

PUBP 390/ECON 300: Economics of Health Care Policy

Spring 2020

TR 12:30 – 1:50 pm

Tyler 134

Instructor Information

Professor Jennifer Mellor

Phone: 221-1913; Email: jmmell@wm.edu

Office: Tyler 433

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-3 pm and by appointment

Course Description

This seminar provides an introduction to the U.S. healthcare system and an overview of public policies pertaining to healthcare financing and cost containment. Topics include the origins of the US healthcare system and past reform attempts, policies affecting private insurance, Medicare and Medicaid, and policies to address costs in private markets and public insurance programs. Readings for the course include textbook chapters, academic journal articles, policy briefs, and health policy podcasts. URLs/PDFs will be available on Blackboard. There is no textbook. Readings are not optional.

Evaluation

Midterm (25%). Scheduled for Thursday, March 5.

Final (30%). Scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 9-noon.

Reading Quizzes (10%). There will be frequent unannounced short quizzes on basic content in the assigned readings. The quizzes are not designed to be difficult *if* you do the readings. I will drop your lowest two quiz grades.

Short Writing Assignments (25%). There will be four short papers that relate to topics on the syllabus. Instructions will be provided at least one week in advance.

Small Group Project/Presentation (10%). Group projects will focus on topics in international healthcare reform. Presentations will take place the last week of the semester.

Course Policies

1. Except in cases of documented emergencies, late assignments will receive reductions in the grade and missed exams will not be rescheduled. Except for extreme circumstances, I do not give make-up quizzes.

2. William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2512 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please see www.wm.edu/sas.

3. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected. The *Student Handbook* includes your responsibilities as a student and the full Code (www.wm.edu/studenthandbook).

4. Readings, announcements, assignments, and discussion questions will be posted on or via Blackboard. Make sure that the email address you have registered with Blackboard is one that you actually check, and be sure to check Blackboard regularly.

5. Cell phone use during class is prohibited; laptops are allowed for course-related activities. It is well known that some types of laptop use distract students and lower the quality of classroom interaction. I reserve the right to ask students to close laptops.

Course Outline (see the complete Reading List on Blackboard)

Understanding the Context and History of US Health Policy (6 classes)

- 1/23 The U.S. Health Care System in Context
- 1/28 Sources of Health Insurance, 2018
- 1/30 History of Comprehensive US Health Reform
- 2/4 Incremental Healthcare Reforms Pre-ACA
- 2/6 Passage of the Affordable Care Act (*short paper*)
- 2/11 Interest Groups and Healthcare Reform in the Trump Years

Policies Affecting Insurance Coverage

- 2/13 Health Insurance and Demand for Healthcare
- 2/18 Demand for Health Insurance
- 2/20 Equilibrium in the Market for Health Insurance
- 2/25 Adverse Selection in Health Insurance Markets
- 2/27 Obamacare Exchanges (*short paper*)
- 3/3 Medicaid Basics, and the ACA and Medicaid

- 3/5 *Midterm*

- 3/17 Medicare Basics
- 3/19 Healthcare Financing in Other Countries

Policies to Address Healthcare Costs

- 3/24 Factors that Drive Healthcare Spending
- 3/26 Hospital Prices (*short paper*)
- 3/31 Medicare and Hospital Spending
- 4/2 Medicare and Physician Spending
- 4/7 "Hotspotting:" Better Care, Lower Costs (*short paper*)
- 4/9 Medicaid Reforms
- 4/14 Prescription Drug Prices
- 4/16 Long-term Care

Public Health Policy

- 4/21 Health Policy and the Rise in Vaping
- 4/23 Health Policy and the Opioid Epidemic

- 4/28, 4/30 *Group Project Presentations*

- 5/12 *Final exam*