

**POLS/UEP209: Health Policy**  
**Course Syllabus**  
**FALL2020**

Course Title: POLS/UEP 209: Health Policy

Meeting schedule: The course will meet on Thursdays from 1:30 to 4:25 PM. The course will be taught mostly synchronously via Zoom. The Zoom link for the course is: <https://occidental.zoom.us/j/98797668383>  
The passcode is 12345.

Office hours: Office hours are available virtually upon request.

Course Instructor: Corey Davis, JD, MSPH

Contact Information: The best way to reach me is via email at [cdavis2@oxy.edu](mailto:cdavis2@oxy.edu).

Course Description

Why does the United States spend more on health care per person than other developed countries and still have worse health outcomes? American health care costs (including drug prices) are higher and we have a much greater use of expensive medical technology than in other countries. This course will examine the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to health care delivery and financing, including private, single-payer and universal systems. Students will analyze the impact of these approaches on access, cost, quality, and disparities. They will also examine the historical, economic, social, and political factors that have led the U.S. to adopt its current health system, how care is delivered, analyze its strengths and weaknesses, and examine the different proposals for reforming it.

This course is intended to provide an overview of health planning, health service delivery, health policy, and health ethics, and provide students with a framework for understanding the goals, politics, and barriers to health care improvement. At the conclusion of the course, students will understand the legal and ethical bases for government regulation of health and health care, the current makeup of the American health care system, the history of health reform in the United States, the ways in which American political realities impact health policy, how health care is delivered in other industrialized countries, and potential paths forward for the United States.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the process through which health policy is made in the United States, including the role of legislators, judges, government agencies, non-government organizations and for-profit actors;
2. Understand the unique nature of the American system of health care delivery, and the historical forces that shaped it;
3. Explain how health policy and health care policy in the US compares to that in other countries; and

4. Formulate actionable strategies for improving the equitable delivery of health care in the United States.

### Course materials

There is one required book for the course:

- Bradley and Taylor, [The American Healthcare Paradox: Why Spending More is Getting Us Less](#)

Another book is optional:

- Johnson, Stoskopf, and Shi, [Comparative Health Systems: A Global Perspective](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (ISBN 1284111733)

We will also read a number of news articles, journal articles, fact sheets, and cases as noted on this syllabus. They will either be linked from the syllabus or posted on [Moodle](#). We will also utilize the [Constitution of the United States](#). Unless otherwise noted, please use the abridged cases posted on Moodle, not the full text of cases that might be available online (of course, you're welcome to read the full cases as well if you wish). I also recommend that students subscribe to Vox's health care newsletter, VoxCare, which you can sign up for [here](#).

### Course Structure and Requirements

This semester, this will be a distance education course that will utilize live lectures, student presentations, in-person discussion, and group activities. This is a four credit course. It is expected that students devote approximately 12 hours per week, on average, to course activities.

### Reading

This is a reading-intensive course. Students are expected to read all assigned texts prior to the class in which they'll be discussed, and be prepared to engage in informed discussion regarding those texts.

### Student-led activities and class discussion

Discussion is an integral part of the course. Students can be expected to be called on at random, and are expected to be able to provide intelligent discussion regarding the readings, integrating their own knowledge and experience. There will also be several in-class group-based activities in which students are expected to substantially contribute their knowledge and expertise.

Beginning in the second week of class, one small group per class will provide a short (~10 minute) summary and informed analysis of a recent publication or event regarding health care or health policy. This can be an article in the popular press, a journal article, a blog post, online video, policy statement, etc. of the student's choosing.

The small group should email the relevant article, video, etc. to me by the Tuesday night prior to the class in which they present. During class, the small group will provide a brief explanation of how this publication or event relates to health care/health care policy/social determinant of health, with reference to the concepts and ideas we've learned to date, and utilizing outside sources as applicable.

Additionally, there will be a graded larger group exercise in which the group will research and explain the health care delivery system of another country in the 13<sup>th</sup> week of the course.

### Writing

Informed analysis delivered through written work will also be a key component of the course. There will

referenced and list each cited source at the end of the document. For example: Health policy is the best class ever! (Everyone, 2020).

### Exams

There will be three quizzes, a midterm, and a final. The exams will cover the readings as well as class discussions. The examinations will test key concepts learned in the course, your knowledge of the assigned readings, and your ability to summarize the policy relevance of health issues. The midterm may consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. The final exam will comprise a combination of short answer and short paragraph response questions.

### Grading

Points will be allocated as follows:

- 1912 11e 2012 1000% (Sept 17) 92 reW\* nBT/F2 11.04 Tf1 0 0 1 152.78 510.91 Tm98( 1)0 612 792 reW\* 92 reW\* nBT/F2 1
- Paper 1 (COVID-19 and disparities): 5% (Sept. 24)
  - Midterm: 15% (Oct. 1)

- Paul Starr, [The Social Transformation of American Medicine](#). While almost 30 years old, this is still one of the best explanations of why the American health care system is the way it is. You should be able to pick up a used version for less than ten dollars.

If you choose to submit a paper or present to the class, you will earn between two and five points added to the midterm exam grade.

identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website:

<https://www.oxy.edu/office-religious-spiritual-life>

### Academic Integrity

Students are expected to strictly adhere to the [Code of Student Conduct](#) and to maintain the highest levels of academic integrity. Students are responsible for knowing and using the correct procedures for acknowledging and identifying sources of borrowed material. Failure to properly credit sources in all or part of work presented in draft or final form to anyone is plagiarism, regardless of whether it occurs as a result of dishonest intent or carelessness and regardless of the course credit attached to it. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, all course assignments must be completed individually. Any unsanctioned collaboration constitutes academic misconduct. Consistent with College policy on [discrimination, harassment, and retaliation](#), I seek to maintain an environment of mutual respect among all members of our community. Collegial disagreement is welcome, but learners are expected to treat colleagues with dignity and respect.

### Wellness

Emmons Wellness Center is committed to providing the students of Occidental College with accessible, culturally sensitive, and high quality medical care, psychological counseling services, and student-driven wellness education.

Class	Topic	Reading assignment	Assignments/Activities
<b>Class 1</b> Aug. 27	Topic 1: Course overview, introduction to health policy	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This syllabus</li> <li>• Kaiser Family Foundation, <a href="#">Health of the Healthcare System: An Overview</a></li> <li>• Anderson et al., <a href="#">Measuring the U.S. health care system: A cross-national comparison</a></li> </ul> Further reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCHS, <a href="#">Health insurance and access to care</a></li> <li>• Commonwealth Fund, <a href="#">Mirror, Mirror 2017: International comparison reflects flaws and opportunities for better US health care</a></li> <li>• Rubin, <a href="#">US dead last among developed countries when it comes to paid maternity leave</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Class 2</b> Sept. 3	Topic 1 continued  Topic 2: Constitutional basis for health policy; mechanisms of policy creation	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bradley &amp; Taylor, Chapter 1</li> <li>• O. Kerr, <a href="#">How to read a legal opinion</a></li> <li>• Nat'l Meat Ass'n v. Harris, 565 U.S. 452 (2012)</li> <li>• Gonzales v. Raich, 545 U.S. 1 (2005)</li> <li>• South Dakota v. Dole, 483 U.S. 203 (1987)</li> </ul> Further reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rutkow and Vernick, <a href="#">The U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause, the Supreme Court, and Public Health</a></li> <li>• Pomeranz &amp; Pertschuk, M. <a href="#">State Preemption: A Significant and Quiet Threat to Public Health in the United States</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Gonzales v. Raich Summary (5 min video)</a></li> <li>• TED-Ed, <a href="#">How is Power Divided in the United States Government? (4 min video)</a></li> </ul>	<a href="#">Group 1 short presentation</a>

**Class 3**  
Sept. 10

Topic 2 continued

Further reading:

- Liptak, [Corporations find a friend in the Supreme Court](#)
- [The FDA and graphic cigarette-pack warnings – Thwarted by the courts](#)
- [The Curious case of the docs vs. the Glocks](#)  
(Wollschlaeger I)
- Volokh, E. [Eleventh Circuit en bank strikes down restriction on doctor](#)



		<p>Further reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wiley &amp; Benfer, <a href="#">Health justice strategies to combat COVID-19: Protecting vulnerable communities during a pandemic</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Deshaney v. Winnebago County</a>, 489 U.S. 189 (1979)</li> <li>• Greenhouse, <a href="#">The Supreme Court and a Life Barely Lived</a> (about and its effects)</li> <li>• Jew Ho v. Williamson, 103 F. 10 (1900)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Prince v. Massachusetts</a>, 321 U.S. 158 (1944)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Class 6</b> Oct. 1</p>	<p>Part 1: Midterm</p> <p>Part 2: Mid-course review,</p>	<p>Required task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review for midterm</li> </ul>	<p><b>Midterm</b></p>
<p><b>Class 7</b> Oct. 8</p>	<p>Topic 4: Health care financing, cost and quality</p>	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bradley &amp; Taylor, Chapter 3</li> <li>• Atul Gawande, <a href="#">The cost conundrum: What a Texas town can teach us about health care</a></li> <li>• Bodenheimer &amp; West, <a href="#">Low-Cost lessons from Grand Junction, Colorado</a> (on Moodle)</li> </ul> <p>Further reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presser, <a href="#">When Medical Debt Collectors Decide Who Gets Arrested</a></li> <li>• Eli Saslow, Washington Post, <a href="#">The Follow-Up Appointment</a></li> <li>• Wiley &amp; Benfer, <a href="#">Health justice strategies to combat COVID-19: Protecting vulnerable communities during a pandemic</a></li> <li>• Frakt, Hidden from view: <a href="#">The astonishingly high administrative costs of U.S. health care</a></li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Group 5 short presentation</a></p> <p><a href="#">Class 7 recording</a> Passcode: G0%8r^j&amp;</p>
<p><b>Class 8</b> Oct. 15</p>	<p>Topic 4 continued</p>	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don Berwick, <a href="#">The Triple Aim: Care, Health, and Cost</a></li> </ul>	<p>Group 6 short presentation</p>

Guest speaker: Social  
emergency medicine

- Carroll, [The "Iron Triangle" of health care: Access, cost, and quality](#)

Further reading:

- Institute of Medicine, [Crossing the Quality Chasm \(Summary\)](#)
- Mehrotra,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kodjak, <a href="#">From Birth to Death, Medicaid Affects the Lives of Millions</a></li> <li>• Kaiser Family Foundation, <a href="#">A primer on Medicare</a></li> <li>• Kaiser Family Foundation, <a href="#">Medicare and Medicaid at 50</a> (video)</li> <li>• Goldsmith, Mosley, &amp; Davis: <a href="#">Medicaid Managed Care: Lots of Unanswered Questions</a></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Class 10</b> Oct. 29</p>	<p>Topic 6: Health reform</p>	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bradley &amp; Taylor, Chapter 5</li> <li>• John Oberlander, <a href="#">Unfinished Journey: A Century of Health Care Reform in the United States</a></li> <li>• Kaiser Family Foundation, <a href="#">National health insurance: A brief history of reform efforts in the U.S.</a></li> </ul> <p>Further reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starr, <a href="#">What happened to health care reform?</a> (re: Clinton-era reform efforts)</li> <li>• Kaiser Family Foundation, <a href="#">Summary of the Affordable Care Act</a></li> <li>• KFF, <a href="#">Health reform infographics</a> (peruse)</li> <li>• KFF, <a href="#">Health care reform: a retrospective tutorial</a> (video)</li> <li>• KFF, <a href="#">Health reform quiz</a></li> <li>• Scher, <a href="#">How Democrats won the health care war</a></li> <li>• Brown, <a href="#">The elements of surprise: How reform happened</a></li> <li>• PBS, <a href="#">Obama's Deal (56 minute video)</a></li> <li>• Karen Palmer, <a href="#">A brief history: Universal Health Care Efforts in the United States</a></li> <li>• Kaiser Family Foundation, <a href="#">A Guide to the Supreme Court's Affordable Care Act decision</a></li> <li>• Lemieux, <a href="#">How the Supreme Court screwed Obamacare</a></li> <li>• Oberlander, <a href="#">Implementing the Affordable Care Act</a></li> </ul>	<p>Group 8 short presentation</p>

**Class 11**

Nov. 5

Topic 7: Private insurance, managed care plans

Guest speaker: Drug policy

Required reading:

- Rosenthal, [Apprehensive, many doctors shift to jobs with salaries](#)
- Abelson, [Employer health insurance is increasingly](#)



This syllabus was last modified October 5, 2020.