

**Politics of US Health Care
BISC/POSC 4381-101
Marquette University**

**Dr. Susan Giaimo
Fall 2015**

Course time and location:

MWF 10-10:50 AM, Wehr Physics 209

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The United States tops the world in health care spending, yet over 11% of the population lacks health insurance. American health care deploys the latest technological advances but other countries have better health outcomes. Closer to home, some Milwaukee neighborhoods have the dubious distinction of infant mortality rates on a par with developing nations.

How can we explain these paradoxes of American health care? This course finds that the answers lie in American politics, and views our health care system as a product of such politics. To see how this is so, the course first delineates the organization and financing of health care in the US at national and state levels. It then explores how political institutions, political parties, interest groups, and dominant values have shaped our health care system and health policies. We will also analyze the major health care reform law of 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and Republican alternatives to it. The final part of the course covers health policies toward special populations.

The goal of this course is to provide you with the knowledge and analytical tools to understand the political dynamics that underpin health care policies in the United States. Such knowledge will help you to participate intelligently in health policy debates, evaluate various health care reform approaches in the United States, and bring this knowledge of the political realities of health care to your future careers in the world of health sciences, public policy, and politics. Hopefully, you will come away with a better understanding of our broader political system and will hone your skills of critical analysis.

Course Requirements

Your course grade is based on the completion of the following assignments, which involve a mix of written work and in-class participation. I will distribute study guides ahead of each exam. I will distribute instructions for the policy memo assignment later in the semester.

Assignments:

In-class exam: 30%

Policy memo: 30%

Final exam: 30%

Class participation: 10%

Grading scale:

A	93-100	C	73-77
AB	88-92	CD	70-72
B	83-87	D	65-69
BC	78-82	F	64 or below

Please be aware that there is a significant reading and writing component

Class Schedule and Assignments

***denotes required readings on reserve**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Course introduction

Aug. 31: Bodenheimer and Grumbach, *Understanding Health Policy*, chap. 1.

B. US health care system performance in comparative context

Sept. 2:

*T. R. Reid, *The Healing of America* New York: Penguin Books, 2010, “Appendix: The Best

4. Safety net providers in trouble

Sept. 21:

*Bruce C. Vladeck, "Paying for Hospitals' Community Service," HA, 25 (1) Jan/Feb. 2006: 34-43.

*Rick Romell, "Hospital losses hit city heart," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (MJS) 10/21/06 (also see accompanying map).

B. Delivering health care

1. The structure of the delivery system

Sept. 23:

Bodenheimer and Grumbach, chap. 5 and 6.

2. Paying providers; medical practice patterns

Sept. 25:

*Miriam J. Laugesen and Sherry A. Glied, "Higher Fees Paid to US Physicians: Spending for Physician Services Compared to Other Countries," HA 24 (3): 56.

Sept. 28:

*Gerard F. Anderson, et al., "It's the Prices, Stupid: Why the U.S. is So Expensive Compared to Other Countries," Health Affairs (HA) 22 (3): May 2003.

*G. F. Anderson, et al., "Health Spending in the United States and the Rest of the World," Health Affairs (HA) 24 (4): July/August 2005.

V. SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND POLICY RESPONSES

A. Social determinants of health and implications for policy

Nov. 18: *Paul Tough, "The Poverty Clinic," New Yorker