The Topic:

Health care in the United States consumes 16 percent of the national economy, and the share is rising quickly. Access to, cost, and quality of medical services are of fundamental interest to all Americans, even or especially those who are too young or too frail to know what their interests are. Government is involved with health care in more ways than anyone can count.

These factors all make health policy important for its own sake. They also make evaluation of how health policy is made a good way to study politics. Instead of talking about institutions in isolation, this course studies politics by looking at what government actually does about public problems.

Therefore this course is designed especially for two groups of students. One is political science students. The other is those who might choose careers in public health, medicine, or related fields. It may have a bit too much politics for one group, and a bit too much health policy for the other. I hope each will conclude that both aspects of the course are important and interesting.

Outline of the Course and its Objectives:

In the first half of the course we will focus on health policy itself. We will work to understand the extremely complex system of health care finance and delivery in the United States, and the extensive range of issues that people can raise if they want to improve the system. As a matter of political theory, this part of the course should give students a sense of how hard a task politicians and bureaucrats face in trying to meet our demands to make the system better. For those who expect to work in the health care system in some way, this should give you a more realistic sense of what you will be getting into.

In the second half of the course we will focus on how health policy is made. The text for this half of the course covers the main political institutions and concludes with an overview of the policy process and one case study, the Medicare Prescription Drug and
Modernization Act of 2003 (the name itself was a political statement). We will also take a
closer look at two other health policy cases: the failure to enact any guarantee of health
insurance for all Americans, and the controversies in 2007 about reauthorization of a
program called S-CHIP, the State Children’s Health Insurance program.

Course Requirements:

The work for this course will include reading done by all students; two in-class
exams during the first half of the course; a final exam on December 11; and separate
reports on supplementary reading, due in class on November 30. Undergraduates
will be required to do one reading report, of a minimum of 2000 words. Students will
also be expected to participate in class discussion by reporting to the class about what
they found interesting (or dubious) in their supplementary reading. Graduate students
will be required to read two supplementary books, both on the same policy topic,
and complete a 3500 word report on those two books.

Grades for undergraduates will be based 20% for each of the first two exams; 20% for the
reading report; and 30% for the final.

Grades for graduate students will be based 15% for each of the first two exams; 30% for the
reading report, and 30% for the final.

YOU WILL NOTE THAT THIS ONLY ADDS TO 90%. The balance will be
determined by class participation. HOWEVER: it is difficult to grade class participation
on an “A/B/C” basis. My expectations are that students attend the class and participate in
class discussion. If a student’s attendance and participation are particularly scant, the
10% for participation will receive a lower than average grade, so weight the person’s
total grade downward. If a student’s attendance and participation are particularly strong,
it will be graded so as to weight the overall grade upward. Of course, on an A/B/C/D/F
system, 10% usually will not swing the overall grade. But it will be better to attend and
participate.

All assigned readings should be done prior to the class for which they are scheduled, as
they will be discussed on the indicated date.

Reading for all students will include two texts and a selection of articles. Some of
the articles can be downloaded directly from public websites. Others will be placed on
electronic and hardcopy reserve. In a few cases I may hand out copies.

There is virtually a third book (in volume) of articles that I have written. Those
will be placed on the course blackboard site as well as on e-reserves, but I could arrange
to create a reader of those articles if students so request, figuring that copyright on my
own work should not be an issue.

There are two required texts. Please note that you need the specific editions of
each text:


**NOTE:** This book will be arriving late in the bookstore, but that should not be a problem, as the first assignment is not until October.

The supplementary texts from which students will choose their books for book reviews are listed at the end of this syllabus. Articles are listed below on the schedule of assignments.

*Schedule of Assignments and Readings:*

**Section I: Perspectives**

August 27: First class. Introduction and explanation of the course


Sept 3: No class, Labor Day


*Section II: Problems 1 (The Financing and Organization of American Health Care)*

Sept 10: Bodenheimer and Grumbach Chapters 1-3 and 15, pages 1-29 and 158-166.
Sept 12: Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Chapter 4, Reimbursing Health Care Providers, and Chapter 5, Capitation Payment in Managed Care: 30-45.


Sept 19: Joseph White. Drafts for book on health care cost control


**Students must select the book or books for their supplementary reading by this date.**


**Sept 28:** First Exam

**Section III: Problems 2 (Health, Health Care, and Quality of Care)**

October 3: Bodenheimer and Grumbach Chapter 11, The Prevention of Illness. Sara Gifford senior capstone paper on preventing lead poisoning in Cleveland


October 8: Malpractice Readings:
Marc A. Rodwin, Hak J. Chang, and Jeffrey Clausen. 2006. Malpractice
Premiums and Physicians’ Income: Perceptions Of A Crisis Conflict With Empirical
Michelle M. Mello et al. 2007. Changes in Physician Supply And Scope
of Practice During A Malpractice Crisis: Evidence From Pennsylvania. Health Affairs
Teresa M. Waters et al. 2007. Impact of State Tort Reforms on Physician

October 10: Bodenheimer and Grumbach Chapter 13, Medical Ethics and the
Rationing of Health Care: 129-142.

October 12: Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Chapter 17, The Health Care Workforce,
and Chapter 18, Conclusion: Tensions and Challenges: 176-189.

October 15: Mark Schlesinger. 2002. A Loss of Faith: The Sources of Reduced
Political Legitimacy for the American Medical Profession. Milbank Quarterly,

of a Cultural Icon. From Mark A. Peterson ed., Healthy Markets? The New Competition
in Health Care (Duke University Press)

October 19: Second Exam

Section 4: The Health Care Policy Process

October 22: NO CLASS, Fall Break.

October 24: Weissert and Weissert. Introduction and Chapter 1, Congress: 1-80

October 26: NO CLASS (Professor at a meeting on the incredibly screwed up
federal budget process)

October 29: Weissert and Weissert Chapter 2, The Presidency: 81-125

October 31: Weissert and Weissert Chapter 3, Interest Groups: 126-187

November 2: Catch-up discussion. A few news articles about groups or presidency, to
be determined.

November 5: Weissert and Weissert, Chapter 4, Bureaucracy: 183-230

November 7: Weissert and Weissert, Chapter 5, States and Health Care Reform: 231-
297
November 9: Discussion. REVIEW material on S-CHIP so we can relate it to the Weissert and Weissert readings.


November 23: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break


November 28: Weissert and Weissert, Chapter 8, Conclusion: 385-396.

November 30: Reading Reports Due Today
First discussion on supplementary readings

December 3: Second discussion on supplementary readings.

December 5: Third discussion on supplementary readings.

December 7: Concluding lecture and class discussion.

Final Exam: DECEMBER 11: 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Suggested Books for Supplementary Reading Reports:
The books on this list are definitely acceptable. Students may request permission to report on another book, but consent is at the discretion of the instructor.
**Topic 1:** National Health Insurance


**Topic 2:** Politics and Public Health


**Topic 3:** Quality and Efficiency


