HPM 757.001
Health Reform: Political Dynamics and Policy Dilemmas
(3 Credit Hours)
Department of Health Policy and Management
Gillings School of Global Public Health
Spring 2019
Thursdays, 2-4:45 PM
Location: McGavran Greenberg 1301

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Course Overview

In March 2010, President Barack Obama signed landmark health reform legislation into law. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) contained a dizzying array of new policies and programs that aimed to expand insurance coverage, control health care spending, and transform medical care delivery. During the last decade, federal and state governments have implemented myriad ACA provisions, while private insurers and medical providers moved ahead with highly anticipated delivery and payment system reforms.

The ACA’s enactment, though, did not end the health care reform debate. Since 2010, Obamacare has been engulfed in controversy, and the ACA’s implementation has faced challenges in Congress, the courts, and in the states. Following the 2016 elections, Congressional Republicans and the Trump administration sought to repeal the ACA and replace it with their own health reform plan. Nearly a decade after the ACA’s enactment, debate over
ObamaCare rages on and the ACA’s fate remains uncertain. This is a crucial, fluid, and extraordinary moment in U.S. health care politics.

How did we get to this point in American medical care? And where is US health policy going next? Why is health reform so hard to enact in the U.S.? How did past struggles over national health insurance shape our (non)system and set the stage for the ACA and contemporary debates? Where will the fight over ACA repeal leave US health policy? What can the struggles over health care teach us about American politics and public policy? These are the questions we will grapple with.

This course focuses on the dynamics of health care politics and policy. We will explore the political history of health reform, efforts to cover the uninsured, the dilemmas confronting public and private insurers from rising health care costs, and political conflicts over health policy.

We will take full advantage of this extraordinary time in American health politics by focusing on the Affordable Care Act and ongoing debate over its repeal. We will investigate how the ACA became law, why health reform took the form that it did, how the ACA has changed American health care, implementation issues, its successes and failures, the fight over repeal, and options to replace or strengthen the ACA. We will also examine health care spending and efforts to contain costs. We will explore private sector-led health reform, including the rise and fall of managed care, consumerism, and emerging delivery and payment system reforms, including value-based purchasing and Accountable Care Organizations. We will also consider the future of health care reform, including the rise of single-payer, Medicare for All proposals.

Finally, we will consider lessons from other countries’ experiences in financing medical care and controlling health care costs: why does the U.S. spend so much more on medical care than other nations and yet have such poor health outcomes?

Our goal is to understand: how health politics shape health policymaking, lessons from past failures and successes in health care policy, the contemporary state of health reform, emerging controversies in health policy, options for reform and possible futures.
# Learning Objectives and HPM Competencies

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<tr>
<th>Course Learning Objective</th>
<th>HPM Competencies</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. <em>Describe</em> the history of health care reform in the United States and the origins of the contemporary health insurance system</td>
<td>Information Seeking</td>
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<td>2. <em>Explain</em> how the history of US health care policy has shaped the current health care system and the reform debate</td>
<td>Analytical Thinking, Information Seeking</td>
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<td>3. <em>Explain</em> why the U.S. health care system is so difficult to reform</td>
<td>Analytical Thinking</td>
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<td>4. <em>Analyze</em> how American political institutions, ideology, and interests impact the substance and process of health policymaking in the US</td>
<td>Political Savvy, System Thinking</td>
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<td>5. <em>Evaluate</em> the Affordable Care Act, its implementation, and impact on the health care system</td>
<td>Analytical Thinking</td>
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<td>6. <em>Identify</em> the sources of high health care spending and options for cost control</td>
<td>Analytical Thinking, Information Seeking</td>
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<td>7. <em>Compare</em> how other nations organize and finance their health care systems to the US model</td>
<td>Innovative Thinking, Information Seeking</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. <em>Write</em> an analytic research paper that examines a contemporary issue in health policy</td>
<td>Initiative, Communication Skills</td>
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Resources

Course readings for each session are posted on the course Sakai site, are linked directly in the syllabus, and are available on E-reserves under Sakai.

There should be no problem with the direct links in the syllabus for articles in e-journals that UNC carries, but with book chapters and other journal articles, it’s a different story. Depending on whether you are accessing the system on campus or at home, you may have to go through e-reserves or the UNC library to access those articles. Please let me know about any problems that you encounter opening material and links immediately. At times, I will also post other course materials—additional readings, assignments, web links to materials, PPTs—on Sakai.

Background Materials

Many of you are already familiar with the basics of American health insurance arrangements and issues in health care reform. For those who wish to increase their familiarity with or brush up on those topics, and see what insurance arrangements in the U.S. looked like pre-ACA, I recommend these optional readings as background:


Requirements and Expectations

Attendance

Per UNC rules, regular class attendance is a student obligation, and a student is responsible for all the work, including tests and written work, of all class meetings. No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings except for excused absences for authorized University activities or religious observances required by the student’s faith.

Participation

I believe in a highly interactive form of teaching, which is all the more important in a class of this size. This class emphasizes active learning and regular class discussions and does not use Power Point as a form of lecture notes. Student participation is vital to the course’s success—we can and will have a discussion in a large class. I encourage you to ask questions and get involved in class discussions, you have much to learn from each other and I have much to learn from you. Attendance at all course sessions is expected. Because we meet only once a week, missing a class means missing a significant portion of class time and material—you are responsible for ensuring that you understand any material that we go over in class for a session
you did not attend, and should consult with other students, the TA, and me to make sure you grasp that material. While I hope and expect that you will participate regularly in class discussions, there is no participation grade for the class. The class size makes it impossible for me to fairly assign such a grade.

Our discussions will often revolve around and take off from course readings, and it is critical that you read and reflect on these selections before each class. You should focus on the main concepts and arguments in each article, and not get bogged down trying to memorize the endless details we will encounter. Instead, you should think about the authors’ major themes, what they are arguing and the implications of those arguments, whether the analysis, evidence and arguments are persuasive, and what alternative explanations or arguments might look like. Even if we do not discuss every reading in class, you are responsible for reading and understanding the main points of assigned articles.

Each week I will send you a series of questions to think about as you read the materials in preparation for class—these questions will help guide you through that week’s materials and the stage for our in-class discussions. I expect you to think about, be able to answer, and come prepared to discuss these questions in class.

We will often study issues that are controversial—disagreement and debate are absolutely acceptable and indeed essential to learning. At all times you should be respectful of others’ views, ready to listen to different perspectives, open to changing your mind, and tolerant of opinions that may diverge from your own beliefs.

I have tried to make the reading load as manageable and compelling as possible, though some weeks it will be relatively heavy because of the ground we need to cover. I have high expectations regarding your engagement with the readings (exams will cover readings as well as material discussed in class). Some of the material we will cover may be confusing or unfamiliar and some of it is certainly provocative. I encourage you to voice your comments on the readings and raise questions during class, email me or drop by my office to further discuss the course (or anything else on your mind).

**There is nothing that kills discussion and communal learning more than surfing the web during class, which distracts you and those sitting around you. Please use computers only for taking notes.**

**Texting and use of cell phones during class is prohibited.**

**Auditing**

You may only audit this class with my permission and by completing the appropriate forms with the registrar. Auditors must regularly attend class and are expected to complete course readings. UNC’s guidelines for auditing are here: [http://registrar.unc.edu/guide/registration-policies/auditing-a-course/](http://registrar.unc.edu/guide/registration-policies/auditing-a-course/)
**Recording Class**

Recording of class lectures and discussions is prohibited unless you have my explicit permission.

**Evaluation / Grading**

There will be a midterm, a final, and one paper. The midterm and final will be in-class exams, with questions primarily essay and short-answer. The paper will be around 7-10 pages in length. It should be succinctly written, cogently argued, carefully edited, professionally presented, and well-organized; we will talk much more in detail about the paper when it is assigned. Papers are graded on the basis of substantive content, research effort, and writing quality.

When you submit your paper, be sure that it has a title page with your PID. Your name should not appear anywhere on the paper so we can grade anonymously. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the designated date. Late papers will be penalized 10 points for each additional day after the due date. If there is an unexpected event, such as illness, or another compelling reason why you cannot turn in the paper on time, you must speak with me beforehand to get an extension.

Your grade will be determined as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>February 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>March 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>May 6</td>
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The grading scale for the class is:

**High Pass:** 93-100  
**Pass:** 75-92  
**Low Pass:** 65-74  
**Fail:** <65
Recognizing, Valuing, and Encouraging Diversity

Promoting and valuing diversity in the classroom enriches learning and broadens everyone’s perspectives. Inclusion and tolerance can lead to respect for others and their opinions and is critical to maximizing the learning that we expect in this program. This may challenge our own closely held ideas and personal comfort zones. The results, however, create a sense of community and promote excellence in the learning environment. Diversity includes consideration of (1) the variety of life experiences others have had, and (2) factors related to “diversity of presence,” including, among others, age, economic circumstances, ethnic identification, disability, gender, geographic origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, social position. This class will follow principles of inclusion, respect, tolerance, and acceptance that support the values of diversity.

Disability Accommodation

UNC-CH supports all reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or a pregnancy complication resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the UNC Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (ARS), http://accessibility.unc.edu; phone 919-962-8300 or email accessibility@unc.edu. Students must document/register their need for accommodations with ARS before any accommodations can be implemented.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

UNC Honor Code

HPM Statement

The principles of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship govern the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University as they have during the long life of this institution. Your acceptance of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in the Code of Student Conduct and a respect for this most significant Carolina tradition. Your reward is in the practice of these principles.

Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity, however small, strikes destructively at the University's life and work.
If you have any questions about your responsibility or the responsibility of faculty members under the Honor Code, please consult with someone in either the Office of the Student Attorney General (966-4084) or the Office of the Dean of Students (966-4042).

Read “The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance” (http://instrument.unc.edu).

**Plagiarism**

UNC rules about plagiarism are available here: http://guides.lib.unc.edu/plagiarism-citing. Please take the time to carefully read these rules. See also the tutorial available from the UNC library: http://www2.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/

Knowing how to write a research/analysis paper that is original writing while drawing on previous research and existing sources is an important skill to develop. When the paper is assigned we will go over how to write a research paper, proper research methods, what constitutes plagiarism, proper citation form and standards, the difference between plagiarism and paraphrasing, and other related issues. These principles are crucial for you to learn given the temptations inherent in a web-based age of cut and paste. Students who plagiarize often don’t think they are doing anything wrong—that is why it is vital that you read and understand the rules regarding plagiarism and the standards for academic research outlined in the links above. Please feel free to discuss any questions about these rules with me.

Your papers for this course must be original work. You cannot use someone else’s paper or copy material without attribution from another source. Nor can you use a paper that you have written or are writing for another course. Papers in this course have the status of exams—you are to complete all work yourself and you are not to receive help from others with writing your paper.

A special note on paraphrasing: it is not writing to copy someone else’s words/paragraphs/pages at length and simply alter an occasional word to pass it off as your own work. Avoid repeated and extensive use of this type of “close” paraphrasing, which amounts to plagiarism even if you are citing the source.

**Course Evaluation**

HPM participates in the UNC-CH’s online course evaluation system, enabled at the end of the semester by Scantron Class Climate. Your responses will be anonymous, with feedback provided in the aggregate. Open-ended comments will be shared with instructors, but not identified with individual students. Your participation in course evaluation is an expectation, since providing constructive feedback is a professional obligation. Feedback is critical, moreover, to improving the quality of our courses, as well as for instructor assessment. Students are notified when the evaluation is available online, towards the end of each semester.
Schedule of Sessions

January 10  Introduction
http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/24/5/1103.full.pdf+html

January 17  The Politics of National Health Insurance
https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/

https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/


http://prospect.org/article/what-happened-health-care-reform

January 24  The Evolution of Private Insurance
https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/24/5/897/39576/The-Predictable-Managed-Care-Kvetch-on-the-Rocky


**January 31**

**The Politics of Demographic Incrementalism: Medicare & Medicaid**

[https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/](https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/)


**February 7**

**Enacting the Affordable Care Act: The (Im)Possible Politics of Reform**

[https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/](https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/)

[https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/](https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/)

[http://jhppl.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/36/3/419](http://jhppl.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/36/3/419)

**February 14**

**The Affordable Care Act: Promise and Performance**

[https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/](https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/)
February 21  
**Midterm Exam**

February 28  
**Repealing and Replacing the Affordable Care Act**

[https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/](https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/)

Dylan Scott. 2017. A Conservative Wonk Makes the Case for the AHCA.  


Optional:


March 7  
**The Trump Administration and Obamacare**

[https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/](https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/)
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08959420.2018.1462684

March 21

**Why is U.S. Health Care Spending so High?**

https://sakai.unc.edu/welcome/


https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhppl/article/43/5/771/134936/The-Price-of-Health-Care-Why-Is-the-United-States

***Paper due March 26***

March 28

**Lessons from International Health Systems**


http://www.commonwealthfund.org~/media/Files/Publications/Issue%20Brief/2012/May/1595_Squires_explaining_high_hlt_care_spending_intl_brief.pdf

Optional:
**April 4**

**Containing Health Care Spending**


Ian Spatz. 2018. IPAB RIP. Health Affairs blog.  

[https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2016/rwjf429930](https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2016/rwjf429930)

**April 11**

**ACOs and Value-based Purchasing**


Optional:


April 18  

**2020 and Beyond: Medicare for All?**


April 25  

**The Future of Health Care Reform**

May 6  

**Final Exam**  12PM-3PM