CH 99: Power, Politics, and Health

Tufts University
Spring 2020

Course Syllabus

Professor: Alecia J. McGregor
Office: 574 Boston Ave, Suite 208J
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Office hours: Thursdays, 2pm to 3:30pm

Meeting Time and Place: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:30pm to 5:45pm
574 Boston Ave, Room 204

Course Overview
All around the world, health policy is politically contentious, sharply dividing the public, political parties, other powerful stakeholders. Against a global backdrop of increasing wealth inequality and persistent health disparities, this course explores the impact of major political shifts on health policymaking in the U.S. and abroad.

We will explore questions such as: How well do political institutions in the U.S. and other countries respond to the health needs of the public? What aspects of a country’s political history and political system influence how health care is delivered, and the types of public health programs that are implemented? How do major elections affect the health of populations? To what extent do multinational organizations and large NGOs (such as the WHO, World Bank, the IMF, and the Gates Foundation) shape health programs poor countries? The course will cover topics such as health system reform, climate change, drug politics, abortion policy, HIV/AIDS treatment, and more.

Students will learn both the theoretical basis and empirical evidence for the “political determinants of health.” Through case-based exercises, students will also gain strategic skills for influencing the health policy process within political institutions.
Course Objectives
This course is designed to meet four chief objectives. Throughout the semester, students will learn to:

1) Analyze the politics of major past and present health policy developments in the United States and in select cases abroad;
2) Clarify the role of political institutions, non-governmental stakeholders, and the public in influencing health policies.
3) Explain the ways political analysis can improve health policy research and its implementation;
4) Demonstrate skills in political strategy for influencing health policy.

Course Requirements
Students will be expected to complete assigned readings, participate in class discussions, prepare for case discussions, and write two political strategy memos and one Op-Ed article.

Case Assignments
All students are expected to submit a political strategy memo on two selected cases for political analysis and to participate in classroom debates for each case. The memo is due the day of case discussion, prior to the presentation. Late materials will not be accepted without prior discussion with a teaching fellow and permission from the instructor.

Political strategy memos should be no more than 5 pages, double spaced, one-inch margins, with no less than 11 point font. References should be included on separate pages and do not count toward the page limit. Appendices are not required and will not be graded. If these memo formatting rules are not followed, points will be deducted from the memo grade.

Electronic Materials
This class uses Canvas to post lecture slides, supplementary materials, and some announcements.

Assignments & Grading
Class Participation/ Memo Presentation: 15%
Political Strategy Memo 1: 15%
Political Strategy Memo 2: 15%
Op Ed: 20%
Final Exam: 35%
**Grading Policy**
All assignments will be given a letter grade on the A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc scale. Any assignment submitted after the deadline will receive a reduction of one letter grade for each day late. For example, an A- paper submitted one day late will receive a B-. **Final exams will not be accepted after the deadline.**

**Class Protocol**
Students are expected to attend all classes. Please email the instructor if you expect to be absent. During class, *cell phones must be turned off or to vibrate mode*. During class, students are asked not to use the Internet for email or other purposes.

**Office Hours**
If for any reason, you would prefer to discuss an issue or theme one-on-one, please don’t hesitate to visit during office hours. My office hours are held on Thursdays from 1pm to 2:30pm in 574 Boston Ave, Suite 208J. I look forward to getting to know all of you this semester!
PART I- Overview of Health Care Politics

Session 1: Course Introduction: Why Study Politics and Health?
1/16/2020

Assigned Readings:
None

Session 2: The Political Determinants of Health: ‘A Neglected Area of Research’
1/21/2020

Assigned Readings:

Kickbush, Ilona. 2015. “The political determinants of health: 10 years on.” BMJ.


Optional:

Session 3: Theories of Health Policy Change
1/23/2020

Assigned Readings:
Reich MR. 2002. The politics of reforming health policies. Promotion and Education.


Optional:

Shiffman, J. and Smith, S. 2007. “Generation of political priority for global health initiatives: a


**Session 4: Overview of the U.S. Health Care System: Where are we now?**
1/28/2020

**Assigned Readings:**


**Optional:**

**Session 5: Legislative Politics and U.S. Health Policy**
1/30/2020

**Assigned Readings:**


**Optional:**
Session 6: Developing a Political Strategy
2/4/2020

In this class we will introduce the major assignments of the semester, the Political Strategy Memo and the Op-Ed article.

Assigned Readings:


Rehr DK. “Advocacy Tools that Influence Congressional Decision-making.” Huffington Post, 28 June 2012.

PART II- Joining the Public Discussion

Session 7: Legalizing Marijuana: The Case of Colorado
2/6/2020

Assigned Readings:


NYTimes. “Legalizing Marijuana with a Focus on Social Justice Unites 2020 Democrats.”


Optional Further Reading:


*Guest Speakers: Patrick Collins and Kalimah Knight, Tufts Media Relations*
Session 8: Medicare for All: An Idea Whose Time has Come?  
2/11/2020

Assigned Readings:


Morone J. 2017. “How to think about Medicare for All?” NEJM.  


Session 9: Op-Ed Workshop  
2/13/2020

No reading assigned. Bring your Op-Ed outline to class to review with classmates.

Session 10: Public Opinion and the Media  
2/18/2020

Assigned Readings:


2/20 NO CLASS, SUBSTITUTE DAY
***Op-Ed Assignment due to Canvas by 5:00 pm on Friday, 2/21***
PART III – Devising a Political Strategy

Session 11: Campaigns, Elections and Health Policy
2/25/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 12: History of the Politics of National Health Reform
2/27/2020

Assigned Readings:
Kaiser Family Foundation. 2009. National Health Insurance - a Brief History of reform efforts in the U.S.


Session 13: Case 1 - The Clinton Health Reform
3/3/2020

Political Strategy Presentation and Debate to take Place in Class

Assigned Readings:


**Political Strategy Memos due in class at 4:30pm.**

*For Students not assigned to this case, please submit a discussion question to at least two stakeholders to the Canvas website.*

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**Session 14: Health Politics in the States**

3/5/2020

Assigned Readings:


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**Session 15: Massachusetts Health Reform**

3/10/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 16: Case 2 – The Obama Health Reform
3/12/2020

Assigned Readings:


**Political Strategy Memos due in class at 4:30pm.**

*For Students not assigned to this case, please submit a discussion question to at least two stakeholders to the Canvas website.*

Week of 3/16 SPRING BREAK

Session 17: U.S. Health Politics in International Context
3/24/2020

Assigned Readings:
Physicians for a National Health Program. Health Care Systems - Four Basic Models.


Session 18: Politics of Public Funding for Abortion
3/26/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 19: Case 3—South Dakota Abortion Referendum
3/31/2020

Political Strategy Presentation and Debate to take Place in Class

Assigned Readings:


Slevin, Peter. “S. Dakota Becomes Abortion Focal Point; Voters to Decide Fate of State Ban.” The Washington Post, August 28, 2006: A10
Optional Further Reading:


**Political Strategy Memos due in class at 4:30pm.**

*For Students not assigned to this case, please submit a discussion question to at least two stakeholders to the Canvas website.*

PART IV - Global Health Politics

Session 20: The Field of Global Health: Key Actors, Agendas, and Values
4/2/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 21: Social Movements and Health Reform in Brazil
4/7/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 22: The Politics of Universal Access to HIV/AIDS Meds in Brazil
4/9/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 23: National Health Reform in Ghana
4/14/2020

Guest Speaker: Aimee Miller, MPH, Health Development Monitoring and Outreach Specialist, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Assigned Readings:


Session 24: The Politics of Foreign Aid for Global Health: The Global Gag Rule
4/16/2020

Assigned Readings:


Session 25: Politics of Climate Change and Environmental Health
4/21/2020


Session 26: Final Exam Review Session
4/23/2020