

HPAA 755: Introduction to Health Policy and Politics
COURSE OVERVIEW - FALL 2007

LOCATION AND TIME

TBA

INSTRUCTORS

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DESCRIPTION

Every aspect of health care or public health is affected by government policies and politics. This course has two primary foci: health policy and health politics. Students in this course will be introduced to a variety of health issues and related policy alternatives. This course also introduces students to the government institutions, decision making processes, and political actors that create health policy in the United States. Through class exercises and assignments, students will develop a critical view of the primary foci and further develop analytical and communication skills.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the government institutions and processes that produce health care policy
2. Identify important trends in health care policy and politics
3. Explain how key actors (i.e., news organizations, interest groups, health care professionals, and public opinion) affect politics and health policy
4. Compare and contrast the politics of health policy issues
5. Communicate more effectively via short, written communications
6. Engage in political debate in a way that recognizes and respects different views

ORGANIZATION

This course is divided into two major sections. In the first few weeks, we focus on how health policy is made in the U.S. The remainder of the course is devoted to using case studies to illustrate key frameworks for understanding health care politics.

This course gives students several opportunities to engage with course materials in different ways. Along with class lectures, students will have opportunities to question health policy and political experts and to participate in class exercises and discussions. Written assignments and an exam will also help students develop skills and knowledge.

UNC-CH HONOR CODE

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).

To familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Honor Code, please go to <http://instrument.unc.edu/>.

CHEATING AND THE INTERNET

(Copied from Professor Tom Rickett's syllabus for HPAA 260, 2001, with a few minor edits)

The World Wide Web provides you with a portal to an expanding amount of information. Examples of much of what I ask you to write can be found on the Internet. When the assignment is for a memo or a paper, there is a great deal of temptation to cut and paste material from the Internet. I would like to make it clear what is considered inappropriate use of others' work or—plagiarism.

In general, the direct copying of more than a single full sentence from a Web site or any other source requires a full citation and the use of quotation marks or quotation formatting. If you re-word a series of sentences but keep the structure of the argument contained in those sentences, the order of the points and the underlying logic, you are using someone else's work and you need to describe it as such. An example of what is considered cheating and plagiarism, is provided by the following example:

From Student's paper (with no citation)

Under this option, Medicare would pay for prescriptions once an annual deductible has been met. The lower the amount that policymakers set the deductible, the more people would benefit. However, this option may be reminiscent of the structure of current Medigap policies H, I, and J, which has a limiting maximum benefit. So, policymakers would have to decide how many beneficiaries should pay for each covered prescription—whether through a deductible or modest co-pay. Another option could be to provide beneficiaries with a voucher toward the purchase of private prescription drug insurance policies, which the federal government could choose to standardize as it has done for Medigap insurance.

The Web site @ www.nasi.org reads:

"Under this approach, Medicare would help pay for any beneficiary's prescriptions once she paid an annual deductible. The lower that policymakers set the deductible, the more people would benefit. A key question for policymakers is whether such coverage would include a maximum benefit similar to those of Medigap policies H, I, and J in order to limit costs. Policymakers would also have to decide how much beneficiaries should pay for each covered prescription. Most employer-sponsored retiree health plans either pay 80 percent of drug costs after the beneficiary has met an overall medical spending deductible or require modest co-payments with each prescription (for example, \$5 co-payment for generic drugs, 16 \$10-\$15 for brand name drugs) but no deductible.¹⁷ Another way to structure the benefit would be to provide beneficiaries with a voucher toward the purchase of private prescription drug insurance policies, which the federal government could choose to standardize as it has done for Medigap insurance."

FINAL GRADES

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>
H	100-90
P	89-70
L	69-60
F	<60

For this course, an H represents exceptional performance. To earn an H, a student must demonstrate mastery of course assignments and topics.

ASSIGNMENTS

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>% of Grade</i>
Exam	25
Memo 1	10
Memo 2	15
Memo 3	10
Memo 4	15
Memo 5	10
Participation	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Exam

To provide an opportunity for students to engage with course materials and key concepts, this course requires students to take an exam in the first half of the class. The exam requires students to demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of concepts and issues related to health policy and politics. The exam will focus on required readings, lectures, guest speakers and in-class discussions.

Memos

The ability to write clearly, concisely, quickly and with purpose is a valuable skill for health care executives, policy analysts, and other political actors. To further develop communication skills and to give students an opportunity to consider important health policy topics, students will write five memos throughout the semester.

The first two memos require students to choose the most important health issue in politics in the three months preceding the due dates and justify their choice with concepts and arguments learned or refined in class. For the second two memos, the students will be given a case study and asked to analyze the political environment.

The final memo requires students to provide an analysis crafted by a real client. Past clients have included CMS and NCSL. Well in advance of this final assignment, the class will meet with the client via a conference call to determine the requirements.

Completing these assignments will help students: 1) synthesize and apply what they have learned about the political and policy process, 2) develop a more in-depth understanding of health care politics, and 3) further develop memo writing skills.

Students must write their memos without assistance. Unless allowed explicitly in the assignment instructions, collaboration on this assignment or use of other students' work is considered a violation of the honor code.

Participation

This class offers a range of activities and assignments aimed at helping students think critically about health policy and politics and to learn about its development. In addition, these assignments give students

HPAA 755: Syllabus for Fall 2006 (Mebane)

opportunities to develop effective ways to discuss and negotiate different views and perspectives. Even with a class of this size, students are expected to participate in class exercises and to take advantage of the expertise of guest speakers. Students are also encouraged to ask questions and to apply what they are learning in class discussions and via assignments and exercises.

This portion of the grade will be assigned as follows:

	<i>% of Final Grade</i>
<i>Participation Assignment</i>	
Assigned group-led discussion	5
Small group discussions	5
In-class discussions	5
<i>Total Participation Grade</i>	<i>15%</i>

To earn full credit for participation, students must also complete the student survey at the beginning of the class.

Assigned group-led discussions. Each student will be assigned to keep track of a key factor affecting politics, e.g., interest groups or health policy analysts. Everyone assigned to a particular topic will help lead discussions of that topic in class on the day the topic is discussed in more detail by Dr. Mebane in class. Assigning key actors will benefit class discussions as individuals become more knowledgeable on their topic. These assignments will also help the class keep track of the most current happenings related to each topic. Dr. Mebane will assign this grade, with input from the teaching assistants.

Small group discussions. On the days that the first four memo assignments, are due, we will discuss the topic of the memo in class. To provide a forum in which every student can actively participate, during class time, students will convene into small groups (assigned in advance) to discuss a specific aspect of the topic as instructed by Dr. Mebane. Class will then reconvene to continue the discussion. This grade will be assigned from a combination of input from the group and Dr. Mebane and the teaching assistants.

In-class discussions. Students should be prepared to discuss readings, lectures, etc. in each class. The teaching assistants will assign this grade.

As with all other assignments, please notify the teaching assistants in advance if you need to miss an discussion assignment.

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Evaluation Criteria for Written Assignments*

%	<i>Description</i>
90 to 100	<p>High Pass (H): A grade in this range is for exceptional work at the graduate level. The work must be exceptional in both its analytics and presentation.</p> <p>The analysis must show an exceptional understanding of concepts and instructions. The written presentation must be insightful in perspective, be presented in an exceptionally clear manner, and conform to generally accepted writing conventions such as spelling and grammar. It identifies and clearly addresses significant aspects of the issue.</p> <p>Tables and charts, [which should be limited], must stand-alone, provide clarity and/or insight to the point being made, and be exceptionally clear in their presentation. Tables and charts should be used to help the reader quickly and clearly understand major points. [Thus they should not be repeated in the text, but only introduced and their key points summarized.]</p> <p>Appendices are not required and should be pertinent to the reader's understanding of the points being made and be presented in a manner which is exceptionally easy to follow. Any analysis contained in appendices must go beyond that generally expected, be appropriate and insightful, free of material errors and be presented in an exceptionally clear manner. In general, there are no errors in grammar or spelling.</p>
80 to 89	<p>Pass Plus (P+): A grade in this range is for work of an overall high caliber at the graduate level. The work is of superior, but not exceptional quality, in both analytics and presentation.</p> <p>The analysis must show a well-developed understanding of the concepts and instructions. The written presentation must communicate a clear perspective in a skillful manner, and conform to generally accepted writing conventions such as spelling and grammar. The presentation is logical and easy to follow, and conforms to the criteria given above in regard to the use of tables, appendices and generally accepted writing conventions.</p> <p>The overall presentation should be polished and suggest a thorough understanding of the assignment.</p>
70 to 79	<p>Pass (P): A grade in this range is for generally acceptable work at the graduate level. The work must be acceptable in both its analytics and presentation.</p> <p>The written presentation must show a firm understanding of the concepts and instructions and communicate at a relatively high, but not superior level. The presentation is logical and easy to follow, and conforms to the criteria given above in regard to the use of tables, appendices and generally accepted writing conventions.</p> <p>The presentation must be appropriate and validly applied, free of any major errors, and presented in a clear manner. No major section should look like it needs at least one more draft to clearly communicate.</p>
60 to 69	<p>Low Pass (L): A grade in this range is for a low level of work at the graduate level. Though it shows a basic familiarity with the concepts and instructions, it has either a significant deficiency in one of the following areas or several smaller but cumulatively important deficiencies in several of the following areas: recognizing and addressing key points, identification and use of appropriate analytical tools, errors and/or ability to clearly communicate through the use of prose, tables and graphics, and appendices.</p>
< 60	Fail (F): Below acceptable graduate level work.

* These descriptions were adapted from Professor Peggy Leatt's criteria for written presentations of cases, HPAA 240, Fall 2003.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Without prior authorization or emergency circumstances, late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a grade of 0. Please let the teaching assistants know IN ADVANCE if you are having trouble completing an assignment by the deadline so that you can make suitable arrangements. This includes computer failures. Please leave a note in the teaching assistant's box in HPAA, leave a message at (919) 966 2499 or via email. If an emergency occurs, please let us know as soon as you can.

COURSE WEBSITE

This course has a website on Blackboard that will provide access to 1) lecture notes, 2) guidance for assignments, 3) links to assigned readings and useful websites, and 4) other materials as needed. You can gain access via Blackboard at <https://Blackboard.unc.edu/>. Any student having difficulty entering the website, should contact the teaching assistant as soon as possible.

NOTE: (Much to my chagrin) the readings may best be viewed using Microsoft Explorer. If files do not look good in one web browser, try the other.

READINGS

Required texts

Note: Students taking this course are assumed to have a basic understanding of the structure of the U.S. government. A basic book on the U.S. government may come in handy as a reference.

Required readings

Assigned readings are described in the course schedule, which will be available on the first day of class. Readings are available via links in this document or in files posted under Assigned Readings.

Health policy and politics in the news

It is recommended that students follow current issues in health policy and politics. Possible sources include news outlets (e.g., FoxNews, CNN, *The Washington Post*-Politics section, *The News & Observer*), daily e-mail news alerts from the Kaiser Foundation (http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm), and Congressional Quarterly (accessed via UNC's e-sources).

CONNECTIONS WITH HPAA 564

This course is a complete introduction to health policy and politics in the United States. Many students taking this course will also be taking HPAA 564 (Health Care in the United States: Administrative and Policy Issues). Because the content of HPAA 564 is closely connected with the content of this course, the two courses have been designed to complement each other. Throughout this semester, there will be sessions in HPAA 564 of particular interest to students taking HPAA 755 (this course). Students in HPAA 755 who are not taking HPAA 564 are invited to attend those sessions. Similarly, there are some sessions in HPAA 755 that students taking HPAA 564 will be encouraged to attend.

NOTE: For students taking HPAA 755, attending the HPAA 564 sessions is NOT MANDATORY.

LECTURE NOTES

To facilitate class discussion and note taking, PowerPoint presentations or lectures given in class will be available on Blackboard before each class (unless noted otherwise).