Political Analysis And Strategy For U.S. Health Policy:
HPM 247 / SUP 575
Harvard University
Harvard School of Public Health / Harvard Kennedy School
Spring 2011
Course Syllabus

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Meeting Time and Place:  3:30 p.m. - 5:20 p.m., MW, FXB G12 at HSPH

Course Dates: January 24 – May 4.
Note to HKS students: The in-class final exam on May 4 is during the HKS reading period, so please plan accordingly. Class will not meet the week of May 9.

Course Overview
This course offers political and analytical insights into understanding U.S. health policymaking and into developing strategies that influence health policy outcomes. The course provides both the theoretical basis and strategic skills for influencing the health policy process within U.S. political institutions. In addition, this course addresses the politics of agenda-setting and health care; the press, politics, and health policy; pollsters and political institutions; White House politics; health politics and the states; and health politics abroad.

Course Objectives
This course is designed to meet the following objectives:
1) To analyze the politics of major health policy developments in the United States;
2) To develop political strategies for influencing health policy;
3) To understand the ways political analysis can improve health policy research and its implementation;
4) To develop skills in political strategy and case analysis.
Subjects Covered

I. Health Politics
   • The Politics of Health Care
   • The Politics of Agendas
   • The Politics of Health Care Reform
   • Health Politics from The States
   • Politics and Policy Research
   • The Future of Health Policy and Its Politics

II. The Strategy of Health Politics
   • The Media in Health Politics
   • Influencing Issues and Elections
   • Influencing Public Opinion
   • Strategies for Interests Groups
   • Influencing Political Institutions

In addition, there will be six case studies that illustrate and probe the topics outlined above.

Course Requirements Overview
Students will be expected to complete assigned readings, participate in class discussions, prepare for case discussions, and write two political strategy/policy memos. The final exam will be given during the last day of class.

Case Assignments
All students are expected to submit a political strategy memo on two selected cases for political analysis and to prepare for a class presentation of one of those. The memo is due the day of case discussion, prior to the presentation. Late materials will not be accepted without prior discussion with a teaching fellow and permission from the instructor.

Political strategy memos should be no more than 5 pages, double spaced, one inch margins, with no less than 11 point font. References should be included on separate pages and do not count toward the page limit. Appendices are not required and will not be graded. If these memo formatting rules are not followed, points will be deducted from the memo grade.

Electronic Materials
This class uses the HSPH course website for HPM 273 to post lecture slides, supplementary materials, and some announcements (which can be found at www.hsph.harvard.edu).

If you are interested, additional articles, poll data, and other items related to Dr. Blendon’s research can be found at www.hsph.harvard.edu/horp.
**Course Grading**

Final grades for the course will be determined as follows:

- Class Participation/Memo Presentation: 15%
- Political Strategy Memo 1: 20%
- Political Strategy Memo 2: 20%
- Final Exam: 45%

**Class Protocol**

Students are expected to attend all classes. Please email the teaching fellow if you expect to be absent. During class, *cell phones must be turned off or to vibrate mode*. If you need to respond to a call, please step outside the room. During class, students are asked not to use the Internet for email or other purposes.

**Course Participants**

All students are welcome, no prerequisites are required. However, students will benefit most from this course if their professional interests include improving their skills and insights into how to influence the outcomes of future health policy debates effectively. The principal focus of the course is political strategy in this field, rather than the more theoretical aspects of the politics of health policy. Enrollment is limited to those students taking the course for credit and is NOT open to auditors. Undergraduate students are not allowed to take the course pass/fail.

**Required Readings**

*Books:*

  (Although we encourage you to read the entire book, we have assigned less than half of the chapters to ensure a manageable workload. Chapters 1-3, 5-6, 10, 14-16 and Epilogue are required readings.)
  (Part I is required reading. Part II provides an overview of the main provisions contained in the health reform legislation. This is useful background material but not required.)

*Additional Readings:*

Course packets with additional readings are available for purchase in the HSPH Course Materials Office. This is located on the ground floor of Kresge. Readings that are available online through the Harvard Libraries are linked to on the course website and not included in the course packet.

Required books and a copy of the course packet are available on reserve at Countway and the Kennedy School Library.
Recommended Readings
We suggest that students have read prior to enrollment:


Session 1: The Politics of Health Care
1/24/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 2: Data for Political Strategy
1/26/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 3: Developing a Political Strategy for Health Politics
1/31/2011 Robert J. Blendon and Ricky Gonzales, Ph.D. Program in Health Policy

Assigned Readings:
Session 4: The Politics of Special Interests
2/2/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 5: The Media and Public Opinion
2/7/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 6: History of Politics of the National Healthcare Reform Debate
2/14/2011 Mike Botta, PhD Program in Health Policy

Assigned Readings:
Session 7: Campaigns, Elections, and Health Policy  
2/9/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 8: Educating and Influencing the Broader Public  
2/16/2011 Guest: Mollyann Brodie, Senior Vice President, Director of Public Opinion and Media Research, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Assigned Readings:

2/21/2011: NO CLASS: President’s Day
Session 9: Case Discussion 1: Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit  
2/23/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 10: Designing Health Policies for Presidential Candidates  
2/28/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 11: Health Politics in the States  
3/2/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:
Session 12:  Case Discussion 2:  South Dakota Referendum on Abortion
3/7/2011  Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:
Slevin P. “S. Dakota Becomes Abortion Focal Point; Voters to Decide Fate of State Ban.” The Washington Post, August 28, 2006: A10. [ON-LINE]

Session 13:  Case Discussion 3:  HPV Vaccine [Tentative]
3/9/2011  Robert J. Blendon and Sara Abiola

Assigned Readings:
TBA

3/12-3/20  Spring Break

Session 14:  Case Discussion 4:  Massachusetts Health Reform
3/21/2011  Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:
Case: 2006 Health Reform in Massachusetts by Tara Sussman
Including Appendix 1- Conference Committee on Health Care Access and Affordability Report “Building a Healthier, Better Future” and
Appendix 2- Preliminary Comparison of House and Senate Bills Prepared by V. Pulos of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute)

Session 15:  The Massachusetts Health Care Plan: A Political Perspective
3/23/2011  Guest: Nancy Turnbull Senior Lecturer on Health Policy/Associate Dean for Educational Programs at Harvard School of Public Health

Revised: December 9, 2010
Session 16:  Review Session
3/28/2011  Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 17:  Health Politics in the U.S. House
3/30/2011  Guest: Brian Biles, Former Health Staff Director, House Ways and Means Committee

Assigned Readings:

Session 18:  Health Politics in the U.S. Senate
4/4/2011  Guest: Sheila Burke, Former Chief of Staff, Senator Robert Dole, Kansas

Assigned Readings:

Session 19:  Public Trust in Health Policy
4/6/2011  Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:
Session 20:  Case Discussion 5: The Clinton Health Plan  
4/11/2011    Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 21:  Health Politics and Law [Tentative]  
4/13/2011    Sara Abiola, JD, PhD Program in Health Policy

Assigned Readings:
TBA

Session 22:  Politics and Policy Research  
4/18/2011    Guest: Diane Rowland, Executive Director, Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, Executive Vice President, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Former Deputy Assistant Secretary, HHS

Assigned Readings:

Session 23:  Case Discussion 6: The Obama Health Plan  
4/20/2011    Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Revised: December 9, 2010
Session 24: Analyzing the Political Strategy of the Obama Health Plan
4/25/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:
Washington Post Staff. Landmark: The Inside Story of America’s New Health-Care Law and What It Means for Us All. New York: Public Affairs. 2010. (Part I is required reading. Part II provides an overview of the main provisions contained in the health reform legislation; this is useful background material but not required.)

Session 25: Class Discussion: Solving Medicare’s Funding Problem
4/27/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 26: Course Wrap-up and Review
5/2/2011 Robert J. Blendon

Assigned Readings:

Session 27: Final Exam (in class)
5/4/2011