Course Title: Cross National Comparisons of Health Systems and Policy

Course Number: HSAP 0659

Course Location: School of Public Health, Room 334

Course Date & Time: Tuesdays, 6:00-9 PM

Course Instructor: Michael K. Gusmano, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Health Systems and Policy, Rutgers School of Public Health

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Office Hours: By Appointment


Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources: All other 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: Developed and developing countries face a range of common problems in their health care systems. These include demographic and technological pressures on costs, rising expectations of consumers, the assimilation into medical and policy practice of rapidly growing knowledge about the system's performance, and the tensions that arise when swollen public budgets, slow economic growth, and rising health care costs converge. These nations face these common pressures in quite diverse ways, however. Their responses vary with the historical, cultural, legal, social, and political character of individual countries, and embody significant strategic differences in decisions about coverage, provider payment, funding, and more.

In this course we will go beyond the discussion of comparative health systems in the core course in public health and survey the policy responses of a range of nations to the strains imposed by the evolution of modern health care systems. We will seek to explain why nations differ in their policy choices, explore the pros and cons of some of these approaches, and draw implications for U.S. policy debates. Students should leave the course with an enhanced understanding of the range of strategic responses to the major policy problems facing modern societies, and this understanding should help them to comprehend more fully both the dynamic environment in which they work and the complexities of health care reform.
Selected Department Competencies Addressed:

- 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.
- Critically evaluate both proposed and implemented health policy interventions and the empirical research seeking to assess the impact of policy interventions in the health care sector.

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:

- identify the challenges facing health care systems in industrialized countries
- compare competing health policy responses among industrialized countries.
- assess competing methods for evaluating health system performance

Course Requirements and Grading:

- Students will be asked to complete two short policy essays in which they respond to a question posed by class readings. In addition, the final exam will consist of short answer questions and a longer essay. In all of the written assignments students should offer a critical response to claims from the literature. Although they may draw on additional resources, students may complete the policy essays and final exam using course material only. All of the writing assignments will be assessed based on the clarity and quality of the arguments. Students will also be evaluated based on the contributions they make to class discussions. Students may at times be asked to lead discussions of specific readings on specific topics in the course syllabus.
- A list of activities, assignments, projects, exams, etc. that contribute to course grade, and the respective point/percentage value of each. For example:

  3. Final Exam 40 pts.
  4. Class Participation 10 pts.

  Total: 100 pts.

Course Schedule:
Week 1: Introduction: The International Standard
Objectives: Describe principles on which most health care systems in the developed world are based; Review the course objectives and schedule.


Week 2: US Health Care System in Comparative Perspective
Objectives: Assess the performance of health care systems in the developed world.


Week 3: How to Compare Health Care Systems?: Methodological Issues (Paper #1 is Due)
Objectives: Evaluate alternative methods for comparing health care systems.

Week 4: Sick Around the World, Video Presentations
Objectives: Evaluate how the UK, Japan, Germany, Taiwan and Switzerland deliver care?

FRONTLINE teams up with veteran Washington Post foreign correspondent T.R. Reid to find out how five other capitalist democracies -- the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Taiwan and Switzerland -- deliver health care, and what the United States might learn from their successes and their failures.

Week 5: The English NHS
Objectives: Describe the English NHS; Compare the performance of the English NHS with other health systems; Assess recent proposal for reform.


Week 6: The German Health Care System: Historical and Political Perspectives
Objective: Describe the German health care system.

Established Governance Structures.” J. of Health Care Policy, Politics and Law (30(1-2).
Peter T Sawicki, and Hilda Bastian. 2008. “German health care: a bit of Bismarck plus more
Stephanie Stock, Anna Drabik, Guido Büscher, Christian Graf, Walter Ullrich, Andreas Gerber,
Carl W. Lauterbach, and Markus Lüngen. 2010. “German Diabetes Management
Programs Improve Quality Of Care And Curb Costs” Health Affairs 29: 2197-2205.
Health in Germany. Gesundheitswesen (Bundesverband der Ärzte des Öffentlichen
Gesundheitsdienstes (Germany)). 78(2). p.113.

Week 7: French Exceptionalism in Health Care Reform: Is the Status Quo Sustainable?
Objective: Describe and assess the French health care system.

Gusmano, M.K., D. Weisz, V.G. Rodwin, J. Lang, M. Qian, A. Bocquiere, V. Moysan, and P.
Washington: Jan 2003. Vol. 93, Iss. 1; pg. 31, 7
Copenhagen. The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.
Monika Steffen. 2016. “Universalism, Responsiveness, Sustainability — Regulating  the French
Health Care System,” NEJM February 4: 401-405.

Week 8: U.S. Health System: Lessons from Abroad (Paper #2 is Due)
Objectives: Identify lessons from other health care systems that might be applied to the U.S.

AJPH 93(1): 52-56.
Long-Running Health Care Debate” Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law 36(3):
567-570.
Pollack, Harold. 2015. “Medicare for All— If It Were Politically Possible—Would Necessarily
Replicate the Defects of Our Current System,” Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law
doi: 10.1215/03616878-3150172
Seidman, Lawrence. 2015. “The Affordable Care Act versus Medicare for All,” Journal of Health
Week 9: The Experiences of Smaller Nations  
Objectives: Evaluate the health care systems of several smaller countries around the world. Compare these systems to France, Germany, the UK and the US.


Week 10: BRICS Health Systems: An Overview  
Objectives: Compare the health care systems in Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.


Week 11: BRICS Health Systems: Achieving Universal Health Coverage  
Objectives: Assess the extent to which BRIC Nations have achieve the goal of universal health coverage


Week 12: Governing Global Health (Paper #2 is due)
Objectives: Describe the current system for governing global health

Governing Global Health: Who Runs the World and Why? Chapters 1 and 2

Week 13: Financing Global Health
Objectives: Describe how global public health programs are financed.


Week 14: Reforming Global Health Governance
Objectives: Assess proposals to improve global public health governance.

Governing Global Health: Who Runs the World and Why? Chapters 6 and 7

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.

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.