

**HEALTH POLICY: THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT AND  
THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**  
BIOE 575 / HCMG 250 / HCMG 850

*Tuesdays & Thursdays from 4:30-6:00pm Stiteler B6*

*Faculty*

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The objective of this course is to provide students with a rigorous understanding of the health care system in the United States. The course will focus on the historical development of the current health care system; challenges of health care costs, quality, and access; the relationship between market failure and the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA); the impact to date of recent health reforms on the organization, structure, delivery and outcomes of the health care system; and future reforms and responses of the health care system.

This course will consist of 4 interconnected segments. The first segment will provide an in-depth analysis of the U.S. health care system prior to the passage of the ACA and the factors underlying the failure of this market. This section will begin with an overview of the history and of the structure of the U.S. health care sector, which accounts for nearly a fifth of the entire American economy. We will explore the challenges posed by rapidly rising health care costs, declining health insurance coverage, and uneven quality.

The second segment of the course will review the history of attempts to reform the US health care system, the politics of reform, and the story of how the ACA ultimately passed through Congress. We will dissect the key provisions of the ACA to illuminate the content and goals of the legislation and review the legal challenges it faced.

The third segment will focus on the effects of the ACA subsequent health reforms, such as the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, over the last 8 years on cost, access, and quality. This will include perspectives from a diverse set of stakeholders, including insurers, health care systems, physicians, private sector entrepreneurs, and others. It will summarize the major criticisms of ACA, important political challenges, and unintended consequences of the legislation.

The final segment of the course will consider the possible long-term outlook for health reform in the United States, including recent pushes for national single payer, or “Medicare for All.” It will also explore ongoing payment reforms and consider likely responses by payers and providers. The course will conclude by examining how providers are transforming care delivery to respond to the current health care ecosystem.

## COURSE MATERIALS

*All information on this syllabus can be found on our Canvas site at*  
[www.upenn.instructure.com](http://www.upenn.instructure.com)

The Canvas site for this course will be hosted by the University-wide (Penn Libraries) Canvas site, which is accessible to everyone with a PennKey and password. The Wharton Canvas platform is a different site. We are not using the Wharton Canvas platform for this course. Our Canvas site contains all essential information and readings for this course.

*Required materials:*

1. This course relies heavily on Dr. Emanuel’s books, *Reinventing American Health Care* and *Prescription for the Future*. We encourage you to purchase this book, as many assigned readings will be drawn from it.

Other course materials include: policy documents from government agencies and nonprofit research organizations; articles from popular press outlets; and academic articles from health care journals. Copies of these materials will be made available to you through our Canvas website. Note that in some cases it may be necessary to access the electronic files from a University of Pennsylvania IP address (or through the UPenn Libraries website).

We do not assign superfluous readings. *You should read and learn all assigned readings in advance of lectures.* Due to the amount of information covered in this course, the pace of lectures tends to be quick; in the past, students have found advanced preparation of readings essential to success.

Health policy is a constantly evolving field. As such, you would do well to keep up with current events, which we will often discuss during lectures. We recommend that you periodically read the following websites:

<http://www.vox.com/authors/sarah-kliff>  
<http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/>  
<http://kff.org/>  
<http://healthaffairs.org/>  
[http://www.urban.org/health\\_policy/index.cfm](http://www.urban.org/health_policy/index.cfm)

<http://www.cbo.gov/topics/health-care>  
<http://www.rwjf.org/en/topics/rwjf-topic-areas/health-policy.html>

## REQUIREMENTS & GRADES

### **In-class Quizzes** (15% of your overall grade)

- We drop your two lowest grades in calculating your overall quiz average
- Quizzes will cover the assigned readings and lectures from previous un-quizzed class sessions *and* the required readings due on the day of the quiz
- Each quiz will be three questions, given at the start of class.
- There will be nine quizzes.
- The content of this course is set within American politics, history, and policy, so there may be small extra credit questions on quizzes related to history, politics, economics, and other facts and concepts you don't know but should.

### **Midterm Exam** (25% of your overall grade)

- One midterm exam that consists of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions

### **Homework Assignments** (25% of your overall grade)

- Two double-spaced essays, one to two pages in length.

### **Final Exam** (35% of your overall grade)

- Similar in structure to the midterm exam—multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions
- The final exam is cumulative

*Quizzes and exams can only be taken in class and cannot be made-up.*

Please do **not** schedule flights for the holidays that may conflict with exam dates. Our final exam is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 18th from 6 to 8pm**. If you become aware of a genuine exam conflict, such as another final exam scheduled at the same time as ours, please make us aware of this as early as possible, so that we can work with you to make accommodations.

Of course, if you are hospitalized or if you encounter a significant and documented medical difficulty, we will consider potential accommodations for your situation. For instance, we may allow you to come in on a stretcher and will find some way to accommodate your IV pole to take the final exam.

## INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

Ethicists are teaching this course. We take the virtue of integrity very seriously. We want you to talk about the readings and about the larger topic of health policy with your fellow classmates, family, and friends. We all learn by engaging with the ideas and one of the best ways to engage is to discuss and argue about the ideas. Please do that. However, the work you submit for the quizzes, homework assignments, and examinations must be your work and your work alone. Any plagiarism or other form of cheating will be dealt with severely under the procedures of the University of Pennsylvania. (Too bad they got rid of the public stocks on Locust walk. How you instructors pine for the good old days!)

## COURSE RULES

### **#1 Attendance**

We expect you to attend every class. We are designing this course to be engaging and interactive. A significant portion of the learning will occur in the classroom as we discuss the lecture topics and readings. Missing those interactions will significantly diminish your understanding of health policy.

### **#2 Do the Reading**

We expect you to do all the required readings before class. You should come prepared to discuss all required readings and engage fully in discussion. We will randomly call on people in class to discuss various parts of the readings or extend the principles discussed in the readings to a novel scenario. We take class preparation very seriously.

### **#3 Be Punctual**

We will begin each class promptly at 4:30pm. We will be ready and so should you. Consider our class meetings as you would any job or professional meeting. If you arrive late or leave early you will disrupt the flow of the class and you might miss a quiz, which cannot be made up.

### **#4 No Cell Phones Except for Poll Everywhere**

We work hard to prepare for class. We expect you to be prepared and to thoughtfully participate. We do not want the time disturbed by a ringing phone and we do not want people running out to answer their phones. It disrupts the class.

Laptops may be used for taking notes, if this is your preferred method. However, do not use them for other purposes, such as sending Clickhole articles to nineteen friends, mindlessly scrolling through Facebook pictures of someone you knew in high school, playing with Instagram filters, and other distractions. You cannot multi-task and expect to fully engage with the class. This isn't us talking; it's science. If we find you engaging in any of these behaviors, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

### **#5 No Texting, Tweeting, Facebooking, or other public commenting on this course.**

We want this class to be about learning and engaging with difficult material. This class is not a public performance and you are not yet a health policy reporter. You are a student and this is a learning environment. As teachers, we will sometimes be intentionally provocative and challenging. We want you, as students, to take intellectual risks, think creatively, and push your own limits. This requires an environment of safety and respect, which is not compatible with publicly broadcasting what is going on in class to titillate unknown interlopers.

*By registering for this course you are agreeing to abide by these rules.  
This is informed consent.*