

HESB 43041/POLS 30155  
Health Care Policy  
Professor Betson  
1:30 to 2:45 PM  
307 DeBartolo Hall

Health care expenditures in the United States now represent over 16% of the nation's GDP, more than any other country in the world. Yet our health statistics are on par with many developing nations. Why do we spend so much and not have the health outcomes that other developed nations enjoy? High costs of health care have surfaced in other policy debates. In the near future, the majority of federal spending will be devoted to the nation's social health programs, Medicare and Medicaid. If we are going to solve our deficit problem, we will need to ask how can the nation deliver more health care at a lower cost?

The purpose of this course is to explore these questions as well as to examine the likely impact of the passage and implementation of the "Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010" or ObamaCare.

### *Required Texts:*

The Bookstore will have the required books for this course. There are three books that I am requesting that you purchase or have access. These are

*Still Broken: Understanding the U.S. Health Care System*, by Stephan Davidson. Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8047-6196-3

*Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* by Lawrence Jacobs and Theda Skocpol. Oxford University Press, New York New York, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-19-976912-4 (paperback).

*The New Health Care System: Everything You Need to Know* by David Nather. Thomas Dunne Books (St. Martins Griffin), New York New York, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-312-64934-0 (paperback).

Other readings but these will be made available for download from my personal web site. All of these readings will be marked on the reading list with 'web'. I reserve the right to make additions and subtractions from the reading list throughout the semester. During the semester other material (handouts, announcements and assignments) will also be made available to you at

<http://www.nd.edu/~dbetson/courses/courses.html>

### *Grading:*

The final course grade will be assigned using the following weights:

Class Participation	25%
Reaction Essays	15%
Midterm Exam (10/12)	15%
Book Report (11/30)	10%
Research Paper (due on 12/7)	35%

### *Honor Code Policy:*

I expect all students to abide by the Notre Dame Honor Code. While I encourage all students to form study groups to promote peer tutoring, I expect all students to fully participate in the course and homework. Specifically, the copying of another student's homework is considered an honor code violation just as copying answers during an exam would be considered an honor code violation. However, seeking help either from me or another student on the homework is encouraged.

### *Attendance Policy:*

The Academic Code (reprinted in Du Lac) states 'students are expected to attend classes regularly and punctually.' I have the same expectation as the university in this regard and will hold students accountable through your class participation grade.

### *Class Participation (25%)*

For each class, you are expected to have completed the reading for the day and be prepared to participate in the class. After Fall Break, I will notify any student whose performance in class I judge to be below average (C or lower).

### *Reaction Essays (15%)*

Throughout the semester students will be asked to write one-page (two page maximum) reaction essays to the readings. These reaction essays should be emailed in MS Word document attached to email to me ([dbetson@nd.edu](mailto:dbetson@nd.edu)). No essay will be accepted after 10 AM of the day they are due. If you have a University excuse for a given due date, you will be given a two day extension. Grading for this portion of the course will be done as the following. Each essay that is turned in on time will be assigned an "A" or the numerical equivalent of 4.00. Essays not turned in on time, will receive a "F" or 0.00. The grades will be averaged over the number of assignments made throughout the semester. For example I currently planning to assign 6 reaction essays and you turn in five, your average numerical score would be 3.33 (= (5 x 4.00 + 1 x 0.00)/6) or a "B+". While all completed essays will receive an "A", I will return your essays with comments.

### *Book Report (10%)*

Each student will be asked to read a book on health care that is outside the reading list and submit a 4 to 5 page 'book report'. This report should briefly summarize the main points of the author. However, the bulk of the report should contain your reaction to the book in light of other readings we have done for the course. The following are a list of suggested books you might consider, however, you can suggest other books but first get my approval.

*Sick* (2007) by Jonathan Cohn  
*Overtreated* (2007) by Shannon Brownlee  
*The Healing of America* (2009) by T.R. Reid  
*The Truth About Obamacare* (2010) by Sally Pipes  
*Poor People's Medicine* (2007) by Jonathan Engel\*  
*The Political Life of Medicare* (2003) by Jonathan Oberlander\*  
*The Politics of Medicaid* (2010) by Laura Katz Olson\*

The three books with the \* are academic books that are more 'dense' than the others. We can negotiate sections of these books to read also I could loan my copies of these books since they are more expensive than the others to acquire.

You can form 'reading groups' where all of the members read and report upon the same book but please have your report reflect your own thoughts and reactions. While you can turn in the book reports any time prior to the due date, the final due date for this requirement is November 30.

Please note that I realize there are numerous book reviews on many of these books on the internet and I have read many of them. Please do not use these published reviews as the basis of your report. If I detect that you have done so, I will consider this a violation of the honor code.

### *Research Paper (35%)*

Each student will submit a paper of 10 to 15 pages of length reflecting their own original research or analysis. While any paper topic can be proposed, I think there are two general types of papers

you might want to consider. The first type of paper can be derived from the topics on the reading list. Is there a topic that interests you? If so then you could write a paper that goes into more depth in the issue than we will be able to do in class. For example, reform of medical malpractice might be something interests you. Our discussion of medical malpractice is going to be quite limited and your paper could examine evaluations of various state's efforts to reform tort law. Another example of digging deeper into a subject is a comparative study. For example, how does the uninsured in your state get access to medical care compared to a neighboring state or the nation?

The second type of paper is one that explores an issue that we didn't even cover in class but interests you. For example, how will the growing rate of obesity affect future health care costs? Another example might be, if the society paid for medical education of doctors and nurses but they became salaried employees of hospitals would the cost of health care be reduced?

When thinking about your topic, conceive of the paper of answering a question. In your proposal, you should have a clear statement of that question and why it is interesting or important to answer. You don't have to answer to the question by the time you write the proposal – that is why you are doing the research to formulate your answer. However by the time when you have to turn in your preliminary list of references and abstract, you should have a good idea of what the answer to the question will be. Your preliminary answer to the research question should be included in abstract.

If you have problems with forming an idea for a paper topic or would like to discuss your idea, feel free to schedule an appointment or visit me during office hours. If you want me to read a first draft of your paper, please provide me a draft by November 21 (Monday before Thanksgiving)

The final draft of the paper should be double-spaced and submitted electronically using MS WORD. All sources for your research should be noted in the paper clearly so it is clear what is your work and what is the work of others. While the specific form of citation is not important it should be sufficient for me to check any reference with the minimum amount of effort. For example if you cite something – please put the page number from where you taking an idea or a quote.

Deadlines for the research paper are

Topic Proposal	9/28
Preliminary list of references and abstract	10/31
Completed Final Draft of Paper	12/7

### *Office Hours:*

My regular office hours will be from 3:00 to 4:30 on Monday and Wednesday and from 1:30 to 5 PM on Tuesday. If you are not available for these times, appointments at other times can be arranged. You should be aware that my other class is at 1:30 to 2:45 on MW. Prior to exams, I will hold extra hours. My office is 404 Decio Hall. You are strongly encouraged to come and talk even if you are not having problems with the material. I can be contacted at 1-5068 (office telephone) or via email at dbetson@nd.edu.

### *Class Schedule Disclaimer:*

Since each class is different with regards to their interests, some discussion of certain material may be lengthened while others may be shorten. Consequently the following schedule is tentative and is subject to change as the semester proceeds. However, the posted exam dates are fixed but the material covered on them will reflect what we have covered prior to them.

## Class Schedule -- Tentative

### Week: 1

- 8/24 (1) Course overview with a viewing of 'Sick Around America'  
Reading: None

### Week: 2

- 8/29 (2) Discussion of 'Sick Around America' – Does the perceived problem frame the solution?

**Reaction Essay 1:** Reaction Essay to the video 'Sick Around America' – What does the video suggest is the problem with American Health Care and its solution? Do you agree?

Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapter 1)

- 8/31 (3) Overview of Health Care Spending in the US  
Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapter 2); Kaiser Foundation's Primer on Health Care Costs (web)

### Week: 3

- 9/5 (4) Why is the Cost of Health Care So High? (View 60 Minutes Segment "Cost of Dying")  
Reading: (All on Web) "Nine Reasons" (insystemmd blog); Reinhardt blog; Perlstein blog; Kaiser Foundation's "Trends in Drug Expenditures"; "Health care expenditures in the last two years of life"; Reinhardt on "Administrative Costs"

- 9/7 (5) How Well Does the Health Care Sector Perform?  
Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapter 3); Commonwealth Fund's National Scorecard for 2008 (web)

### Week: 4

- 9/12 (6) Private Health Insurance – History, Types and Terms

**Reaction Essay 2:** Reflecting upon the previous two class sessions, how would you grade the US Health Care System? Be sure to explain your grade!

Reading: *The New Health Care System* (Chapter 1); (following are on the web) "History of Health Insurance"; "What is Health Insurance"; Kaiser Foundation "Survey of Those Who Buy Health Insurance"

- 9/14 (7) 'Economics of Insurance'  
Reading: *The New Health Care System* (Chapter 2); (following are on the web) "Adequacy of Health Insurance"; "Welfare Economics of Health Insurance"

### Week: 5

- 9/19 (8) Medicare (view 60 Minutes Segment "\$60 Billion Fraud")  
Reading: "Summary of Medicare"; "Spending by Age" (web)

- 9/21 (9) Medicaid  
Reading: (following on the web) "Overview of Medicaid"; "Brief History of Medicaid Spending"; "Growth in Medicaid Spending"; "Why did Medicaid Grow?"

### Week: 6

- 9/26 (10) Uninsured – Who are they and how many?  
Reading: (following are the web) Census Report on "Income, Poverty and the Uninsured"; "Affordability of Health Care Coverage"; "High Income or Uninsured?"; "Cost of the Uninsured"; "Do the Uninsured Pay More?"

- 9/28 **Proposal for Research Paper Due**

(11) Uncompensated Care  
Reading: (following are on the web) "AMA on Free Care"; "Observations from a Free Clinic"; "Surgeons and Free Care"; Gruber on "Uncompensated Care"; "Cost Shifting"

Week: 7

10/3 (12) Problems with the US Health Care and what needs to be done

**Reaction Essay 3:** Is the current system of uncompensated or charity health care, the right policy to provide health care for those without insurance?

Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapters 4, 5 and 6)

10/5 (13) How do other Nations provide health care – viewing of "Sick Around the World"  
Reading: None

Week: 8

10/10 (14) Discussion of "Sick Around the World"

**Reaction Essay 4:** What can we learn from other nations about the provision of health care? Reactions to the film "Sick Around the World"

Reading: None

10/12 **MIDTERM EXAM**

## **Fall Break**

Week: 9

10/24 (15) History of Health Care Reform  
Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapter 9)

10/26 No Class – Work on your research paper

Week: 10

10/31 ***Preliminary list of references and abstract for research paper due***

(16) Politics of Reform  
Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapter 10 and 11)

11/2 (17) Government Direction or the Market?  
Reading: *Still Broken* (Chapter 7): The Free Market and Health Care (web)

Week: 11

11/7 (18) RomneyCare: Massachusetts Health Care Reform – What is it?  
Reading: (following on web) "Massachusetts Health Reform – Politics"; "The Massachusetts Approach"; "Commonwealth Choice"; "The Massachusetts Connector"; "What are Exchanges?"

11/9 (19) Has RomneyCare worked?  
Reading: "Effects of Health Reform in Massachusetts"; New England Journal of Medicine (2 articles); Kaiser Foundation on Massachusetts Health Reform.

Week: 12

11/14 (20) Viewing of "Obama's Deal"  
Reading: None

11/16 (21) Passage of ObamaCare

**Reaction Essay 5:** "Did Obama choose the right strategy to promote meaningful health care reform?"

Reading: *Health Care Reform and American Politics* (Chapters 1 through 4); *The New Health Care System* (Chapters 8)

Week: 13

11/21 **Optional: First drafts of research papers for comments**

(22) What is ObamaCare? Impact on Individuals, Employers, Providers, Insurance  
Reading: *The New Health Care System* (Chapters 2 through 6, 8, 12 and 13); Public Law 111-152 (web)

11/24 *No Class due to Thanksgiving Break*

Week: 14

11/28 (23) Impact on Federal and State Governments

**Reaction Essay 6:** Should individuals be mandated to purchase health care insurance?

Reading: *The New Health Care System* (Chapters 9 through 11)

11/30 **Book report due**

(24) Will ObamaCare Succeed?  
Reading: *The New Health Care System* (Chapters 14 and 15)

Week: 15

12/5 (25) First optional topic: Are Administrative Costs for Private Insurance Lower or Higher than for Government run Plans?  
Reading: "Paperwork of Medicine"; "Medicare Administrative Costs are Higher than Private Insurance" (both on web)

Alternative topic: Medical Malpractice  
Reading: Kessler on "Evaluating Medical Malpractice Reforms" (web)

12/7 **Final draft of research paper due**

Final Remarks