**Core Course in Health Policy 2019-2020**
**Health Policy 2000A/SUP957/HPM246-01**

**Class Meetings**
Tuesday & Thursday, 4:15-6:00pm
14 Story Street, 4th Floor Conference Room

**Instructors**
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**Teaching Fellow**
Rebecca Gourevitch
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Office Hours: By appointment

**Course Overview**
This yearlong seminar is required for doctoral candidates in health policy and is open to other doctoral students at Harvard. The course is intended to familiarize students with the health policy research literature and selected questions in the field.

The course is organized around lectures by faculty from the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, the Kennedy School of Government, the T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Medical School, the Business School, and the Law School. Discussion sessions will be interspersed with the invited lectures and will examine the policy relevance, research methods, and technical details of many of the presented topics in more depth.

**Readings**
Readings for the course will generally consist of journal articles assigned by the lecturer and should be read in advance of each lecture. When provided by the lecturers, the syllabus includes
an overview of the goals for the lecture and identifies key points for which to read in order to help you better prepare for class.

The majority of assigned readings are available electronically. Links are provided in the syllabus and on Canvas (under “Modules”), or students can search for the articles using the Harvard Library research website: https://hollis.harvard.edu. Some readings are available on the course website. Where readings are not available electronically or on the course website, it is suggested that students use the Harvard Library’s Scan & Deliver service: http://library.harvard.edu/scan-deliver.

It is also suggested that you purchase the following books, which are also on reserve at the HKS library:


**LIBRARY TRAINING SESSION**

The teaching fellow has arranged for a library training session to be held during the fall semester. Paul Bain, a reference librarian at Countway, will provide training on how to use PubMed. This session will take place on Thurs., Oct. 24th from 6-8pm at 14 Story Street (dinner will be provided). This session will help students prepare for the literature review due at the end of the semester.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

*Attendance & Participation:* 33%

This course meets twice per week. Students are expected to attend and participate in the 2-hour lecture and discussion sessions. This participation includes reading 3-4 relevant articles assigned by the lecturers prior to each class. If you are unable to attend a lecture, please let the teaching fellow know by email in advance of the session.

You will be expected to actively participate in each course session by listening attentively to your peers and constructively contributing to the conversation. The rubric below provides evaluation criteria for your class participation.
## Participation Rubric

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Written Assignments: 67%

Each semester, there will be two written assignments related to the content and concepts presented in the seminar sessions. In the fall, students will produce a 10-12 page literature review as a final paper. Throughout the spring semester, students will produce a 10-15 page research proposal. Due dates are as follows:

**Fall**
- Assignment: Post potential literature review topic to Canvas: 10/10
- Assignment: Provide feedback to classmates on Canvas: 10/17
- Assignment: Email Rebecca final research proposal topic: 10/31
- Essay #1 (Politics or Decision Science): 11/5
- Essay #2 (Ethics or Quality): 12/3
- Literature Review: 12/10

**Spring (Tentative Dates)**
- Assignment: 2-3-Paragraph Update on Research Proposal: 2/6
- Essay #3/Article Critique (Research Methods): 3/5
- Assignment: 2-page Description of Study Design/Methods: 3/26
- Essay #4 (Economics of Health): 4/17
- Presentation of Research Proposal: 4/21 and 4/22 (6:00-8:00 pm)
- Final Research Proposal: 5/5

For details on the literature review assignment, please see the separate document posted on Canvas.

The research proposal should be written in the form of an F31 predoctoral fellowship application to NIH or AHRQ. You should download the instructions for PHS form 398 at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html. Go to Section 5.5 “Content of Research Plan” and follow the instructions. Note that there is a human subjects section, which pertains to the next requirement.

**Human Subjects Training:**
To pass the Spring semester, students will be expected to complete an online Human Subjects Training Course and present verification. The training can be accessed through the following link: https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp. Students should do the Basic Course in the Protection of Human Subjects for Social and Behavioral Research Investigators. For affiliation, please select Harvard University (Cambridge/Allston Campus). Completed training certificates should be e-mailed to both the teaching fellow and to Colleen Yout (colleen_yout@harvard.edu).

**Grades:**
Grades will be assigned separately for the first semester and the second semester.

**Academic Honesty:**
Students must observe Harvard University rules regarding the citation of sources. Any sentences or paragraphs taken verbatim from the writing of any other person or persons, or from your own
writing that has been published elsewhere, must be placed in quotation marks and their source must be clearly identified. Changing the wording of a sentence or passage slightly does not evade the requirement for citation. Indeed, whenever you are drawing an important argument or insight from someone else, even if you reword it into your own words, a reference to the source is required. Including material from others in the assignments without appropriate quotation marks and citations is regarded, as a matter of School and University policy, as a serious violation of academic and professional standards and can lead to a failing grade in the course, failure to graduate, and even expulsion from the University.

**FALL SEMESTER SYLLABUS**

Please note that locations of readings are indicated in brackets beside each citation. Email the teaching fellow if you have any trouble accessing the readings.

**SECTION I: OVERVIEW (SECTION LEADER: JOE NEWHOUSE)**

9/3: **Determinants of Health (David Cutler)**

This class discusses the evolution of human health over time, and briefly across space. The goal is to familiarize you with basic demographic trends that affect health policy debates.


  - Chapters 1 and 2


9/5: **Health Care Spending (Joe Newhouse)**

Please send an email to Joe (newhouse@hcp.med.harvard.edu) by Wednesday noon, 9/4, with the following: what you found most puzzling in the reading, what you found most interesting, and what you would like to discuss. I have put this topic first because US spending on health care is one of the most important domestic policy issues.

2011. [Library] Be prepared to comment on the themes of the Fuchs book, which is a classic.
  o Introduction to This [the 2nd Expanded] Edition
  o Introduction [this was part of the 1st edition]
  o Chapters 1 and 6
  o “What Every Philosopher Should Know About Economics”


  If you are interested in this topic, there are three other editorials (!) on this paper in the March 13 issue, from Parente, Emanuel, and the editors of JAMA. Although the first two in particular are worth reading, in the interests of keeping the required reading down, all three are optional.

9/10: Introduction to the U.S. Health Care System (Haiden Huskamp)

This session is intended to provide a broad overview of the U.S. health care system: how much we spend, the role of the government in financing health care, gaps in our health insurance system, and issues of value and quality of care. Most of the topics we will cover will be addressed in greater length in individual sessions later in the year. Although most of the class will be in lecture format given the amount of material to cover and the nature of the session, be prepared to discuss what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of our system, how the ACA affected them, and the potential impacts of recent health reform proposals.

**Required Reading:**


Optional Reading (for those who would like more background):
• L. Levitt, “Medicare for All or Medicare for More?” [https://newsatjama.jama.com/2019/05/22/jama-forum-medicare-for-all-or-medicare-for-more/]

9/12: Comparative Health Systems (Rifat Atun)

Required reading:
SECTION II: POLITICS OF HEALTH (SECTION LEADER: BOB BLENDON)

9/17: Public Opinion + Politics of Health (Robert Blendon)

  - Chapter 1 [Courseweb]


9/19: The US Congress (David King)

Objective:

We will explore a recent piece of health legislation (the “Mental Health Parity Act”) as a window into how health policy is handled on Capitol Hill. What roles do the various institutions play, and why do legislators take on some topics while avoiding others? Students will come to class with two brief written assignments that they should be ready to share with others, as described in “assignments” (2) and (5) below.

Assignments:

1. Please read the Haskell chapter first, because it is a useful overview of how the Congress works, at least in “theory.” The chapter focuses on process and procedure, not on personalities or expertise, but I need you to understand the mechanics well before reading the case.

2. Read the 13-page “Mental Health Parity” case twice. The **first time** through, just try to get a sense of who was involved, and why they got involved, and what institutional chutes
folks went through. On the **second reading**, please make a list with two columns. Label one column “typical” and the other “not typical.” As you are reading, please write down elements of the case that you think are fairly typical of the way health policy is handled in Congress (the referrals to committees, for example), and elements that strike you as not typical. **Don’t worry about getting a “right” answer – just put things down on paper.**

3. Review the health subcommittee rosters for Ways and Means and for Commerce, using the links below. Note that we are now in the “115th” Congress – and you should know what that means. Choose **one** elected representative from **each** committee, and find information that might help you understand why they are on those subcommittees. For example, you might choose Kathy Castor (D-FL) from Commerce and Devin Nunes (R-CA) from Ways and Means. Explore, for a while, their wiki pages or other sources, and get a sense for why they might be interested in health policy. Be sure to note a major city for each of the members you choose. (Clovis, CA is in Representative Nunes’ district, for example, and Caster represents much of Tampa, FL.)

4. Using the 990 finder from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, please find the most recently-available 990 for **any** health care organization in each of the congressional districts you identified above. You may find the 990 locator through foundationcenter.org to be a bit easier to use (http://990finder.foundationcenter.org/). **My goal is for you simply to find and open a couple of 990s** – which will help give you a sense of how these non-profits are engaged in a congressional districts. In the example above, and focusing on Tampa, the University Community Hospital would be a natural choice.

5. Using opensecrets.org, please navigate to the 2016 “race summaries” for the two legislators you’ve chosen above. Please write down the names of the top five contributors to the member’s campaigns in the 2016 cycle, and be ready to share that list with the class.

**Readings:**

- House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Health (link here: https://waysandmeans.house.gov/subcommittees/health-116th-congress)
- National Center for Charitable Statistics, 990 Finder, (link off of the homepage here: http://nccs.urban.org/)
- Fundraising summaries by industry, for members of the House of Representatives, linked here: http://www.opensecrets.org/

**9/24: US Health Reform and the Affordable Care Act (John McDonough)**
Please think about the following questions as you do the readings:

1. In light of the failure of prior national health reform efforts in the U.S., why did the Affordable Care Act pass?
2. Consider: a. the 1993-94 Clinton health reform failure; b. the 2010 ACA success; and c. the 2017 Republican AHCA/BCRA efforts to repeal and replace the ACA (unsuccessful as of this writing) – is there a model that helps to explain the outcomes in all three cases?
3. How might you design a study to determine the factors that cause health reform to fail versus succeed?
4. What is the difference between political analysis and policy analysis?

Required Reading:
  - Read the introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 closely. Skim chapters 5-conclusion.

Recommended Reading:
  - This is a lengthy but useful (though dated) article. Skimming it effectively will expose you to the competing explanatory frameworks that exist within political science to understand the different forms of national health insurance (NHI) efforts (and outcomes) in Canada, Britain, and the US. It is less important to focus on the details (who, what, where) within each of the country case studies (after page 84), though I encourage you to all to look at the US case study pp.106-126.

9/26: The Politics of Medicare (Adrianna McIntyre)
  - Read only pages 1-15, 23-29, and 46-47.

**SECTION III: HEALTH DECISION SCIENCE (SECTION LEADER: ANKUR PANDYA)**

**OBJECTIVES:**

*Decision science* is the study of how we make decisions and how to make better decisions in the presence of uncertainty, complexity and competing values. While most fields of research focus on producing new knowledge, decision science is concerned with making choices based on available information. Health decision science is the application of these quantitative tools to help policy developers, physicians, and patients make the best decisions in light of their specific objectives and constraints.

This section concerns the inevitable need to allocate (i.e., ration) health care services, and various approaches that have been attempted or proposed to apply explicit, outcome-based criteria (e.g., cost-effectiveness analysis) for resource allocation.

Specific objectives for the section will include:

1. Weighing the tradeoffs among health benefits, risks, and costs using quantitative health decision science methods;
2. Compare descriptive, prescriptive, and normative framings of health decision-making; and
3. Examining the role of health decision science methods, given their inherent strengths limitations, in designing efficient and equitable health policies.

**10/1: Introduction to Health Decision Science and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (Ankur Pandya)**

Cost-effectiveness analysis is used widely in most of the industrial world to guide decisions about payment and reimbursement of medical services. In the US, use of cost-effectiveness analysis using quality-adjusted life years as the measure of health improvement is forbidden from policy decision making by the Affordable Care Act. It is used mainly behind the scenes in the private insurance sector, by medical professional organizations in guideline formulation, and to evaluate prevention programs such as vaccination. Can and should cost-effectiveness information be used in US health care decision-making, and if so, how?

*Required Reading:*


**Supplementary Articles:**


**10/3: From CEA to BCA: Estimating the Money Value of Health (Lisa Robinson)**

**Required:**


Optional:


10/8: Extended Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (Stéphane Verguet)

- Phelps CE, Lakdawalla DN, Basu A, Drummond MF, Towse A, Tanzon PM. Approaches to aggregation and decision making – a health economics approach: an ISPOR special
http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/129543/1/CP_DL_AB_MD_AT_PD_Agregatn_Decsn_mkng_ISPOR_ViH_21_146_154_2018.pdf

10/10: Policy Example: HPV and Cervical Cancer (Jane Kim)


10/10 ASSIGNMENT DUE: Post potential literature review topic to Canvas

10/15: Beyond Modeling: Preferences and Health Metrics (E. Wittenberg and D. Wright)


**SECTION IV: ETHICS (SECTION LEADER: DAVID JONES)**

**10/17: Intro to Population-Level Bioethics + Distributive Justice (David Jones)**

*Required Readings:*


*Optional Readings:*


**10/22: Ethical Issues in Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (Dan Wikler)**

*Required Reading:*

Supplementary Readings:


10/24: Harm Reduction (Allan Brandt)
This session will assess the history and philosophy of health interventions that focus on reducing risks of morbidity and mortality. Over recent decades these strategies and technologies have proven controversial. These debates have centered on problems of reducing versus eliminating serious risks to health, and the relationship of alternative approaches. The class will center attention on several cases: methadone and other medically-assisted treatments for substance use disorders; safe-injection equipment and sites for opiate use; e-cigarettes and vaping technology to reduce tobacco related harms.

Methadone and medically assisted treatment:

• Kuehn, Bridget M. “Methadone Treatment Marks 40 Years.” JAMA 294, no. 8 (August 24, 2005): 887–89. [https://jamanetwork-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/journals/jama/fullarticle/1719708]


Safe injection of opiates:

**E-cigarettes:**


10/24 6:00-8:00 pm: PubMed Training (Paul Bain)

10/29: Commodification: Selling Organs, Eggs, and Other Things (Glenn Cohen)

• In Re Baby M, 537 A.2d 1227 (N.J. 1988) [Courseweb, taken from Joseph Singer, Property Law]

  o pp. 131-140 (Beginning of chapter on Prostitution and Baby Selling only until “A Special Case of Commissioned Adoptions”)


  o Chapter 6 (Organ Sales)

10/31: Responsibility for Health (Dan Wikler)

**Required Reading:**
- Scott Halpern, Peter Ubel, and David Asch, “Harnessing the Power of Default Options to Improve Health Care,” *NEJM* 357(13), Sept. 27 2007, 1340-1344.

**Optional Reading on “Healthy Indiana” – designed by Seema Verma, current Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services**
- Lewin Group, “*Indiana Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0: Interim Evaluation Report*”.

**Optional Reading:**
- Kristin Voigt, “Appeals to Individual Responsibility for Health: Reconsidering the Luck Egalitarian Perspective.” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 22(2), April 2013, 146-158 [See also *erratum notice*, loc cit July 2013 issue, 328-329]

10/31 ASSIGNMENT DUE: Email Rebecca your final literature review/research proposal topic.

SECTION V: QUALITY (SECTION LEADER: ZIRUI SONG)

11/5: Health Care Organizations and Operations (Mariam Atkinson)


Please consider the following objectives and questions when reading the case:

Case Objectives:
• Analyze the linkage between structure and individual action in organizations
• Examine how healthcare organizations learn and improve over time

Case Preparation Questions:
1. With so many doctors in the room, what is the major reason you believe someone didn't save Matty?
2. What are some structural and cultural factors of the hospital you believe led to Matty's death?
3. How do you think clinicians' individual perspectives and decision-making played a role in this tragedy?
4. What are some solutions you would propose to prevent care delivery accidents from happening?

Additional Readings:
11/5 ASSIGNMENT DUE: Essay 1 (Politics or Decision Science)

11/7: Patient Safety and Medical Errors (Tom Sequist)
  o Describes the ways that HIT can be used to improve safety

  o Illustrates the risks of healthcare IT.


11/12: Scientific Basis of Quality Improvement (Don Goldmann)


11/14: Clinical and Policy Efforts to Improve Quality (Zirui Song)

Required Reading


Suggested Additional Reading


11/19: Medical Malpractice (Anupam Jena)


SECTION VI: PUBLIC HEALTH (SECTION LEADER: JOE NEWHOUSE)

11/20: Research on Firearms (David Hemenway)


11/26: Obesity: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions (Sara Bleich)

This is a trends paper that highlights the global scope and scale of obesity. It has some nice maps of obesity ‘hot spots’ around the world.

  - There is a fair amount of controversy about whether the obesity epidemic is more due to too many calories or too little exercise. This paper pools all available data (at the time) to answer this question among adults. It also looks at macro drivers of over consumption of calories. It was my first dissertation paper. 😊

  - This is a good overview paper since it talks about the burden of obesity, as well as causes, consequences, and potential solutions. It is part of a larger 2011 series in *Lancet*, which is a great resource for interested students.

  - This is a good overview paper on possible food policy alternatives for obesity prevention. It is part of the second 2015 *Lancet* series on obesity. For those of you interested in the clinical side of obesity, here is the most recent 2017 in *Lancet*.

  - These are results from the Philly beverage tax – it is looking at the impact on prices and sales in large chain stores.

**11/28: No Class (Thanksgiving)**

**12/3: Discussion/Debate Session (Laura Garabedian)**

We will hold a debate on the legalization of recreational marijuana.

Please read the following prior to the session. Additional (optional) background reading can be found in the debate prompt documents.

- Debate prompt [Courseweb – to be posted]
12/3 ASSIGNMENT DUE: Essay 2 (Ethics or Quality)

12/4-12/9 FALL READING PERIOD
12/10-12/19 FALL EXAM PERIOD

12/10 ASSIGNMENT DUE: Literature Review

12/21–1/26 WINTER RECESS