COURSE INTRODUCTION

Medicine is a social science, and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale. Rudolf Virchow (1880)

This course explores the role of government in organizing, financing and delivering healthcare in the U.S., including conflicting values involved in the distribution of healthcare, policy implications raised by social vs. private health insurance and government regulation vs. market-oriented solutions for social problems and the political environment that shapes healthcare policy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Analyze the political terrain that shapes policymaking in healthcare, including:
  - Historical development of healthcare policy in the U.S.
  - Conflicting values associated with the distribution of healthcare resources
  - Strengths and dysfunctions of a third party payment system for healthcare
  - Escalating price of healthcare and strategies aimed at containing costs
  - Breadth and diversity of the regulatory environment
  - The policy environment and the role of key policy actors
  - The promise and pitfalls of past attempts at healthcare reform
  - The Affordable Care Act (ACA)
    - Impetus for change that resulted in the passage of the ACA
    - Key policies that comprise the ACA
    - Political, legal and economic challenges
- Explore the dynamics of policy development, process and implementation within a federal system of government
- Apply policy analysis tools and approaches to contemporary issues in healthcare policy
  - Enhance and refine skills in identifying, assessing and presenting relevant data and information, defining social policy problems, developing solutions and making informed recommendations/decisions

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Grades for the course will be determined as follows:

60% 4-page briefing & analysis reports / class collaborative assignments
    ***grade includes preparation for in-class participation and discussion

20% 5-page essay papers on the Gordon (10%) and Jacobs/Skocpol (10%) texts
    ***grade includes preparation for in-class participation and discussion

20% Policy analysis paper
Students who (1) carefully complete and keep pace with the specified readings, writing assignments and class activities; (2) exhibit effective preparation, thoughtfulness and initiative in class discussions; and (3) demonstrate superior scholarship and analytical thinking in academic writing should be able to achieve excellence in this course.

**Academic Honesty** – Presenting the words or works of others as your own is plagiarism, is dishonest and is a violation of the University Policy on Academic Honesty. Please make certain that your work product for this class conforms to the University of Houston's policy on academic honesty at [http://guides.lib.uh.edu/plagiarism](http://guides.lib.uh.edu/plagiarism). A student found in violation of academic honesty may be subject to a failing grade, suspension or dismissal from the University.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Health Care Reform and American Politics*, Lawrence Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, Oxford U. Press (revised/updated 2012)

**REQUIRED SUBSCRIPTION**

Subscribe to *Health Affairs* at [http://www.healthaffairs.org/](http://www.healthaffairs.org/). *Health Affairs* is the leading journal of health policy thought and research in the U.S. A student subscription for all digital content is $78/year.

**CLASS OUTLINE / ASSIGNMENTS**

**AUGUST 27, 2013**

**Encounters With the Healthcare System**

*Introductions, Course Approach, Philosophy, Goals and Requirements*

**Required Activities After Class**

**Become Familiar With Health Policy Lingo**
- Patel and Rushefsky, List of Abbreviations

**Stay Apprised of Current Developments**
- Sign up to receive daily e-mails / Twitter updates from:

**Know Where and How to Access Key Government Resources**
- Regulations
  - Federal Register [https://www.federalregister.gov/](https://www.federalregister.gov/)
  - Texas Register [http://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml)
- Government Portals
  - [http://www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov) (see topics and government agencies)
SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

Defining Problems; Framing Issues

Defining “Health” & “Healthcare” — Policy Implications

Briefing & Analysis Report Due Today

Find and choose a definition that best describes “health” and “healthcare” in your opinion. Compare and contrast the two definitions and discuss the types of government policies that may follow from your definitions. Please explain and discuss the following: Is healthcare a commodity or a public good? Do Americans have a “right” to health? Why is “health” political?

Required Reading

- Toward a Politics of Health (2005), Clare Bambra, Debbie Fox and Alex Scott-Samuel, Health Promotion International [5 pages] at http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/20/2/187.full

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

The Policy and Political Environment

The U.S. Healthcare System – Defining Characteristics; Environment; Government Roles; Issues and Problems

Briefing & Analysis Report Due Today

Identify and discuss the key characteristics of the U.S. healthcare “system” including the factors that shape healthcare policy and politics. What issues and problems are associated with these characteristics? How does the performance of the U.S. healthcare system compare with other nations? Explain the role of government as underwriter, provider and regulator of healthcare services. How do state, local and federal roles in healthcare both differ and overlap? Discuss.

Required Reading (in addition to last week’s readings)

- Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 1

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

Required Viewing

SEPTEMBER 17, 2013
Policy Process and Barriers to Change
How Social Policy History Impacts and Informs Policymaking

5-Page Essay Due Today
Using the Gordon text as support for your assertions and conclusions, please write a 5-page essay on the following: Why has the United States consistently failed to establish a system that provides basic health insurance coverage for all of its citizens? Be thoroughly prepared to present and discuss your findings and conclusions in class.

Required Reading
• Dead on Arrival, Gordon (entire text)

Helpful Resources
• Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 2

SEPTEMBER 24, 2013
Incrementalism vs. Comprehensive Change
Overview of Reform Efforts by the Clinton and Bush ‘43 Administrations

Briefing & Analysis Report Due Today
Compare and contrast the Clinton and Bush ‘43 approaches to healthcare reform. Why did the Health Security Act fail to pass Congress? How did Clinton succeed in implementing major parts of his reform plan anyway? Which key factors led to the successful passage of the Bush Medicare prescription drug initiative?
(MMA) in 2003? Discuss Bush’s (‘43) “ownership society” and how this prompted a shift toward “consumerism” and value-based payment in healthcare.

**Required Reading**
- Patel & Rushefsky, Chapters 9 & 10; Chapter 4, pp. 162-78 on the MMA

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

**OCTOBER 1, 2013**  
Policy Options and Political Choices  
*Access to Care—Is There a Crisis?*

**Class Collaborative Assignment Due Today**
How many people lack insurance coverage in the U.S.? What are their characteristics? Why do they lack coverage? Who are the underinsured and why do they lack sufficient coverage? What are the consequences and costs of the uninsured and the underinsured—for individuals, providers and government? **In addition to your required reading, you may use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.**

**Required Reading**
- Patel and Rushefsky, Chapter 5 [Note: The Jacobs Skocpol text also may be helpful]

**Required Viewing**

**Helpful Resources**

**OCTOBER 8, 2013**  
Social Policy History of the ACA  
*The Affordable Care Act — The Promise, Politics, Pitfalls and Challenges*

**5-Page Essay Due Today**
Using the readings and video as support for your assertions and conclusions, please write a 5-page essay on the following: Why were President Obama and the congressional Democrats able to achieve an overhaul of the healthcare system through the ACA – a victory that had eluded lawmakers for generations?

**Required Reading**
• Health Care Reform and American Politics; Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol (entire text)
• Key Features of the Affordable Care Act [Graphic], HHS at http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts/timeline/index.html

Required Viewing
• Video [60:00] Obama’s Deal (Apr. 2010), Frontline at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamasdeal/

Helpful Graphics
• Health Reform Implementation Timeline, KFF at http://kff.org/interactive/implementation-timeline/

Helpful Resources
• Note that the 2010 health reform law actually comprises two public laws: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (HR 3590 or Pub. L. 111-146) and a “side car” bill that revised HR 3590 entitled the Healthcare and Education Reconciliation Act (HR 4872 or Pub. L. 111-152). The text of both laws may be accessed through the U.S. Government Printing Office website at http://www.gpo.gov.
• Kaiser Family Foundation (“KFF”)

OCTOBER 15, 2013
Healthcare Reform and the Role of the Supreme Court
Analyzing the Policy Challenges Created by the Supreme Court’s Decision to Uphold the ACA

Briefing & Analysis Report Due Today Discuss the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 28, 2012, decision upholding the constitutionality of the ACA. Analyze the policy challenges created by the Supreme Court’s decision and their impact on the future of healthcare reform. To fully answer this question you must address the following: The four questions addressed by the Supreme Court (and how the Court ruled on each), the individual mandate, Medicaid expansion and federalism.

Required Reading (in addition to last week’s readings)
• A Guide to the Supreme Court’s Affordable Care Act Decision (2012), KFF [10 pages] at http://www.kff.org/healthreform/8332.cfm

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

Required Viewing
• Video [48:32]: Making Sense of the Supreme Court Ruling (June 28, 2012), KHN at http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/stories/2012/june/28/health-law-decision-webcast.aspx [Note that the complete transcript to this video is also available on the website]
Note that key facts and related publications are also available on this webpage

Helpful Resources

OCTOBER 22, 2013
Implementing the ACA – Current Policy Challenges
Analyzing Selected Policy Developments and Issues

Class Collaborative Assignment Due Today [Note: These topics are subject to change]
Be thoroughly prepared to discuss the following developments and issues related to the Affordable Care Act: Implementation delays, the individual and employer mandates, the insurance exchanges [or Marketplace], Medicaid expansion and accountable care organizations (ACOs). You may use the Internet and outside sources for this assignment – the Helpful Resources below are provided as a place to begin

Helpful Resources [The following are preliminary; do check for more recent sources and material]
- ACA Implementation Delays
- The Mandates
  — The Employer Mandate Delay May Have Drastic Consequences (July 12, 2013), Forbes at http://www.forbes.com/sites/theapothecary/2013/07/12/the-employer-mandate-delay-may-have-drastic-consequences/
- The Exchanges
- Medicaid Expansion
  — Supreme Court ACA Ruling at 1 Year: Many States Fleeing Medicaid Expansion (June 27, 2013), Medscape at http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/806987
  — Beyond the Pledges: Where the States Stand on Medicaid (July 26, 2013), The Advisory Board at http://www.advisory.com/Daily-Briefing/Resources/Primers/MedicaidMap
- Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)
  — Taking Stock of Initial Year One Results for Pioneer ACOs (July 25, 2013), Health Affairs Blog at http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2013/07/25/taking-stock-of-initial-year-one-results-for-pioneer-acos/

Helpful Graphics
OCTOBER 29, 2013
Making Public Allocations Decisions
National Health Expenditures—How Much? What Value? Will ACA Reforms Help Bend the Cost Curve?

Class Collaborative Assignment Due Today
How much do we spend as a nation on healthcare? Identify the principal cost drivers. Briefly address how U.S. healthcare spending compares with other countries. Historically, how has government worked to constrain healthcare spending? Why is figuring out healthcare prices impossible to know? What are the key causes for high healthcare prices in the U.S.? Discuss whether/how the ACA reforms are intended to target and address this issue.

Required Reading
- Patel & Rushefsky, Chapters 6 [required], 7 & 8 [optional]
- Health Care Costs, a Primer (May 2012), KFF [44 pages- treat this as a required resource] at http://www.kff.org/insurance/upload/7670-03.pdf
- Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us (Mar 4, 2013), Steven Brill, TIME magazine [34 pages]

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

Required Viewing

Helpful Graphics
- The Sad History of Health Care Cost Containment as Told in One Chart (Jan. 2002), Health Affairs.
- From the California HealthCare Foundation:

NOVEMBER 5, 2013
Fundamentals of Policy Analysis
Applying a Structured Approach to Public Policy Problems

Class Collaborative Assignment Due Today [2 Parts]

*** Note that the requirements for your policy analysis papers will be discussed in this class***

PART 1 – What is policy? What is public policy? Briefly explain how public policies are created. Public policies go through several stages from conception to conclusion. We use the representation of the “policy cycle” as a tool to guide our understanding of how “private troubles evolve into public concerns.” Briefly identify and discuss the various stages in the policy cycle and their importance to policy analysis.

Please use outside sources and the Internet to inform your answers for Part 1.
PART 2 – What is policy analysis? What are the benefits of good policy analysis? Discuss the characteristics of good policy analysis. Identify and discuss in some detail the eight-step process for successful policy analysis. Why is defining the problem a crucial step in policy analysis? Please limit your sources to the Bardach text for Part 2.

Required Reading
- A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, Bardach (entire text including the Appendices).

NOVEMBER 12, 2013
Government-Administered Social Insurance Programs
Medicaid—Policy and Administrative Challenges Associated With a Joint Federal/State Program

Briefing & Analysis Report Due Today
Describe and discuss the fundamental characteristics of the Medicaid program. Be sure to include eligibility, coverage (including gaps in coverage), payment, key attempts at cost containment and financing issues in your answer. Discuss some of the policy and administrative challenges associated with operating Medicaid as a joint federal and state program.

Required Reading
- Patel & Rushefsky, Chapter 3
- Federalism [Medicaid] and Health Policy (Dec. 2005), Health Affairs [10 pages]

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

Helpful Graphic

NOVEMBER 19, 2013
Government-Administered Social Insurance Programs
Medicare Fundamentals, Policymaking and Reform

Briefing & Analysis Report Due Today
Describe and discuss the fundamental characteristics of the Medicare program. Be sure to address eligibility, coverage (including gaps in coverage), payment, administration, cost containment efforts and financing issues in your answer. Does Medicare coverage and payment policy affect commercial health insurance? Explain. Identify and discuss key Medicare reforms under the ACA, including the Medicare Shared Savings Program, and the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB). Discuss why the “doctor fix” was omitted from the ACA. How is the ACA expected to affect future Medicare spending?

Required Reading
- Patel & Rushefsky, Chapters 4 & 6
• Shared Savings Program [various resources], CMS at http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/sharedsavingsprogram/index.html?redirect=sharedsavingsprogram/

You may also use the Internet and outside sources to inform your answers for this assignment.

Helpful Resources
• Medicare: A Primer (2010), Kaiser Family Foundation at http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/7615-03.pdf

NOVEMBER 26, 2013
No Class Today – Happy Thanksgiving!

DECEMBER 3, 2013
In-Class Clinic on the Policy Analysis Paper

Assignment Due Today
Turn in your problem statement and an outline of your policy analysis paper. Come to class prepared to discuss your policy analysis paper, including any unresolved problems/issues that you may be experiencing with your papers.

DECEMBER 10, 2013

POLICY ANALYSIS PAPERS ARE DUE
*** Papers received after 5:30 p.m. are considered late ***