Course Title: Health Politics and Policy
Course Number: HSAP 0656
Course Location: School of Public Health - Piscataway, Room 2B
Course Date & Time: Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 PM
Course Instructor: Michael K. Gusmano, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Health Systems and Policy, Rutgers School of Public Health

Office: Institute for Health, Health Care and Aging Research, Room 424 – 4th Floor, 112 Paterson Street New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1293
Email: mkg93@sph.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Required Course Text: None

Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources: The class readings consist of articles and book chapters. Readings will be posted on the MOODLE system for the course. If this is not possible, some readings will be distributed in class, via e-mail, or through links to electronic journals or other web sites.

Course Description: This course is designed to provide an in-depth analysis of the government institutions and processes that affect health policy in the American context. It has two primary goals (1) to explore how the institutional arrangements of American government work with respect to the development of health policy (2) to review several health policy case studies and identify lessons from them. The course explores fundamental challenges that face all health policymakers, whatever country or its level of economic development – and the array of policy instruments that can be deployed to address them. The readings, lectures and writing assignments are designed to help you explore the ways in which choices of policy instruments and their implementation over time are shaped by the nature of government institutions, drawing on the U.S. as the fundamental frame of reference.

Selected Department Competencies Addressed: Provide a bulleted list of the Department’s competencies that will be addressed in this course. If the course is predominantly for MPH students, then include MPH degree competencies for your Department or if it is predominantly for doctoral students, include PhD/DrPH competencies. Begin this section with the following statement: Each Department identifies competencies for each degree offered. The competencies addressed in this course for the MPH (or other degrees) for the Department of Health Systems and Policy:

- Assess and delineate public health policies and practices recognizing legal and ethical implications for individuals and populations;
Assess community health needs, disparities and the health care delivery system within the context of social, cultural, political, legal and economic forces; Apply quantitative and qualitative research methods in the analysis of health service and policy issues.

Describe and evaluate the political, social and institutional contexts in which health policies are developed.

Please visit the Department webpages on the School of Public Health’s website at http://sph.rutgers.edu/ for additional competencies addressed by this course for other degrees and departments.

Course Objectives: By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Outline the policy process for improving the health status of populations
- Identify important concepts, theories, and literature concerning policy making and administration
- Recognize the legal and ethical bases for public health and healthcare policies and procedures
- Describe the steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions

Course Requirements and Grading:

- The course grades will be based on the two papers, three online quizzes, the final exam, and class participation.

- The two papers give you an opportunity to track a bill in a topic area of your interest (this could be historical rather than current) so that you can really learn more about the federal or state policy making process. In order to make sure that you are giving yourself enough time to collect information about your case, I want you to provide at least one paragraph in which you identify the policy topic on which you will focus your papers by week three (sooner would be better!). Although you may select a policy proposal that was eventually adopted by the Congress and signed into law by the President, please remember that may select a bill that was not adopted into law. It is acceptable (and may be quite interesting) to write about a policy proposal that failed. If you are new to health policy and want to explore possible topics, I encourage you to search through the last several issues of the journals Health Affairs, the Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law and Milbank Quarterly. You may look at other journals as well, but these three are particularly useful because they are focused on health policy and provide information about national, state and local policy debates. It is helpful to select a case on which there is already a substantial academic literature, so reviewing these journals is a good starting point. You are not required to collect original data for this paper, so you will be relying on secondary information from newspapers, professional publications and academic journals. Your job is to apply the theories and concepts from class to the
“facts” of your case in order to better understand how the political process shaped the policy outcomes.

In the first paper (due on week #8), I want you to analyze how this issue reached the policy agenda. Of all the topics that the President and Congress might address, why did the issue you are exploring reach the agenda when it did? How was the problem defined? How did the definition (or competing definitions) of these problems influence its place on the policy agenda.

In the second paper (due on week #9), I want you to track your bill through the legislative process. Was the bill adopted or defeated? What explains this outcome? In both papers I want you to draw on conceptual material from readings, lectures and class discussions. Can you draw on insights from the literature on policy development and health policy implementation to better understand your case?

Both papers should be five pages, double spaced with standard margins and appropriate references. To the extent possible, you should frame your argument in terms of theories and hypotheses from the literature and use the detailed facts from your case to “test” these hypotheses.

- The three online quizzes will test your understanding of the class readings. Each quiz (weeks 5, 9, and 13) will include five true/false and/or multiple choice questions worth two points each.

- The final exam is a take home exam that will be distributed via Moodle immediately after the final class (week 14) and will be due one week later. It will include two parts. The first section will require you to define four terms (from a list of 8-10) from the class readings. For each, you will be asked to define the term and provide a sentence or two about its relevance for the study of health politics and policy. The second section will be an essay question that addresses one of the broad themes from class.

- A list of activities, assignments, projects, exams, etc. that contribute to course grade, and the respective point/percentage value of each:
  1. Paper #1 20 pts.
  2. Paper #2 20 pts.
  3. Online quizzes (3) 30 pts.
  4. Final Exam 30 pts.
  5. Class Participation 10 pts.
  Total: 100 pts.

Course Schedule:

Institutions 1: Federalism, Congress, National values
Week 1: Introduction: A Republican Form of Government


Madison, James. Federalist 47, 48, and 51.


Week 2: Federalism and the States


Week 3: How do “national values” shape public policy?

Objectives: Analyze the role of national values and political culture on public policy.


Week 4: Models of the Policy Process: Incrementalism and Garbage Cans


Health Policy Case Studies 1: National health insurance, technocratic politics

Week 5: History of National Health Reform in the U.S.: The Progressive Era to Obama (online quiz #1 is due)

Klein E. The Lessons of ‘94: The three reasons the Clinton administration's health care reform effort failed, and how the next Democratic president can get it right. The American Prospect, January 22, 2008.


Week 6: Repeal and Replace?


Week 7: Technocratic Health Politics


Institutions 2: Courts, regulatory agencies, interest groups; muddling through

Week 8: Courts (Paper #1 on Agenda Setting is Due)


Week 9: Regulatory Agencies (online quiz#2 is due)


Week 10: Are policy decisions the result of powerful interests?


Health Policy Case Studies 2: Age-Rationing, Obesity, Vaccines and Synthetic biology.

Week 11: Do We Need to Age-Ration Health Care? (Paper #2 is Due)


**Week 12: The Politics of Obesity**


**Week 13: Personal Belief Exemptions for Vaccines (online quiz#3 is due)**


**Week 14: Synthetic Biology: The Politics of Risk Assessment**


**Learning Management System:** Moodle will be used extensively throughout the semester for course syllabus, assignments, announcements, communication and/or other course-related activities. It is the student’s responsibility to familiarize themselves with Moodle and check it regularly. If you have difficulties accessing Moodle, please inform the instructor and Moodle Support (moodlehelp@ca.rutgers.edu). Moodle is accessible at moodle.rutgers.edu.

**School of Public Health Honor Code:** The School of Public Health Honor Code is found in the student bulletin (sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog/index.html). Each student bears a fundamental responsibility for maintaining academic integrity and intellectual honesty in his or her graduate work. For example, all students are expected to observe the generally accepted principles of scholarly work, to submit their own rather than another’s work, to refrain from falsifying data, and to refrain from receiving and/or giving aid on examinations or other assigned work requiring independent effort. In submitting written material, the writer takes full responsibility for the work as a whole and implies that, except as properly noted by use of quotation marks, footnotes, etc., both the ideas and the works used are his or her own. In addition to maintaining personal academic integrity, each student is expected to contribute to the academic integrity of the school community by not facilitating inappropriate use of her/his own work by others and by reporting acts of academic dishonesty by others to an appropriate school authority. It should be clearly understood that plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can lead to sanctions up to and including separation from the Rutgers School of Public Health.

**Students with Disabilities:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student must Apply for Services by first completing a Registration Form with the Rutgers Office of Disability Services (ODS) at ods.rutgers.edu. The student will also be required to participate in an ODS intake interview and provide documentation. If reasonable accommodations are granted, ODS will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations which should be shared with your instructors as early in your courses as possible.

**Graduate Student Computer Policy:** Students are required to possess a personal laptop, no older than approximately two years, that must meet minimum requirements which may be found online at: sph.rutgers.edu/student_life/computer_requirements.html

**Policy Concerning Use of Recording Devices and Other Electronic Communications Systems:** When personally owned communication/recording devices are used by students to record lectures and/or classroom lessons, such use must be authorized by the faculty member or instructor who must give either oral or written permission prior to the start of the semester and identify restrictions, if any, on the use of mobile communications or recording devices.

**Withdrawal/Refund Schedule:** Students who stop attending their course(s) without processing an Add/Drop Course form will receive a failing grade. Furthermore, students dropping to zero credits for the semester are considered withdrawn and must submit a completed Leave of Absence form from the School of Public Health’s Office of Student Affairs. The School of Public Health refunds tuition only. Administrative and technology fees are non-refundable. You may find the Withdrawal/Refund Schedule on the School of Public Health website at: sph.rutgers.edu/academics/registration/school_calendars.html

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