US Health Politics and Policy (POL SC 4390)
Spring 2019
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am-12:15pm
309 Middlebush

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Syllabus updated March 7, 2019

Teaching Assistant
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Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1-4pm

Course Overview

Medicine is a social science and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale. Medicine as a social science, as the science of human beings, has the obligation to point out problems and to attempt their theoretical solution; the politician, the practical anthropologist, must find the means for their actual solution. -Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902)

This course deals with the politics and public policy of health in the United States. This topic is broader than you may think - when many Americans hear “health policy,” they probably think first of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) and other policies dealing with health insurance. There is no doubt that these issues are important and deserve our attention, they are just the tip of the iceberg of how politics and policy affect the health of the US population. In addition to issues of health insurance coverage, this course will cover topics ranging from the quality of medical care, to socioeconomic disparities in health outcomes, to substance abuse and addiction, to
gender and reproductive health, to climate change, and more. All of these issues are deeply political, whether you may realize it or not, and all present public policy challenges.

In addition to building your subject matter knowledge, this course will help you to develop critical thinking and argumentation skills about public policy issues. It will also give you experience in conceiving and drafting a policy memo, a common format of written communication in the policy world.

**Readings and Required Texts**

This course will feature less lecture and more discussion than a typical undergraduate course. As such, the assigned readings are absolutely vital to the course - careful and critical reading should form the basis of your participation in class.

Most of the assigned readings are available freely online or through the university library’s subscriptions to various journals. A number of readings are from CQ Researcher - these can be accessed through the library webpage (on the home page, under “LOOKING FOR?” click “A database” and search for CQ Researcher, then search for the title of the assigned piece on the CQ Researcher page).

In addition, you will need to purchase the following two books. Both are available at the Mizzou store or through online book-sellers.


**Assignments and Grades**

Your grade for the course will be determined with a weighted average of the following items.

**Class Participation** - 15%

This is a small class, and I will run it as a hybrid between a typical undergraduate class and a graduate seminar. This means there will be a good deal of discussion and your participation will be crucial. Successful participation requires the following

- **Attendance**: This should be obvious. You should attend all class sessions and be ready to
participate on time at the beginning of class. If you have to miss a class due to illness, emergency, or an unavoidable conflict, please notify me in advance.

- *Actively joining in:* I will do my part to ensure there are equitable opportunities for everyone to participate, but you must also show some initiative to take advantage of these opportunities.
- *Completing the reading:* While we will also discuss current events and issues not covered in the readings, our discussions will draw heavily on the readings. You cannot participate successfully if you don’t read.
- *Critical thinking about the reading:* To earn an outstanding participation grade, you have to do more than just read and recall. You should think critically about each reading. That means questioning the arguments and the empirical evidence the authors present. It also means thinking about issues the authors neglect to consider.
- *Respect:* This should also go without saying, and I do not anticipate any problems, but nonetheless, you should be respectful and polite to me, the teaching assistants, and your classmates.

**Pop Quizzes - 10%**
There will be a series of pop quizzes on the assigned readings. Each quiz will cover the readings due the day of the quiz, and previous readings as appropriate. The scheduling of these quizzes is at my discretion.

**Evidence-Based Medicine Essay - 15%**
This is a written assignment of 6-8 pages that you will write in reaction to *Unhealthy Politics* by Patashnik, Gerber, and Dowling. More detail will be provided in class and a forthcoming assignment sheet. The paper is due on Friday, February 15 at midnight on Canvas. All written assignments must be submitted as Word documents on Canvas so they can be run through the Turnitin plagiarism detection software.

**Policy Memo - 20%**
This is a written assignment of 8-12 pages. You will select a health policy problem and write a mock memorandum to a real public official outlining the problem and evaluating possible solutions. I will provide more information about the policy memo format during the semester. The choice of the issue is up to you, though you must clear it with me with a brief, ungraded proposal due Friday, April 5. (This is just to make sure your choice is focused enough and that there is not too much duplication between students.) You may select an issue covered on the syllabus, or one that is not. The written memo is due on Friday, May 3 at midnight on Canvas. All written assignments must be submitted as Word documents on Canvas so they can
be run through the Turnitin plagiarism detection software.

**Exams - 40% (20% each)**
There will be two exams. **The second exam will not be cumulative.** The exams will cover the issues covered in the readings and in our class discussions, with a mix of short answer and essay questions. Both exams will take place in class - the second exam will be taken in our last regularly scheduled class on Thursday, May 9, not during finals week.

Each student will be responsible for bringing a blue book to class for the exams. Blue books are available in the Mizzou Store and elsewhere on campus in vending machines.

**Extra Credit Opportunity - Population, Education, and Health Seminar Series - +3%**
Students who wish to earn extra credit can attend a talk in the Population, Education, and Health Seminar Series on campus and write a report on the research that was presented. More details will be made available over email and on Canvas.

**Grading Scale**
Final letter grades will be decided based on the following cut points:

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<th>Final percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94.0 - 100.0</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90.0 - &lt;94.0</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87.0 - &lt;90.0</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84.0 - &lt;87.0</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80.0 - &lt;84.0</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77.0 - &lt;80.0</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>74.0 - &lt;77.0</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>70.0 - &lt;74.0</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67.0 - &lt;70.0</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>64.0 - &lt;67.0</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>61.0 - &lt;64.0</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>Below 61</td>
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**Course Policies**

**Classroom Conduct**
I expect everyone to be respectful and attentive in class. All phones, laptops and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away, unless you have worked out an accommodation with
the MU Disability Center (see below). (The research on electronic devices in the classroom is pretty definitive: they are harmful to learning except in specific circumstances of students with disabilities. See education expert Susan Dynarki's column in the New York Times: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html) Do not put your head down on the desk or sleep in class, as this is rude and distracting. I don’t mind beverages or small snacks in the classroom as long as you clean up after yourself. Please feel free to leave to use the restroom at any time (no need to interrupt to ask permission).

Extensions and Late Assignments
Late policy memos will be penalized ten points (out of 100) per day. There will be no extensions or make-up exams except in the case of a legitimate family or medical emergency, and only if arranged in advance.

Grade Disputes
If you feel a grade you have received from me or a teaching assistant is unfair for a reason that you can articulate, please email me with a written explanation of why you believe this to be the case. A two-line email does not qualify - you must make a convincing case in a professional and respectful manner. I will reevaluate the work and decide if a grade change is warranted. Note that I may revise your grade downward!

If a grade that you have received makes you unhappy, but you cannot articulate a reason why it is unfair (or you do not wish to dispute the grade), I advise you to come talk about it during office hours or at some other time by appointment (an aside: it’s always a good idea to make an appointment even when you plan to come during office hours), either with me or one of the TAs. We can discuss ways to improve your performance. It’s better to handle it this way rather than keep your frustration to yourself.

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor. Please visit https://osrr.missouri.edu/guidelines/index.html to familiarize
yourself with your obligations related to academic integrity and conduct as a student enrolled at the University of Missouri.

Written assignments must be turned in on Canvas as Word documents, where they will be run through the “TurnItIn” plagiarism detection software.

**Students with Disabilities**
If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning, use of a laptop or other device), please establish an accommodation plan with the MU Disability Center, S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. I defer all decisions on these sorts of accommodations to the experts at the Disability Center - do not make these requests of me directly. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

**Intellectual Pluralism**
The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the departmental chair or divisional director; the director of the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities; the MU Equity Office, or equity@missouri.edu.

All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor at the end of the course.

**Course Schedule**
All readings should be completed before the class session under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change - the most up-to-date version of the syllabus will always be available on Canvas (note "syllabus updated" date on the first page).

**Week 1**
**Tuesday, January 22** - Introduction & Overview
Thursday, January 24 - Population Health & Health Disparities I

**Week 2**
Tuesday, January 29 - Population Health & Health Disparities II

Thursday, January 31 - Quality of Care and the Medical Profession I
Patashnik, Gerber and Dowling Introduction & chapters 1 & 2

**Week 3**
Tuesday, February 5 - Quality of Care and the Medical Profession II
Patashnik, Gerber and Dowling Chapters 3 & 4

*Thursday, February 7 - Weather cancellation - schedule updated*

**Week 4**
Tuesday, February 12 - Quality of Care and the Medical Profession III
Patashnik, Gerber and Dowling Chapters 5 & 6 and Conclusion

*Thursday, February 14 - The Economics of Health Insurance*

The Affordable Care Act I


**Week 5**

*Monday, February 18* - evidence-based medicine essay due on Canvas

*Tuesday, February 19* - The Affordable Care Act II


*Thursday, February 21* - The Affordable Care Act III


**Week 6**

*Tuesday, February 26* - The Affordable Care Act IV


Thursday, February 28 - Disability and the Health Safety Net I
Campbell, Chapters 1-3

Week 7
Tuesday, March 5 - Disability and the Health Safety Net II
Campbell, Chapters 4-6

Thursday, March 7 - Health Costs, Finance, and Bureaucracy I

Week 8
Tuesday, March 12 - Health Costs, Finance, and Bureaucracy II
Aaron Carroll. November 20, 2018. Twitter rant starting here: [https://twitter.com/aaronecarroll/status/1064619230048460801](https://twitter.com/aaronecarroll/status/1064619230048460801)

Thursday, March 14 - First Exam

Week 9
Tuesday, March 19 - Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco I
(Feature written by a number of reporters.)
Thursday, March 21 - Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco II

Spring Break, March 25-29

Week 10
Tuesday, April 2 - Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco III

Thursday, April 4 - Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco IV

Friday, April 5 - ungraded policy memo proposal due on Canvas

Week 11
Tuesday, April 9 - Mental Health I

Thursday, April 11 - Mental Health II

**Week 12**

**Tuesday, April 16 - Seniors and Long-Term Care I**


**Thursday, April 18 - Seniors and Long-Term Care II**


**Week 13**

**Tuesday, April 23 - Gender and Reproductive Health I**


**Thursday, April 25 - Gender and Reproductive Health II**


**Week 14**
Tuesday, April 30 - Children's Health

Thursday, May 2 - Obesity, Nutrition, and Junk Science

Friday, May 3 - Policy memo due on Canvas

Week 15
Tuesday, May 7 - Climate Change and Health
Fourth National Climate Assessment, Chapter 14: Human Health: https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/14/

Thursday, May 9 - Second Exam