COURSE DESCRIPTION

Policymakers in health systems around the world grapple with problems of how to assure access to services, contain the growth of health care expenditure, improve the quality of care, and reconcile the tradeoffs among these objectives. They debate economic and political reforms designed to extend health care coverage and benefits, regulate competition, improve public sector management, adapt contracting arrangements among payers and providers, and alter payment incentives to meet these objectives. While health care system reform has received more attention than reform of the public health system, there has also been increasing attention to what is often termed the “new public health.” As reforms to improve population health have been added to the political agenda, there have been new efforts to integrate reform of public health with health care system reform.

In this seminar, we will apply some perspectives and tools of public policy analysis, and draw on international comparisons of health systems to analyze efforts at health system and public health reform. The readings, lectures and class discussions should make students more knowledgeable about policy options and policy changes in different countries. The class begins with an overview of recent health care reforms in the United States and other wealthy nations around the world. Next, we focus on ideas and concepts related to the performance of health care systems, including WHO’s controversial approach. Finally, we examine what may be learned in the United States from health systems and reform efforts in other wealthy industrialized nations. The course provides a special focus on the experience of Britain and France and the Netherlands. Each case will apply a common, general framework for analyzing health systems and reform while emphasizing different perspectives for approaching these topics. Students are required to select a nation facing health system reform issues and become “experts” about its experience with reform.

Learning objectives

- Analyze conceptual and methodological issues in the study of health systems and policy
- Identify common problems and differences among diverse health systems
- Highlight key features of health systems in OECD nations and other countries.
- Assess the impact of globalization on health system development
- Analyze the U.S. health system from a comparative perspective
- Examine the uses of comparative analysis in learning from abroad
Prerequisites

The seminar assumes that students will be familiar with principles of micro-economics, policy analysis and with our current system of health care organization and financing in the United States. Community Health and Medical Care (P11.1830), Micro-Economics (P11.1018), Introduction to Public Policy (P11.1022). Highly recommended classes: Current Issues in Health Policy (P11.2836), Health Economics and Payment Systems (P11.1832).

Course requirements

Students must complete all required reading before each class. I will ask individuals and/or groups to make several short (5-10 minute) presentations in the course of the semester, drawing on the readings and additional research. In addition, I will ask each member of the class to make final presentations on some aspect of health care reform in a selected nation, and how that might inform on-going reform efforts in another nation. For example, one approach would be to make a presentation to a congressional subcommittee about the experience of one or several wealthy OECD nations that would inform feasible health care reform in the United States. Alternatively, students may choose to draw on the experience of health care system innovations/experiments in the U.S. to assist other nations in reforming their health care systems.

A preliminary proposal and a final proposal (including a progress report) on your final presentation (3 pages each) will be required in the course of the semester. The final presentations and written summaries must be ready in close to final form by April 11 so that I can provide preliminary feedback before the final two classes devoted to these presentations. All proposals and summary papers must be written with the understanding that the class, as a whole, is the audience, and posted on blackboard for all to see. One class will be cancelled (either the one scheduled for March 28 or April 4). The final two classes will be extended from 4:55 to 7:30 PM. If these times conflict with other obligations, you must inform me on the first day of class, and we will attempt to make other arrangements. If other arrangements are not possible, it may not be feasible for you to take the class.

Teaching method and grading

Classes will consist of short lectures and questions aimed to provoke discussion about the readings and the issues they raise. There will also be many short student presentations and debates.

The proposals for final presentations will each count for 20% of the final grade. The final presentation will count for 40% of the grade and will be evaluated by all class members (anonymously) and by the instructor. The class component and instructor’s component will each count for ½ of the grade’s value. Student presentations in the course of the semester will count for the remaining 20% of the grade.

REQUIRED BOOKS

ADDITIONAL READINGS IN SYLLABUS ARE ALL POSTED ON BLACKBOARD
OUTLINE OF COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Course Themes: Globalization and Health System Reform -- Jan. 25
   Required Reading:

2. U.S. Health Care Reform: The Affordable Care Act -- Feb. 1
   Required Reading:
   P. Starr, Remedy and Reaction, Introduction and Part III

   Assignment: Write me an e-mail announcing what country(ies) you will study for your final presentation.

3. The Evolution of Health Care Reform Efforts in the U.S. -- Feb. 8
   Required Reading:
   P. Starr, Remedy and Reaction, Introduction and Parts I and II

4. Health System Reform Around the World -- Feb. 15
   Required Reading:

   Class Discussion on Germany, UK, Japan, Canada

   First proposal for final presentation due (post on blackboard)
   Write a 3 proposal on what you will present, why it is important and related to class themes, and how you will do necessary research?

5. Converging Themes and Challenges – Feb. 22
   Required Reading:

   Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss: What are common themes in health care reform discussed so far? What questions does T.R. Reid raise, which you would like to explore further?
II. HEALTH REFORM AND THE PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH SYSTEMS

6. **League Tables: A World Health Organization Perspective -- Feb. 29**  
   *Required Reading*  

7. **Discrete Components of Performance vs. Composite Scores: The Commonwealth Fund’s Commission on High Performance Health Systems -- March 7**  
   *Required Reading:*  
   *Optional Reading:*  

**SPRING RECESS: Monday, March 12 - Saturday, March 16, 2012**

8. **Surprise session – March 23**  
   Complete unfinished readings

9. **Health Reform and Public Health – March 28 or April 4**
III. CASE STUDIES

10. Reform of the English National Health Service – April 11
    
   Required Reading:
   

11. French National Health Insurance and Reform Issues -- April 18
    
   Required Reading:
   
   

14. Final Presentations -- April 25 and May 2nd – 4:55-7:30 PM
Bibliography


46. Romanov Commission (on Canadian Health Care Reform)Website: www.healthcarecommission.ca


