session 3**

#### *Health Disparities*

#### Required Reading

Collins, KS, Hughes, DL, Doty, MM, Ives, BL, Edwards, JN, Tenney, K.  
'Diverse Communities, Common Concerns: Assessing Health Care Quality for Minority Americans,' The Commonwealth Fund, March, 2002.

#### Supplemental Readings

(\*) Institute of Medicine (2002). Unequal Treatment.  
<http://www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/14/973/DisparitiesAdmin8pg.pdf>

(\*) Key Facts: Race, Ethnicity and Medical Care. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Access [www.KFF.org/minorityhealth/upload/6069-02.pdf](http://www.KFF.org/minorityhealth/upload/6069-02.pdf)

View the video 'You Can't Tell by Looking.' Access <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/no-index/about-ama/8035.shtml>

### Assignment

Divide into groups to write individual papers and do group presentations on health disparities. Identify issue to instructor via e-mail by January 12, 6:00 p.m. Group presentations are January 25 and January 27, individual papers are due January 27.

Breast Cancer/African-American Women  
Asthma/Inner City Populations  
HIV/AIDS in Africa

#### **January 13 Session 4**

*Arrange groups for health disparities presentations and papers*

*Discussion: Comparative Health Systems*

#### **January 18 (Martin Luther King Day) CLASSES CANCELLED**

*Health Disparities*

##### Required Reading

(\*) Steelfisher, Gillian K. 'Addressing Unequal Treatment: Disparities in Health Care,' The Commonwealth Fund, November, 2004. Access [www.cmwf.org/usr\\_doc/steelfisher\\_unequaltreatment\\_cong2004\\_709.pdf](http://www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/steelfisher_unequaltreatment_cong2004_709.pdf)

(\*) Browse Health, United States, 2008. National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control. Access the report at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

##### Supplemental Readings

(\*) Browse the National Healthcare Disparities Report.  
<http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhdr07/nhdr07.pdf>

Grumbach, K. and Mendoza, R. (2008). "Disparities in Human Resources: Addressing the Lack of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Health Professions." Health Affairs, Vol. 27(2).

(\*) skim Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions.  
[http://www.amsa.org/div/Sullivan\\_Commission.pdf](http://www.amsa.org/div/Sullivan_Commission.pdf)

#### **January 20 Session 5**

*Construct for review of social policies/health policies*

##### Required Reading

Oberlander, J. August 27, (2003). The Politics of Health Care Reform. Health Affairs, Web Exclusive.

#### **January 25 Session 6**

*Health Disparities Presentations  
HIV/AIDS in Africa*

**January 27 Session 7**

*Health Disparities Presentations  
Breast Cancer in African-American Women  
Asthma and Inner City Children*

INDIVIDUAL PAPERS ON HEALTH DISPARITIES DUE

**February 1 Session 8**

*Federal Health Policy-Making  
Researching Federal Health Policy*

Assignment

Mid Term Essay Exam assigned due February 10

Koplan, JP, and Fleming, DW. (2000). Current and Future Public Health Challenges. JAMA, Vol. 284(13): 1696-1698.

Nichols, L, et al. (2004). Are Market Forces Strong Enough to Deliver Efficient Health Care Systems? Confidence is Waning. Health Affairs, Vol. 23(2): 8-21. Also read attached 'Perspective' by S. Butler which follows.

Wyden, R., and Bennett, R. (2008). 'Finally Fixing Health Care: What's Different Now?' Health Affairs, Vol. 27(3)

**February 3 Session 9**

*Health Insurance: Basic Concepts and History*

Required Readings

(\*) 'Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2008,' US Census Bureau, pages 20-26. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p60-236.pdf>

Claxton, G, et al. 'Health Benefits in 2008: Premiums Moderately Higher, While Enrollment in Consumer-Directed Plans Rises in Small Firms,' Health Affairs, Web Exclusive, September 24, 2008, w492-w502.

Reinhart, UE. (1999). 'Employer-Based Health Insurance: A Balance Sheet,' Health Affairs, Vol. 18(6): 124-132.

Supplemental Readings

Hunt, K., and J. Knickman (2008). 'Financing for Health Care,' in Health Care Delivery in the United States, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition.

(\*) 'Employer Health Benefits: 2009 Summary of Findings,' Kaiser Family Foundation. Access <http://ehbs.kff.org/pdf/2009/7937.pdf>

(\*) Fronstin, P. 'Workers Health Insurance: Trends, Issues and Options to Expand Coverage,' The Commonwealth Fund, March, 2006.  
[www.cmwf.org/usr\\_doc/Fronstin\\_workershtins\\_908.pdf](http://www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/Fronstin_workershtins_908.pdf)

### Assignment

Divide into groups to research different solutions for the uninsured. Discussion on February 15 (Session 12).

National Health Insurance  
The Public Option  
Tax Credits for Businesses and/or Individuals to Purchase Insurance  
Expansion of Medicare and Medicaid

## **February 8 Session 10**

*Health Insurance: Medicare*

### Required Reading

(\*) 'Medicare, A Primer, 2009,' Kaiser Family Foundation  
<http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/7615-02.pdf>

### Supplemental Readings

Moon, M. (2000). 'Medicare Matters: Building on a Record of Accomplishments,' Health Care Financing Review, Vol. 22(1):9-22.

(\*) 'The Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit,' Kaiser Family Foundation  
[http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/7044\\_08.pdf](http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/7044_08.pdf)

(\*) 'Medicare Advantage,' Kaiser Family Foundation  
<http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/2052-11.pdf>

### Assignment

Research a health policy issue at federal level. Identify issue to instructor by February 17. Research plan due February 24. Final paper due March 17.

## **February 10 Session 11**

*Health Insurance: Medicaid*

## Readings

(\*) Medicaid, A Primer,' Kaiser Family Foundation, November, 2008,  
<http://www.kff.org/medicaid/upload/7334-03.pdf>

(\*) 'Medicaid: Improving Health, Saving Lives,' Center for Budget and Policy  
Priorities, August, 2005. [www.cbpp.org/7-19-05health.htm](http://www.cbpp.org/7-19-05health.htm)

Kenney, G., and D. Chang. (2004). 'The State Children's Health Insurance  
Program: Successes, Shortcomings, and Challenges,' Health Affairs, Vol.  
23(5):51-62.

## Assignment

Research the health policy platform/health reform votes of the U.S.  
Representative from your home congressional district and the two U.S. Senators  
from your home state for discussion on February 22 (Session 14).

## MIDTERM EXAM DUE

### **February 15 Session 12**

*Why are People Uninsured?*

#### Required Readings

(\*) 'Why Do People Lack Health Insurance?' Urban Institute,  
[www.urban.org/uploadedPDF/411317\\_lack\\_health\\_ins.pdf](http://www.urban.org/uploadedPDF/411317_lack_health_ins.pdf)

(\*) Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance (2003). Hidden Costs, Value  
Lost: Uninsurance in America. Institute of Medicine. Washington, DC: National  
Academy Press, pp. 1-4. [http://books.nap.edu/execsumm\\_pdf/10719.pdf](http://books.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/10719.pdf)

Reinhardt, U. 'Is There Hope for the Uninsured?' Health Affairs Web Exclusives,  
27 August, 2003.

#### Supplemental Readings

(\*) 'The Voice of the Uninsured: A Detailed Description of Illinois' Uninsured.'  
Access [www.gileadcenter.org](http://www.gileadcenter.org). Access paper from home page.

Schoen, C., et al. 'Insured But Not Protected: How Many Adults are  
Underinsured?' Health Affairs, Vol. 24:272-86.

Schoen, C., et al. (2008) 'Building Blocks for Reform: Achieving Universal Coverage with Private and Public Group Health Insurance.' Health Affairs, Vol. 27(3).

Lambrew, J., et al. 'Change in Challenging Times: A Plan for Extending and Improving Health Coverage.' Health Affairs, Vol. 24:119-33.

Fuchs, V. and E. Emanuel. 'Health Care Reform: Why? What? When?' Health Affairs, Vol. 24:1399-1414.

The Physicians' Working Group for Single-Payer National Health Insurance (2003). 'Proposal of the Physicians' Working Group for Single-Payer National Health Insurance,' JAMA, Vol. 290: 798-805.

### Assignment

Research a specific finding from comparative effectiveness research. Be prepared to discuss on February 24.

### **February 17 Session 13**

*Discussion: Solutions to the Uninsured*

#### Guest Speaker

Margie Schaps, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group

FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE

### **February 22 Session 14**

*Discussion: Health Care Platform of Your US Representative and US Senators*

### **February 24 Session 15**

*Discussion: Comparative Effectiveness Research*

*Discussion: Medical Malpractice 'Crisis'*

#### Required Reading

(\*) Commonwealth Fund. 'Comparative Effectiveness' Research Sparks Concern over Access to Health Care,' February, 2009.

Access <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Newsletters/Washington-Health-Policy-in-Review/2009/Feb/Washington-Health-Policy-Week-in-Review-February-23-2009/Comparative-Effectiveness-Research-Sparks-Concerns-Over-Access-To-Health-Care.aspx>

Thorpe, K. 'The Medical Malpractice 'Crisis': Recent Trends and the Impact of State Tort Reforms,' Health Affairs Web Exclusive, 21 January 2004, W4-20-W4-30.

### Supplemental Readings

(\*) National Conference of State Legislatures, 'Medical Malpractice Tort Reform,' <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=17488> Look up your home state to research active bills.

(\*) Center for American Progress, 'The Jury's Still Out: A Critical Look at Malpractice Reform,' <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/06/malpractice.html>

Clinton, H. and B. Obama. 'Making Patient Safety the Centerpiece of Medical Liability Reform,' *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 354: 2205-08.

### FINAL PAPER RESEARCH PLAN DUE

#### **March 1 Session 16**

*Special Populations: Homeless*

#### Guest Speakers

Stephanie Luther, MD, Medical Director, Heartland Health Outreach

#### Required Reading

O'Connell, J.J. 'Premature Mortality in Homeless Persons: A Review of the Literature,' 19 pages. Nashville: National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Inc., 2005.

#### **March 3 Session 17**

*Mental Health and Addictions Treatment Policy*

#### Guest Speakers

Ed Stellan, Director, Resource and Community Development, Mental Health and Addictions Services, Heartland Health Outreach

#### Required Reading

(\*) Office of the President of the United States, 'National Drug Control Strategy.' Access <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/policy/ndcs09/index.html>

#### Supplemental Reading

(\*) The Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy, 'Intersecting Voices: Impact of Illinois' Drug Policies,' Access <http://www.roosevelt.edu/ima/pdfs/intersectingVoices.pdf>

**March 8 Session 18**

*Group Discussion: Health Policy Final Paper Topics  
Careers in Health and Health Policy  
CTEC*

**March 10 Session 19**

*Special Populations: Immigrants/Refugees*

Guest Speakers

Judith Weinstein, Associate Director, Refugee Health Programs, Heartland Health Outreach

Readings

Flores, G. 'Language Barriers to Health Care in the United States,' The New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 355:229-231.

(\*) Siegel, WL, and Kappaz. 'Strengthening Illinois' Immigrant Policy: Improving Health and Human Services for Immigrants and Refugees,' Illinois Immigrant Policy Project, Millennia Consulting, 2002. Access [www.consultmillennia.com](http://www.consultmillennia.com) From home page, click on 'Resources,' then 'Publications.' Click on report.

**March 17**

FINAL PAPER DUE