Overview

Good health enables people to lead full and productive lives. Many factors affect health: lifestyle, genetic endowment, social and physical environments, and medical care. At various times, governments have attempted to improve health through policies affecting each of these factors. Some of these efforts, such as eugenics, were misguided and abandoned. Others, such as improved sanitation, were highly successful in reducing the incidence of disease and increasing longevity. Governments in industrialized countries now play fundamental roles in funding the development and provision of medical care. In the United States, 16 percent of gross domestic product, or about $6,700 per capita, are expended on medical care annually. About 45 percent of this expenditure flows through government programs, primarily Medicare and Medicaid. Because health, and therefore medical care, are desirable goods, these figures are likely to increase as the population becomes wealthier. They are also likely to increase as the elderly become a larger fraction of the population, new but expensive medical technologies are introduced, and medical care prices continue to outpace inflation. The intrinsic importance of health, the growing share of the economy devoted to medical care, and the increasing role of the government in funding and regulating it, suggest that health policy will become even more important politically over the next generation. Our objective in this course is to prepare ourselves to be more effective participants in debates over health policy.

Course Requirements

Your achievement in the course will be assessed as follows:

Midterm Examination (30 percent): The examinations are intended to give you an opportunity
to integrate and apply the various concepts encountered during the course. The midterm examination will be on November 3.

**Final Examination (50 percent)** The final examination will be cumulative. It will be on December 16 from 12:25 pm to 2:25 pm. Do not take this course if you cannot take the examination at this time.

**Two Policy Memoranda (10 percent each)** The writing assignments in the course are two policy memoranda. You are expected to follow the recommended format outlined in “Professional Writing: The Policy Memorandum,” which is available on the course website at http://learnuw.wisc.edu. Each memoranda will be graded in terms of presentation and analysis (the quality of the arguments you make including the use of relevant evidence). Memoranda must be submitted in both paper and pdf format. Page limits and due dates will be strictly enforced. Everyone will write their first memorandum on obesity policy. The topic of the second memorandum is your choice. You may want to follow-up on some topic raised in class or you may wish to pursue some other topic you find interesting. Newspapers routinely carry stories that may suggest topics to you. Looking through the archives of relevant journals, such as the *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, *Health Affairs*, and *Health Economics*, may give you ideas for topics and a start at collecting relevant information. You may also get ideas for topics from the web sites of organizations that deal with health policy issues such as the Kaiser Family Foundation (http://www.kff.org), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (http://www.rwjf.org/research/index.jsp), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (http://www.cdc.gov/), and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (http://www.cms.hhs.gov).

### Books Recommended for Purchase

Course readings are drawn from both articles and books. All materials are available on reserve in the library and all the articles are available at http://learnuw.wisc.edu. In addition, I recommend that you purchase two books:


### Tentative Schedule

* Recommended reading

**Introduction** (September 3)

   Course Overview
Determinates of Health (September 8)
What determines health?
What is the relationship between health and wealth?

Case Study 1: Smoking Policy (September 10, 15, and 17)
Rationales for public policy
Policy approaches and processes

Derthick, entire.

Case Study 2: Obesity as a Public Policy Issue

Overview (September 22 and 24)
What is obesity?
Is it getting worse?
Should we care?


Causes (September 29 and October 1)
Public health perspective
Economic perspective
Sociological perspective


Public Policy (October 6 and 8)

Is obesity a public policy problem?
Possible policy interventions


**Report 1:** Consider a proposal for dealing with the “obesity problem.” Write a memorandum (no longer than four double-spaced pages) that considers the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. Address your memorandum to an appropriate client. Follow the format in *Policy Writing*. Bring your memorandum to class on **October 13**.

Medical Insurance

**Basics of Private Health Insurance** (October 13 and 15)

Risk pooling, moral hazard, adverse selection


Dranove, Chapters 1 and 2.
National Health Insurance in Perspective (October 20)
   Failed efforts in United States
   Comparative Perspective


Dranove, Chapter 3 and 4

View Harry and Louise Advertisement
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dt31nhleeCg).

View the segment on the United Kingdom at

Medicare and Medicaid (October 22 and 27)
   Political history, structure, and challenges


Please view the Kaiser Family Foundation video, Medicare + Medicaid at 40 at the following address: http://www.kff.org/medicaid/40yearsvideo.cfm.

(If you would like to see some additional video and audio presentations on the history of Medicare and Social Security, visit http://www.ssa.gov/history/mpeg/videosound.html)


Discussion of Candidates’ Health Plans (October 29)
   John McCain (http://www.johnmccain.com/healthcare/)
   Barak Obama (http://www.barackobama.com/issues/healthcare/)
   Side-by-Side Comparison (http://www.health08.org/sidebyside.cfm)

Midterm (November 3)

Medical Governance

Program Administration (November 5 and 10)
   Payment systems (prospective versus retrospective payments)
Ensuring quality (pay-for-performance)


**Regulation** (November 12)
Rationales for regulation
Food and Drug Administration
Hybrid Forms


**Private Rulemaking** (November 17, 19, and 24)
Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network
Kidney and liver allocation


**Report 2**: Policy memorandum of up to four double-spaced pages on a topic of your choice. Due in class on **November 26**. (May be handed in earlier.)

**Discussion of Policy Memoranda** (November 26)
Volunteers present their policy proposals

**Health Report Cards** (December 1)
Information provision as alternative to regulation
NYS Cardiac Surgery Report, Nursing Homes

Complete *Report Card Exercise* prior to class.


**Introduction to Health Policy Analysis** (December 3, 8, and 10)
Utilities of health states
Decision analysis
Mammography, Alzheimer’s screening, Smallpox vaccination

Dranove, Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

**Final Exam** (December 16)