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## PSCI 448.50: Health Care Policy

Laura Dimmler

*University of Montana - Missoula*, [laura.dimmler@umontana.edu](mailto:laura.dimmler@umontana.edu)

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**UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
HEALTH CARE POLICY PSCI 448**

**Fall 2013**

**Instructor:** Laura Dimmler, PhD  
laura.dimmler@umontana.edu

Note: The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus, if necessary, at any time.

## **Introduction**

The intent of this course is to familiarize students with the sociopolitical influences shaping health policy in the United States today. The essential issues include health politics and policy development, political structure and process, health care financing, public opinion and special interest groups, political leadership, and policy reform. Given that health care reform legislation – The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act – became law in March 2010, with full implementation beginning in January 2014 – this initiative will be a primary focus of the course, including how this new law influences health care delivery in Montana.

The health care delivery system in the United States is an enigma. This nation is the only industrialized country that, until very recently, did not ensure all citizens access to health care services. Yet, the U.S. has a long history of centralized government involvement in the delivery of health care services and health policy development. This complex and intertwined relationship between government and health care will continue well into the future, despite rapid change in the health care industry, and an historical desire to reduce public spending and restructure health care delivery toward the competitive private sector.

Leading to the recent passage of the new health care reform law, there has been considerable debate and emotional discussion about health care reform and whether access to health care is a privilege or a right, if reform should offer a government-sponsored option or whether the free market model is more efficient. This debate represents a series of highly complex and emotionally-charged issues that are difficult for Americans to untangle and understand. Special interests want to maintain the status quo and not upset opportunities for power, control, and profits. As a result, how health care services are funded and distributed to various patient populations will vary state by state. Through this course, it is anticipated that students will become informed health care consumers, and develop an in-depth appreciation of the complexities and nuances of health care delivery and recent reform initiatives in the U.S.

## **Required Texts**

Jacobs, L., and Skocpol, T. (2010). Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know. New York, NY: Oxford.

Starr, P. ((1982). The Social Transformation of American Medicine. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Starr, P. (2011). Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle Over Health Care Reform. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Wennberg, J. (2010). Tracking Medicine: A Researcher's Quest to Understand Health Care. New York, NY: Oxford.

## **Other Required Readings**

Any additional required readings will be posted in the course modules. Unless stated otherwise, all readings must be completed by the end of the week in which they are assigned.

## **Course Objectives**

1. To understand the role of the federal government and the states in health policy development, and the institutions and policy processes that contribute to it.
2. To familiarize students with the politics of healthcare and public health, and the important processes, outcomes, failures, and successes.
3. To comprehend the importance of shaping future health policy initiatives as the U.S. confronts shifting demographics, changing epidemiological trends, economic constraints in health care delivery, increasingly expensive medical technology, and new threats to the nation's health.
4. To appreciate the social and economic impact of health policy formulation and implementation on various populations, especially those in rural/frontier areas such as Montana.
5. To understand and appreciate the complexities of the new healthcare reform legislation – The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

## **Course Grading**

### **Undergraduate Students**

Class participation (two Moodle blogs): 30%

Case Studies: 40%

Book Report: 30%

### **Graduate Students**

Class participation (two Moodle blogs): 30%

Case Studies: 20%

Health Policy Paper and Abstract: 50%

## **Academic Code of Conduct**

If the instructor detects instances of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, misrepresentation, failure to appropriately attribute reference materials or the reuse of a student's written materials from other courses on any exam, paper, assignment or other work submitted by a student, or submit the work of another student as your own work, the result will be an immediate failure of the course, with a grade of F, and referral for possible institutional action (see the Student Handbook, Code of Conduct).

## Course Assignment Matrix

Assignments	Percent of Grade		Due Date
	Undergraduate	Graduate	
All Students			
Case Study 1: California's Public Option	20%	10%	October 21
Case Study 2: Where States Stand on Medicaid Expansion	20%	10%	November 11
Class Participation: Blogs	30%	30%	Blog #1 Due September 16 Blog #2 Due October 15
Undergraduate Students Only:	30%	NA	Book Title to Instructor: October 14
Book Report			Final Book Report Due: November 29
Graduate Students Only:	NA	50%	Reference List Due: October 18
Policy Analysis Paper			Policy Analysis Paper Due: December 9

### **BLOGS (two are required)**

Blog #1: Reflect on the historical development and evolution of health policy in the U.S. and explain the impact of the state and federal governments on the delivery of care. Going forward, how might health care reform implementation impact the delivery of care in Montana? Why is it important for Americans to be involved in health policy formulation? Explain your response in detail and support your arguments with referenced material from the readings and other research sources (peer-reviewed journal articles).

**In addition to your own response to the questions, you are required to provide at least two well-written responses to the responses of other participants in the discussion. Posts are not to be made all on the same day. Since active participation is required throughout the week, post early and space your replies to allow for a full response to everyone posting over the course of the week. All components of this discussion must be completed by midnight on September 16.**

Blog #2: What are the central historical tensions that have run through health system reform in the U.S.? What are the key themes that mark the debate over policy reform today? What do you think will be the best way to restrain healthcare costs going forward? You need to be creative and detail specific recommendations regarding your model for cost control, quality, and access, and support your recommendations with referenced material from the readings and other research sources (peer-reviewed journal articles).

**In addition to your own response to the questions, you are required to provide at least two well-written responses to the responses of other participants in the discussion. Posts are not to be made all on the same day. Since active participation is required throughout the week, post early and space your replies to allow for a full response to everyone posting over the course of the week. All components of this discussion must be completed by midnight on October 15.**

### **Course Reading Schedule**

1. Jacobs, L., and Skocpol, T. (2010). Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know. New York, NY: Oxford.

#1 needs to be read by September 10.

2. Starr, P. ((1982). The Social Transformation of American Medicine. New York, NY: Basic Books.

#2 needs to be read by September 25.

3. Starr, P. (2011). Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle Over Health Care Reform. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

#3 needs to be read by October 10.

4. Wennberg, J. (2010). Tracking Medicine: A Researcher's Quest to Understand Health Care. New York, NY: Oxford.

#4 needs to be read by November 15.

### **Case Study Analysis Assignments**

Case Study One – California's Public Option

<http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/stories/2012/january/13/public-option-health-insurance.aspx>

Case Study Two – Where States Stand on Medicaid Expansion

<http://www.advisory.com/Daily-Briefing/Resources/Primers/MedicaidMap>

All students are required to write two 5-7 page (typed and double-spaced) case study analyses - the first is due on October 21, and the second is due on November 11. You will need to do additional research about each case in order to complete this assignment. For each case study analysis, please answer the following questions:

1. **Describe the environment of the case – what specific constraints and opportunities does the environment provide?**
2. **Who are the primary stakeholders?**

3. **What are the objectives of the various groups of stakeholders?**
4. **What are the key issues in dispute in the case?**
5. **What courses of action are decision makers taking in each case?**
6. **What are the likely consequences of each course of action?**
7. **What assumptions or arguments about the nature of the problem or the environment does a stakeholder have to believe to make each course of action seem reasonable or likely to succeed? How plausible are those assumptions or arguments? Explain.**
8. **What are the possible resource limitations?**
9. **What courses of action might other stakeholder groups take? Give at least two examples.**
10. **How has the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act affected the issues of the case? (Explain in detail and be specific, supporting your ideas with information from the course readings and other peer-reviewed articles).**

### **Health Policy Book Report for Undergraduate Students Only**

Undergraduate students are required to write a 5-8 page, typed and double-spaced book report (using APA format), which will be due by midnight on **November 29**. Students may select any book about a health policy topic covered in the course this semester, and they must submit for approval the title, author, and a brief paragraph describing the book. Students will need to submit their selected topics and book titles to the instructor by **October 14**. The final book report assignment represents 30% of the course grade.

#### **Book Report Requirements**

1. Select a book and submit a brief description of it to the instructor by October 14.
2. Read the book and using APA format, submit a 5-8 page, typed and double-spaced book report that includes:
  - a) A comprehensive description of the policy issue(s) covered in the book; include a brief history of the issue(s) - this should cover about 2-4 pages of the report.
  - b) Identify the stakeholders and in terms of the health policy issue described in the book, explain the impact of the health policy decisions on stakeholders; outline the role of policy makers and special interest groups in this process – this should cover about 2-4 pages of the report.
  - c) Evaluate the book – Did you like the book? Did it add to your knowledge? Did the book provide an accurate and comprehensive view of the issue(s)? Has the problem been resolved or exacerbated by the actions taken or decisions made? Did the author identify potential actions or solutions regarding the issue(s)? What course of action do you think still needs to be initiated to resolve

or improve the issue(s)? Provide any additional comments that are relevant to describing or evaluating the book – this should cover about 1-2 pages.

d) Be sure to include a reference list if you use any references for your report.

### **Policy Analysis Paper for Graduate Students Only**

Graduate students are required to write a 20-page (APA format; typed and double-spaced) paper that will be **due by midnight on December 9, 2013**. This assignment represents 50% of your final course grade. You must use APA format for this paper or your final grade on the paper will be reduced by 15%. **A reference list containing at least 20 items must be submitted to the instructor by October 18.**

### **Content of the Policy Analysis Paper**

You are a senior policy advisor assigned the task of conducting various environmental analyses for Montana's Governor Bullock. The Governor wants to study two other states – California and Mississippi – to understand how each is implementing health care reform. You have been assigned the task of preparing a comparative policy analysis (your final paper) of three states – Mississippi, California, and Montana. For your analysis of each state you need to:

1. Identify all the pertinent stakeholders and the various lenses they are using to address healthcare reform implementation.
2. State the assumptions each state has used to address health care reform. You will need to design the arguments presented in your paper around these assumptions and back up your assumptions and arguments with evidence-based literature.
3. Define the strategies of each state. Be sure to consider the Supreme Court's decision regarding the ACA, and the National QA Strategy. Some states may not be considering these at all (if this is the case, then you must articulate this in your paper.) You must be explicit in your assumptions, statements, strategies, etc.
4. Present the history, culture, values, etc. of each state and explain how these influence the state's approach to health care reform implementation. How do these influence state politics? In this section of your paper, you need to include an analysis of population demographics (include the specific social determinants of health that are relevant to each state's population), and hypothesize about how each state's different approach to health care reform will directly impact the state's population – i.e.; What does the state's policy mean in terms of Triple Aim? Health disparities? Community health outcomes? Also, you will need to include a broad macroeconomic analysis of the state to thoroughly discuss these issues.

5. Discuss the current sociopolitical and economic landscapes in each state and explain how these impact the political landscape in the US Congress. Think both globally and locally, and explain how both influence the way policy is made and implemented (at the state and federal levels).
6. Explain how politics drives policy design and implementation in the U.S. Give a concrete example for each state and link to history, culture, values, etc.
7. Hypothesize about how federal and state insurance exchanges may emerge in partnership. Will this be possible in these three states, given what you've learned about the local politics? Explain.
8. Based on the assumptions that you have explicitly stated previously in your paper (i.e.; I think each state will do X because...), and what you've learned about these states, describe three detailed scenarios presenting three possible outcomes (Scenario I - high outcome, Scenario II - mid-range outcome, and Scenario III - low outcome) of the likely strategy each state will take in implementing healthcare reform. Place this within the framework of all the characteristics you have analyzed in 1-7 above (i.e.; history, culture, politics, population demographics, etc.). The information you have garnered from 1-7 must support the assumptions you have used to build each scenario.
9. Explain in detail how you reached these conclusions and recommendations.
10. A SWOT analysis for each state must be included in your paper using the framework below. The SWOT should be your analysis of the issues each state faces regarding health care reform implementation.

Strengths •	Weaknesses •
Opportunities •	Threats •