

**POLI 306 – Health Politics and Policies**  
**Spring 2022**  
**Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:30-4:45 PM, CBB 261 or Via Zoom**

**Professor Jennifer N. Collins, Ph.D.**  
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**Student Hours: Tuesdays 12-1 PM & Fridays 2-3 PM, and by appointment**

**Course Description**

This course examines the U.S. health care system, including its structure, main components and actors, the policies and laws that govern it, as well as how the system developed historically. The two central questions at the heart of this class are, how is the U.S. health care system structured and what are the consequences of this system for health outcomes and costs?

The U.S. spends more on health care in absolute terms, per capita, and as a percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) than any other country in the world. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, “health spending per person in the U.S. was \$10,224 in 2017, which was 28 percent higher than Switzerland, the next highest per capita spender.”<sup>1</sup> Health care spending is a major and growing share of our economy. Despite this elevated level of spending, U.S. health care outcomes are consistently lower than many other developed countries. At the end of the semester, we will compare the U.S. to health care systems in the UK (United Kingdom), Canada, Germany, and Switzerland to see what we can learn from these other models.

How best to meet our population’s health care needs in an economically sustainable way continues to be the subject of contentious political debate in the United States. We will engage in these debates at the very end of the semester based on our knowledge not only of the U.S. system but also of the other models mentioned above. Finally, throughout the semester we will have opportunities to consider how the U.S. health care system has performed in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and how we can improve policy responses to this and future health challenges.

This course is designed to serve the needs of students with a general interest in U.S. policy and politics as well as those planning to pursue careers in the health care professions. It aims to provide students with a grounding and solid understanding of the U.S.’s unique and complex health care system.

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<sup>1</sup> Peterson-Kaiser Health System Tracker, <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/health-spending-u-s-compare-countries/#item-start>. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019.

## Specific Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Explain how the U.S. health care system is organized and how this organizational structure impacts overall health care costs, the ability of individuals and groups to access care, and the quality of care that individuals and groups receive in the United States.
- 2) Differentiate between primarily market versus public approaches to health care and correctly recognize which approach a specific policy reflects and why.
- 3) Identify and describe the functioning of key institutions, programs, and organizational structures that make up the U.S. healthcare system, including Medicare, Medicaid, managed care, and the ACA.
- 4) Outline overarching trends and changes in the evolution of the U.S. health care system from the start of the twentieth century through the Affordable Care Act of 2010 and point to key structural and political factors that led to these changes.
- 5) Understand key concepts related to public and global health.
- 6) Compare the U.S. health care system to models in other wealthy, industrialized nations based on metrics such as cost, access, and quality of care.
- 7) Articulate and defend their own recommendations for policy reform or change to the U.S. health care system.

## General Education Learning Outcomes

This course fulfills the Social Sciences GEP requirement. The above course learning outcomes are tied to and incorporate the general learning outcomes associated with this requirement, which are as follows:

- Explain or apply major concepts, methods, or theories used in the social sciences to investigate, analyze, or predict human behavior.
- Examine and explain how social, cultural, or political institutions influence individuals or groups.

## Required Texts

- Thomas Bodenheimer and Kevin Grumbach. 2016. *Understanding Health Policy: A Clinical Approach, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*. McGraw Hill. (Available through Text Rental)
- All other assigned readings are available on Canvas in the e-Reserve module.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade will be based on your performance in the following areas:

Attendance & Participation	15%
Brief Assignments	8%
Current Events	2%
Mid-term Exam #1	25%
Mid-term Exam #2	25%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>25%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading Scale

Course grades will be calculated on a straight percentage scale. An A equals 93 or above, A- 90-92.99, B+ 87-89.99, B 83-86.99, B- 80-82.99, C+ 77-79.99, C 73-76.99, C- 70-72.99, D+ 67-69.99, D 60-66.99, F 59.99 and below.



## Current Events

During the past two years, the coronavirus pandemic has brought health care issues to the forefront of national and global news in an unprecedented way. Even before the pandemic, health care policy was and continues to be a critical issue in U.S. politics. Because what we are studying is so relevant to what is in the news, we will keep current events front and center in the classroom. Students will be expected to keep up with the news, especially stories having to do with the pandemic, public health, and health care policy.

Once during the semester each student will choose a news story related to health or health care broadly defined to share with the class. At the start of the semester, I will post a current events sign-up sheet on Canvas. Current events presentations will take place at the start of class and be limited to 5 minutes. In your presentation you should briefly outline the news story and explain how you see it relating to this class. Before presenting in class, please provide a link to the article you are presenting in the Current Events assignment on Canvas. Everyone who completes this assignment satisfactorily will receive full points for this assignment, which represents 2% of the final course grade.

When choosing your story, please use highly respected publications and news sources and look for stories with some depth. Here are suggested publications that provide excellent coverage of health care issues and the pandemic:

- *Kaiser Health News* - <https://khn.org/>
- *The New York Times* - [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)
- *The Atlantic* - <https://www.theatlantic.com/>
- *The Guardian (London)* - [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

I also recommend listening to National Public Radio's (NPR) news programs; this is a terrific way to keep up with both domestic and international news, even when you do not have time to read the newspaper. You can hear NPR news on Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR), which has two local radio stations: The Ideas Network at 99.1 FM and News and Classical at 90.9 FM. You can also listen live and access podcasts of earlier shows at [www.wpr.org](http://www.wpr.org). There are many terrific podcasts that can help you learn about and keep up with the news, both domestic and international. One that I recommend for delving deeper into top news stories is "The Daily," which is produced by the *New York Times* and is available for free on various podcast platforms.

## Exams

There will be 3 exams, all of which will be taken on Canvas. Exams will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and long-answer or essay questions. The dates for each are listed on the course schedule below. Exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and movies. I will provide you with study guides at least one week before each exam. I will not hold class on scheduled exam days.

## **Communications and Technology**

There is a **Canvas** site set up for this class, which you should access regularly and get accustomed to using. The syllabus, course materials, e-Reserves, assignments, and exams will all be provided there. I will also use Canvas to post announcements and reminders. Lecture power points will be posted, in most cases sometime before class. You will also use Canvas to submit your assignments.

If you find you are having any trouble keeping up with assignments or other aspects of the course, make sure to reach out to me as early as possible. Building rapport and effective relationships are key to becoming a successful professional. Make sure that you are proactive in informing me and your other instructors when difficulties arise during the semester so that we can help you find a solution.

I welcome your questions, thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. There are several ways you can communicate with me: Canvas Inbox, regular e-mail, and Student Hours. I will be available Tuesdays from 12-1 PM and Fridays from 2-3 PM in my office or you can request to meet with me at that time via Zoom. Since, I might forget to turn Zoom on, it is best if you let me know ahead of time if you want to meet via Zoom during Student Hours. Use the Student Hours link on Canvas, not the class meetings link. Feel free to pop in if you have questions or concerns or if you would like to chat.

## **Technology Support**

- Visit with a [Student Technology Tutor](#)
- Seek assistance from the IT Service Desk (Formerly HELP Desk)
  - IT Service Desk Phone: 715-346-4357 (HELP)
  - IT Service Desk Email: [techhelp@uwsp.edu](mailto:techhelp@uwsp.edu)

## **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to abide by the guidelines for academic integrity contained in the UW System Administrative Code. As a student it behooves you to be well acquainted with these guidelines and to understand clearly what constitutes plagiarism, as violations can result in severe consequences. For the purposes of this class, the basic rule is to do your own work on exams, quizzes, and short writing assignments. I take cheating seriously and will act if an incident comes to my attention. Please let me know if you are aware of cheating taking place during quizzes or exams.

## **Privacy and Recordings**

Lecture materials and recordings for POLI 306 – Health Politics and Policies are protected intellectual property of UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

## Protecting your Data and Privacy

UW-System approved tools meet security, privacy, and data protection standards. For a list of approved tools, visit this website. <https://www.wisconsin.edu/dle/external-application-integration-requests/>

Tools not listed on the website linked above may not meet security, privacy, and data protection standards. If you have questions about tools, contact the UWSP IT Service Desk at 715-346-4357.

Here are steps you can take to protect your data and privacy.

- Use different usernames and passwords for each service you use
- Do not use your UWSP username and password for any other services
- Use secure versions of websites whenever possible (HTTPS instead of HTTP)
- Have updated antivirus software installed on your device

## Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

### Week 1: Introductions

1/24 – Introduction to the course - *No assigned readings*

1/26 - Views of U.S. Healthcare and Introducing Key Concepts

*Read:* Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 1 – “Introduction: The Paradox of Excess and Deprivation”

*Watch:* “Is U.S. health care the best or ‘least effective’ system in the modern world?” *PBS*

*Newshour*, August 31, 2020. (Running time: 12:23 mins.) Link available here and on e-Reserves:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/is-u-s-health-care-the-best-or-least-effective-system-in-the-modern-world>

### Week 2: Paying for and Access to Health Care in the U.S.

1/31 – Who pays for health care?

*Read:* Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 2 – “Paying for Healthcare”

2/2 – Who has access to health care?

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 3 – “Access to Health Care”, pp. 19-26, ending at “Nonfinancial Barriers to Health Care”
- Michael Sainato. “The Americans dying because they can’t afford medical care.” *Guardian*, January 7, 2020. (e-Reserves)
- Noam Levey. “Soaring insurance deductibles and high drug prices hit sick Americans with a ‘double whammy’”. *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2019. (e-Reserves)

### Week 3: Access & Health Disparities

2/7 – In-class discussion of the documentary, “The Waiting Room”.

*Watch:* “The Waiting Room”, 2012. *Running time:* 82 minutes. (Link is on e-Reserves. Note that e-Reserves lists it as 2 hours long, but the film is only 82 minutes.)

2/9 - Health Disparities

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 3 – “Access to Health Care”, pp. 26-30.
- [“Covid 19’s Unequal Consequences” World 101](#) – Online resource (Link also available on e-Reserves)
- Andrew Curry. “Why living in a poor neighborhood can make you fat.” *Nautilus*, Dec. 17, 2015. (e-Reserves)

### Week 4: Organization of Health Care

2/14 – Paying Providers

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 4 – “Paying Health Care Providers”
- Elisabeth Rosenthal. “Paying Till it Hurts: American Way of Birth, Costliest in the World.” *New York Times*, June 30, 2013. (e-Reserves)

2/16 – Organization of Healthcare

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach. Ch. 5 – “How Healthcare is Organized – I: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Care”
- Nicolas Kristoff. “Opinion: Why Infants May be More Likely to Die in America Than Cuba.” *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 2019. (e-Reserves)

### Week 5: Organization of Healthcare Continued and Exam Review

2/21 – Delivery System Organization, including HMOs

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer & Grumbach, Ch. 6 – “How Healthcare is Organized – II: Health Delivery Systems”
- Greg Rosalsky. “The Untamed Rise of Hospital Monopolies.” *Planet Money – NPR*, July 20, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- Reed Abelson. “When Hospitals Merge to Save Money, Patients Often Pay More.” *New York Times*, November 14, 2018. (e-Reserves)

2/23 - Exam review

### Week 6: Midterm Exam #1 & the Passage of Medicare

2/28 – MIDTERM EXAM #1 - **EXAM AVAILABLE ON CANVAS ALL DAY WITH TIME LIMIT ONCE THE EXAM IS OPENED**

### 3/2 – The Civil Rights Movement and the Passage of Medicare

*Watch:* “Power to Heal: Medicare and the Civil Rights Revolution.” *Running time: 56 minutes.* (Link is available on e-Reserves)

*Read:* Jeneen Interlandi. “1619 Project: Why doesn’t the United States have universal healthcare? It has everything to do with race.” *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019. (e-Reserves)

### **Week 7: Medicare**

#### 3/7 – Overview of Medicare

*Read:* Barr. Chapter 6, “Medicare”, pp. 150-166, ending at “The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and its Effect on Medicare.” (e-Reserves)

#### 3/9 – Dilemmas of Medicare and its future

*Read:*

- Barr. Chapter 6, “Medicare”, pp. 166-178, ending at “Changes in Medicare under the Affordable Care Act.” (e-Reserves)
- Fred Schulte. “Researcher: Medicare Advantage Plans Costing Billions More Than They Should.” *Kaiser Health News*, November 11, 2021. (e-Reserves)

### **Week 8: Long-Term Care and Public Health**

#### 3/14 - Long-Term Care

*Read:* Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 12 – “Long-Term Care”

#### 3/16 - Prevention and Public Health - **RECORDED LECTURE & RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT**

*Read:* Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 11, “Prevention of Illness”

*Recommended Reading:* Ed Yong. “How Public Health Took Part in Its Own Downfall.” *The Atlantic*, October 23, 2021. (e-Reserves)

***March 19-27 – Spring Break – Enjoy!!!***

### **Week 9: Medicaid, CHIP, & the ACA**

#### 3/28 – Medicaid & CHIP

*Read:* Barr. Ch. 7, “Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program,” pp. 196-216. (e-Reserves)

#### 3/30 – The Affordable Care Act

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 15, “Health Care Reform and National Health Insurance”
- Elisabeth Rosenthal. “Healthcare’s Road to Ruin.” *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 2013. (e-R)



## **Week 10: The ACA and Medicaid; Exam Review**

4/4 – Impact of the ACA and the Future of Medicaid

*Read:* Barr. Ch. 7, “Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program,” pp. 216-227. (e-Reserves)

4/6 – Exam Review

## **Week 11 – Midterm Exam #2 & Global Health**

*Note: This week Professor Collins will be out of town and unavailable as she will be attending the National Model UN Conference in New York City.*

4/11 – MIDTERM EXAM #2 - **EXAM AVAILABLE ON CANVAS ALL DAY WITH TIME LIMIT ONCE THE EXAM IS OPENED**

4/13 - Global Health - **NO CLASS MEETING, INSTEAD COMPLETE ASSIGNMENT AND QUIZ**

*Watch and Read:* Go to the World 101 Global Health webpage (link on Canvas e-Reserves). This is a collection of resources produced by the Council on Foreign Relations. Read and watch the following short pieces in the module. Feel free to engage with all of them, but for the exam you will be responsible for the information in the following:

1. “What is global health?”, 4 min. video
2. “Global Health Then and Now”. Brief reading with charts.
3. “The Rising Tide of Diabetes in Mexico”, 4 min. video.
4. “Noncommunicable Diseases and How They are Measured.” Short reading.
5. “How Health Care Works Around the World.” Short reading with charts.

## **Week 12 – The Pandemic, the Market, and U.S. Health Care**

4/18 – Big Pharma & Covid Vaccines

*Watch:* “Big Bucks, Big Pharma,” 2006. *Running Time: 46 mins.* (link is on e-Reserves)

*Read:*

- Peter S. Goodman, Apoorva Mandavilli, Rebecca Robbins, and Matina Stevis-Gridneff. “What Would It Take to Vaccinate the World Against Covid?” *New York Times*, May 15, 2021, updated November 17, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- World 101. “The Race to Develop Covid-19 Vaccines.”

#### 4/20 –The Covid-19 Pandemic: It’s Impact and What it Reveals About U.S. Health Care

##### *Read:*

- Ed Yong. “America is Not Ready for Omicron.” *The Atlantic*, December 16, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- Anita Sreedhar and Anand Gopal. “What Causes Vaccine Hesitancy?” *New York Times*, December 5, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- Denise Lu. “How Covid Upended a Century of Patterns in U.S. Deaths.” *New York Times*, April 23, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- Theresa Brown. “Covid-19 is “Probably Going to End My Career.” *New York Times*, February 28, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- Ed Yong. “Why Health-Care Workers Are Quitting in Droves.” *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2021. (e-Reserves)

##### *Further Recommended Reading:*

- Anne Applebaum. “The Coronavirus Called America’s Bluff: Like Japan in the mid-1800s, the United States now faces a crisis that disproves everything the country believes about itself.” *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2020. (e-Reserves)
- David Blumenthal, Elizabeth Fowler, Melinda Abrams, and Sara Collins. “Covid 19 – Implications for the Health System.” *New England Journal of Medicine*, Oct. 8, 2020. (Link provided here and on e-Reserves) <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmsb2021088>
- Farhad Manjoo. “How the World’s Richest Country Ran Out of a 75-Cent Face Mask.” *New York Times*, March 25, 2020. (e-Reserves)

#### **Week 13: How Do They Do It? Health Care in Other Developed Nations – Single-Payer Systems**

##### 4/25 – The UK’s National Health Service (NHS)

##### *Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 14, “Health Care in Four Nations”, UK section, pp. 175-179.
- Aaron E. Carroll and Austin Frakt. “The Best Health Care System in the World: Which One Would You Pick?” *The New York Times*, Sept. 18, 2017. (e-Reserves)
- Barr, Ch. 2, “Health Care as a Reflection of Underlying Cultural Values,” pp. 42-53. (e-R)
- Abigail Abrams. “The U.S. Spends \$2,500 Per Person on Health Care Administrative Costs. Canada spends \$550. Here’s why.” *Time*, January 6, 2020. (e-Reserves)

##### *Watch:*

- “Sick Around the World”, *Frontline*, PBS, April 15, 2008. (e-Reserves)

**Note:** For Monday, watch the first 13 minutes of this documentary which introduces the topic and then talks about the UK. The total Frontline episode lasts about 56 minutes. You should watch the segments on Germany and Switzerland for Week 14. There are 2 segments we will not be discussing -- Japan and Taiwan -- feel free to skip those.

- [“Should U.S. look to UK’s single-payer National Health Service for next care moves?”](#) *PBS Newshour*, September 1, 2020. (Running time: 9 mins.) Link available here and on e-Reserves:

#### 4/27 – Canada’s Health Care System

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 14, “Health Care in Four Nations”, section on Canada, pp. 172-175.
- Barr, Ch. 2, “Health Care as a Reflection of Underlying Cultural Values”, pp. 42-53. (e-Reserves)
- Abigail Abrams. “The U.S. Spends \$2,500 Per Person on Health Care Administrative Costs. Canada spends \$550. Here’s why.” *Time*, January 6, 2020. (e-Reserves)

#### **Week 14: How Do They Do It? Health Care in Other Developed Nations – Multi-payer Models**

##### 5/2 – The German Sickness Funds

*Read:*

- Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 14, “Health Care in Four Nations”, section on Germany, pp. 169-172.
- Jamie Daw. “A Better Path to Universal Healthcare: The United States should look to Germany, not Canada, for the best model.” *The New York Times*, Feb. 20, 2019. (e-Reserves)

*Watch:*

- “Sick Around the World”, *Frontline*, PBS, April 15, 2008. (e-Reserves)

**Note:** Watch segment on Germany (mins. 24 to 35). The total Frontline episode lasts about 56 minutes. There are 2 segments that we will not be discussing -- Japan and Taiwan -- feel free to skip those.

##### 5/4 – Swiss Health Care

*Read:* Nelson D. Schwartz. “Swiss Health Care Thrives Without Public Option.” *New York Times*, September 30, 2009. (e-Reserves)

*Watch:*

- “Sick Around the World”, *Frontline*, PBS, April 15, 2008. (e-Reserves)

**Note:** Watch segment on Switzerland (mins. 43:17 to the end). The total Frontline episode lasts about 56 minutes. There are 2 segments that we will not be discussing -- Japan and Taiwan -- feel free to skip those.

- “How Switzerland delivered health care for all – and kept its private insurance.” *PBS Newshour*, September 2, 2020. (Running time: 9:42 mins.) Link available here and on e-Reserves: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-switzerland-delivered-health-care-for-all-and-kept-its-private-insurance>

## Week 15: Conclusions: The Future of U.S. Health Care

5/9 – The Future of Health Care in the U.S.: Which way should we go?

*Read:*

- William C. Hsiao. “What Other Countries Can – and Can’t -- Teach the United States.” *Foreign Affairs*, Jan./February 2020. (e-Reserves)
- Jake Johnson. “Major Survey Finds 100 Million Americans See U.S. Health Care System as ‘Expensive’ or ‘Broken’.” *Common Dreams*, December 14, 2021. (e-Reserves)
- Diane Archer. “22 studies agree: ‘Medicare for All’ saves money.” *The Hill*, February 24, 2020. (e-Reserves)

*Further Recommended Readings:*

- Adam Cancryn. “The Army Built to Fight ‘Medicare for All’”. *Politico*, November 25, 2019. (e-Reserves)
- Christopher Cai, et al. “Projected costs of single-payer health care financing in the United States: A systematic review of economic analyses.” *PLOS Medicine*, Jan. 15, 2020. **Note:** this is the original article that is described in the Archer article from *The Hill* (see above). (e-Reserves)

5/11 – Conclusions & Review for Final Exam

*Read:* Bodenheimer and Grumbach, Ch. 17, “Conclusion: Tensions & Challenges”

**FINAL EXAM PERIOD: MONDAY, MAY 16<sup>th</sup>, 2:45-4:45 PM**

**EXAM WILL BE TAKEN ON CANVAS**