CH 99-21:

Health Politics and Policy in the U.S. and Abroad

*Tufts University*
*Spring 2017*

*Course Syllabus*

Professor: Alecia J. McGregor  
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Office hours: Thursdays, 1pm to 2:30pm

**Meeting Time and Place:** Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:30pm to 5:45pm  
574 Boston Ave, Room 202

**Course Overview**

As the news cycle will attest, health policymaking is politically contentious, sharply dividing political parties and various segments of the public. This course explores the political dimensions of health policymaking in the U.S., with an eye toward health politics in other nations. Throughout the semester, students will learn both the theoretical basis and strategic skills for influencing the health policy process within political institutions and among the public. We address the politics of agenda-setting and health care; the role of the legislature, the presidency and special interests in health policy; social movements and health policy change; and cover topics including health insurance reform, abortion policy and access to HIV/AIDS treatment.

**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 Trunk 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 received after the deadline will receive a reduction by 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!

Revised: January 18, 2017
Required Text

Recommended Readings
For those interested in additional background and context, please refer to the following texts.


Session 1:    Course Introduction: The Politics of Health Care  
1/19/2017  

Assigned Readings:  
None  

Session 2:    Where are We Now? Overview of the U.S. Health Care System  
1/24/2017  

Assigned Readings:  

Commonwealth Fund. 2013. “Access, Affordability, and Insurance Complexity are Often Worse in the United States Compared to 10 Other Countries.”  


Session 3:    Theories for Health Policy Change  
1/26/2017  

Assigned Readings:  


Optional:  


Revised: January 18, 2017
Session 4: Legislative Politics and U.S. Health Policy
1/31/2017

Assigned Readings:


Optional:

Session 5: Developing a Political Strategy
2/2/2017

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.

Session 6: Medicare—History and Origins
2/7/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 7: Medicare Catastrophic Coverage – Case and In-Class Discussion  
2/9/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 8: Revamping Medicare?
2/14/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 9: Op-Ed Workshop
2/16/2017

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

Session 10: Public Opinion and the Media
2/21/2017

Assigned Readings:


2/23 NO CLASS, SUBSTITUTE DAY

***Op-Ed Assignment due to Trunk by 5:00 pm on Friday, 2/24***

Session 11: Campaigns, Elections and Health Policy
2/28/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 12: History of the Politics of National Health Reform
3/2/2017

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
3/7/2017

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 Trunk website.

Session 14: Health Politics in the States
3/9/2017

Assigned Readings:


Revised: January 18, 2017
Session 15: Massachusetts Health Reform
3/14/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 16: Case 2 – The Obama Health Reform
3/16/2017

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 Trunk website.

3/18 - 3/26 SPRING BREAK

Revised: January 18, 2017
Session 17: Review Session
3/28/2017

No Readings

Session 18: Politics of Public Funding for Abortion
3/30/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 19: Case 3—South Dakota Abortion Referendum
4/4/2017

Political Strategy Presentation and Debate to take Place in Class

Assigned Readings:


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 Trunk website.

Session 20: U.S. Health Politics in International Context
4/6/2017

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


Session 21: Social Movements and Health Reform in Brazil
4/11/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 22: The Politics of Universal Access to HIV/AIDS Meds in Brazil
4/13/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 23: National Health Reform in Ghana
4/18/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 24: The Politics of Foreign Aid for Global Health: The Global Gag Rule
4/20/2017

Assigned Readings:


Session 25: Looking Ahead—Contemplating Domestic and International Health Politics in a Trump Administration
4/25/2017

Assigned Readings:
TBD

Session 26: Final Exam Review Session
4/27/2017