Health Care and Health Care Policy
SOCY 28

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Office hours: Mondays 1-3pm

Course Description: This course explores the policy issues and implications associated with health care in the United States. We will explore the social, economic, organizational and institutional contexts of health care and medicine to answer questions such as, who is healthy in American society and who is not? Why are some healthy and others not? How is our health care system organized? And why is it different from most other industrialized nations? How does the organization of medical care affect the quality and cost of that care? Our goal will be to gain a deeper understanding of the organization and delivery of health care in the U.S., and to appreciate some of the relevant policy issues.

Course Requirements: Students are expected to read and reflect upon the assigned readings before coming to class. Students are required to write a short regional healthcare report (further details given in class) due May 29. Please note well the course Policy on Late Papers (attached). Finally, there will be a take-home mid-term exam and final exam.

Grades are based on:
Regional healthcare report 40%
Mid-term exam 30%
Final exam 30%

Required Reading
The following materials are required, and can be purchased from Wheelock Books or Dartmouth Bookstore. Some are also available on reserve in Baker/Berry library.


Additional required readings are available on the course Blackboard site under the Assigned Readings button, noted as *BB in syllabus.

*** Students with learning, physical or psychiatric disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, and by the end of the second week of classes (April 5, 2013). All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disability Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested. Also, stop by the Academic Skills Center in 301 Collis Center to register for support services. ***

*** For individual peer tutorial assistance with papers, research, and new media projects, students may use RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. Make appointments online at www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit, or drop by the Center in Baker-Berry Library, Level One, from 4 to 6 pm and 7 to 10 pm, S-Th. ***
Honor Principle and work in this course: (1) Regional Report. You are encouraged to discuss your paper ideas and presentation of your analysis with other students in the class, i.e., you may get feedback from others on your writing and analysis to help you improve your paper before submitting it. You should cite concepts and materials from class appropriately in your paper. You are not expected to use additional sources or materials for the paper, but you may do so.
(2) Exams. Exams are independent work ONLY. You are required to use any written materials assigned and covered in class (including slides and lectures) in take-home exams, but your work on the exams are expected to be completely independent – you should not discuss the exam with any other students from the course.

Week 1: The Basics
March 25: Introduction

March 27: Getting Started: Defining Terms, Thinking about concepts

XHOUR March 28: What is policy? What is health policy?  continued
READ: Bodenheimer & Grumbach Ch1 *BB

March 29: NO Class

Week 2: Access: Health Insurance in the US
April 1: Health Insurance in the US part 1
READ: Swartz, Ch 1, pp. 1 – 9 (can skim 9-12)

April 3: Health Insurance in the US part 2 – the Uninsured employed
READ: Swartz, Ch 2 (skim pp.18-35) and Ch 3

XHOUR April 4: Affordable Care Act and Health insurance

April 5: Health Insurance in the US part 3 – the Uninsured poor
READ: Swartz, Ch 4, 7

Week 3: Health Disparities
April 8: Inequality and health in the U.S.

April 10: Fundamental causes of health disparities
READ: Link & Phelan, “Fundamental Sources of health inequalities” PC *BB

X-HOUR: April 11: Racial and Ethnic health disparities

April 12: Addressing health disparities
Week 4: Disparities continued and MIDTERM  
**April 15:** Guest Lecture: Health Disparities and Place, Prof. Emily Walton  

**April 17:** NO CLASS Take Home Midterm  
**April 19:** NO CLASS Take Home Midterm  DUE by 5pm

Week 5: Health Care Delivery 1: Regional Variation  
**April 22:** Variation in medical practice patterns and the Dartmouth Atlas of Care  
READ: Wennberg, Chs 1,5,6

**April 24:** NO CLASS

**April 26:** More Variation  
READ: Wennberg, Chs 8,9,10

Week 6: Health Care Spending and Costs  
**April 29:** US Health Spending and relation to regional variations  
READ: “U.S. Health Care Spending: The Big Picture” NIHCM Foundation Data Brief May 2012  
**May 1:** Delivery, Prices and Costs  

**X HOUR May 2:** Other explanations for rising costs: Medical Malpractice  
READ: Gawande, Atul. “THE MALPRACTICE MESS; Who pays the price when patients sue doctors?” The New Yorker, November 14, 2005, Pg. 63 + *BB*  
**May 3:** Other explanations for rising costs: Pharmaceuticals  
READ: Intro and chs 1-6, 13 in Truth about Drug Companies

Week 7: International Comparisons  
**May 6:** International comparisons of health systems  
**May 8:** International comparisons cont.  Regional Health Report Due 5pm
X HOUR  May 9: International comparisons of health systems
READ: Squires, “Explaining High Health Care Spending in the United States: An International Comparison of Supply, Utilization, Prices, and Quality” *BB

May 10: International comparisons of health systems
READ: Laugesen & Glied “Higher Fees Paid To US Physicians Drive Higher Spending For Physician Services Compared To Other Countries” Health Affairs 2011 30:91647-1656 *BB
READ: Muennig & Glied, “What Changes In Survival Rates Tell Us About US Health Care” Health Affairs 2010 29:112105-2113 *BB

Week 8: Health Care Delivery 2: Organization of Clinical Care
May 13: Trends in Health and Death/ Deciphering Health Statistics

May 15: The Social Context of Diagnosis: Specialization in Medicine
READ: Stevens “Specialization, Specialty Organizations and the quality of health care” *BB

X HOUR May 16: Doctor-patient communication
READ: Groopman “The Right questions” * BB
Mahar “Making Choice an Option” *BB
O’Connor, Llewellyn-Thomas, Flood “Modifying unwarranted variations in health care: shared decision making using patient decision aids” *BB

May 17: Mistakes in Medicine
READ: Leape “Preventing Medical Errors” *BB

Week 9: Culture Clash/System Failure
May 20: Understanding Stratification and Health
Read: The spirit catches you and you fall down Chapters 1-7

May 22: Specialization, delivery of care, doctor-patient communication
Read: The spirit catches you and you fall down Chapters 8-13

May 24: Inequality, social control and medicine
Read: The spirit catches you and you fall down Chapters 14-19

Week 10: Where are we going now? Health IT, Health Reform
May 27: The Case of Health IT
READ: Anderson et al, “Health Care Spending And Use Of Information Technology In OECD Countries” Health Affairs, 25, no.3 (2006):819-831 *BB

May 29: FINAL Thoughts  Receive Take-home Final Exam