

**Wednesdays, 3:15– 5:15 pm
Walsh 494B**

**HEALTH POLICY AND POLITICS
PPOL 642**

**Karen Pollitz, M.P.P.¹
Fall, 2006**

This seminar explores the policy and politics of health “reform” by involving students in the critical debates on health insurance and the uninsured that dominate the policy and politics of U.S. health financing. The focus of the course is on expanding health insurance for people under age 65 in the US, with particular emphasis on private health insurance coverage, how it works, and how it might be changed.

In this class you will learn:

- How to think analytically and politically about health financing, in terms of tradeoffs, incentives, ideologies, and interests.
- How to communicate—orally and in writing, both to analyze and to advocate.

The class will begin by exploring why the U.S. health financing system is the way it is: how public and private roles in insurance have evolved, why most people have health insurance but so many don't; why health care is so expensive; and how the policy and political choices underlying the current system both promote and impede policy change. We will then explore recent and current proposals to expand health coverage. Drawing on this background, students will analyze, discuss and debate the policy and political merits of various reform strategies.

Students are expected to attend weekly lectures, complete assigned reading before each class, and participate in classroom discussions. Most assigned readings are available online with links included in this syllabus. Reprints of other readings are available under “Course Documents” on Blackboard.

Two short writing assignments will provide an opportunity to explore specific issues in depth; students will also give brief oral presentations to the class summarizing what they learned through these short papers. A longer paper, assigned toward the end of the semester, will require design of a health reform public policy approach. Issues from this final paper will be debated in roundtable discussions during the final two class sessions. Additional information about written assignments will be distributed in class.

¹Office hours by appointment, 3300 Whitehaven Street NW, Suite 5000; email pollitzk@georgetown.edu. or call 687-3003.

Grades will be based on written work, oral presentations, and class discussion as follows: Short papers 15% each; oral presentation of short papers 10% each; long paper 30%; roundtable discussion 10%; and class participation 10%.

Part I. The Health Insurance System We Have

1. August 30: What is health insurance all about?

Note: The following materials should be read prior to the first class.

Readings:

“Executive Summary,” Coverage Matters: Insurance and HealthCare, Institute of Medicine, 2001, pp. 1-18

“The Uninsured: A Primer” Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, January 2006. Available online at <http://www.kff.org/uninsured/upload/7451.pdf>

Cathy Schoen, Michelle M. Doty, Sara R. Collins, and Alyssa L. Holmgren, “Insured But Not Protected: How Many Adults Are Underinsured?” *Health Affairs*, 2005, pp. 1-14

“Medicare At a Glance,” A Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Fact Sheet, July 2006. Available online at Available online at <http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/1066-09.pdf>

“The Medicaid Program At a Glance,” Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, May 2006. Available online at <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/upload/7235.pdf>

First short paper assignment: In class on August 30, students will be assigned a topic for the first short paper assignment (up to 2 pages single spaced). Students will be asked to describe a specific program or consumer protection and its relevance to the US health coverage system overall. Students will also make a brief (3 minute) oral presentation to the class summarizing what they have learned. Short papers are due September 6 and students should be ready to present their oral briefing starting on September 6.

2. September 6: Evolution and Entrenchment of the Public/Private Patchwork*

Readings:

Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State*, 2002, pp. 179-292

Paul Starr, The Triumph of Accommodation: The Rise of Private Health Plans in America, 1929-1959 *Journal of Health Policy Politics and Law*, Fall 1982

Donald Moran, “Whence and Whither Health Insurance? A Revisionist History,” *Health Affairs*, November/December 2005

Thomas Bodenheimer, “The Political Divide In Health Care: A Liberal Perspective,” *Health Affairs*, November/December 2005

Medicare and Medicaid: A Timeline of Key Developments. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005 Available online (please follow internal links, too) at <http://www.kff.org/medicare/medicaretimeline.cfm> and http://www.kff.org/medicaid/medicaid_timeline.cfm

3. September 13: Understanding Private Health Insurance

Readings:

Deborah Stone, “The Struggle for the Soul of Health Insurance,” in *The Politics of Health Care Reform*, Morone and Belkin eds., 1994, pp. 26-56

Claxton, Gary, “How Private Insurance Works: A Primer,” A Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Report, April 2002. Available online at <http://www.kff.org/insurance/2255-index.cfm>

Karen Pollitz, Richard Sorian, and Kathy Thomas, “How Accessible is Individual Health Insurance for Consumers in Less-Than-Perfect Health?” (Executive Summary), Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001. Available online at <http://www.kff.org/insurance/3136-index.cfm>

Claudia H. Williams and Beth C. Fuchs, “Expanding the Individual Health Insurance Market: Lessons from the State Reforms of the 1990s,” The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, June 2004. Available online at http://www.rwjf.org/publications/synthesis/reports_and_briefs/issue4.html (Note: see policy brief *and* report)

James C. Robinson, “Renewed Emphasis On Consumer Cost Sharing In Health Insurance Benefit Design,” *Health Affairs*, 2002, pp. 1-16

Karen Pollitz, *Understanding Private Health Insurance*, National Endowment for

Financial Education, 2006. Available online at www.healthinsuranceinfo.net

Part II. Changing the Health Insurance System: Recent and Current Proposals

4. September 20: The Clinton Plan

Readings:

U.S. Congress, Congressional Budget Office, *An Analysis of the Administration's Health Proposal* (Washington, D.C.: February 8, 1994), pp. 1-24

Haynes Johnson and David Broder, "The Players," pp. xv-xvii and "The Delivery Room," pp. 1-54 in *The System*, 1996

Allen Schick, "How a Bill Did Not Become a Law," *Intensive Care*, T.E. Mann and J.J. Ornstein (eds.) Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute and The Brookings Institution, 1995

5. September 27: Incremental Reform Goals and Concepts

Readings:

Congressional Budget Office, *How Many People Lack Health Insurance and For How Long?*, May 2003, pp. 419-452 Available online at <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/42xx/doc4210/05-12-Uninsured.pdf>

Judith Feder and Sheila Burke, eds., "Options for Expanding Health Insurance Coverage: A Report on a Policy Roundtable," Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, October 1999, pp. 1-18, 22-30, 43-51. Available online at <http://www.kff.org/uninsured/1531-index.cfm>

Judith Feder, "Crowd Out and the Politics of Health Reform," *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*, April 2004.

Sherry A. Glied, "Challenges and Options for Increasing the Number of Americans with Health Insurance," *Inquiry*, Summer 2001, pp. 90-105

Alan Weil, "Expanding Access through Public Coverage: Permitting Families to Use Tax Credits to Buy into Medicaid or SCHIP," *Inquiry*, Summer 2001, pp. 146-158

Beth Fuchs, “Increasing Health Insurance Coverage through an Extended Federal Employees Health Benefits Program,” *Inquiry*, Summer 2001, pp. 177-91

Richard Curtis et.al, “Private Purchasing Pools to Harness Individual Tax Credits for Consumers,” *Inquiry*, Summer 2001, pp. 159-175

Mark Merlis, “Public Subsidies for Employees’ Contributions to Employer-Sponsored Insurance,” *Inquiry*, Summer 2001, pp. 121-132

Pamela Farley Short et al., “A Workable Solution for the Pre-Medicare Population,” *Inquiry*, Summer 2001, pp. 214-233

Second Short Paper Assignment: In class, on September 27, students will be assigned a case study based on a real person who has experienced problems getting and keeping health insurance. Working in small teams and relying on additional resources to be provided in class, students will analyze the availability and effectiveness of various health coverage assistance options and recommend public policy changes to address problems presented in the case study. Please draft a short paper, no longer than 5 pages, summarizing findings and recommendations, and prepare an oral briefing for the class, no longer than 5 minutes. Short papers are due class on October 11. Oral presentations will begin on that date and continue for several weeks, but students should be ready to make presentations starting on October 11.

6. October 4: Health Care and Health Insurance Costs

Readings:

Office of the Actuary, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, National Health Expenditure Data, 2004. Available online at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/downloads/highlights.pdf>

David Cutler, *Your Money or Your Life*, 2004, pp. ix-99

Joseph P. Newhouse, “Comments on Stuart Altman’s Paper,” Conference, Boston Federal Reserve Bank, June 2005

Gerard Anderson et al., “Health Spending In the United States and the Rest of the Industrialized World,” *Health Affairs*, July/August 2005

David Blumenthal, “Employer-Sponsored Insurance – Riding the Health Care Tiger,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, July 13, 2006. Available online at <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/355/2/195>

Michael Wilkes et al., “Direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising: trends, impact, and implications,” *Health Affairs*, March/April, 2000

Geeta Anand, “How Drugs for Rare Diseases Became Lifeline for Companies,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2005

Henry Aaron, “Health Care Rationing: What it Means,” *Policy Brief*, The Brookings Institution, December 2005

7. October 11: Health Insurance Subsidies: Tax Credits and Reinsurance

Readings:

Mark Pauly, “Extending Health Insurance Through Insurance Credits,” Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Project on Incremental Health Reform, Conference on Options for Expanding Health Insurance Coverage, February 17, 1999. Available online at <http://www.kff.org/uninsured/19991112c-index.cfm>

Leonard Burman and Jonathan Gruber, “Tax Credits for Health Insurance,” Tax Policy Center, June 2005, pp. 1-44

Jonathan Gruber and Larry Levitt, “Tax Subsidies For Health Insurance: Costs and Benefits,” *Health Affairs*, 2000, pp. 72-85

Title II of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-210). Available online at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ210.107.pdf

Stan Dorn et al., “Limited Take-Up of Health Coverage Tax Credits: A Challenge to Future Tax Credit Design” Commonwealth Fund Issue Brief, October 2005. Available online at http://www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/Dorn_limited_take-up_tax_credits_869_ib.pdf

Katherine Swartz, *Reinsuring Health*, Russell Sage Foundation, 2006. Chapters 6-7

Deborah Chollet, “The Role of Reinsurance in State Efforts to Expand Coverage,” State Coverage Initiatives Issue Brief, October 2004. Available online at <http://www.statecoverage.net/pdf/issuebrief1004.pdf>

8. October 18: Promoting Consumerism: HSAs and CDHPs

Readings:

Beth Fuchs and Julia James, “Health Savings Accounts: The Fundamentals” National Health Policy Forum Background Paper, April 11, 2005. Available online at http://www.nhpf.org/pdfs_bp/BP_HSAs_04-11-05.pdf

Lydia Regopoulos et al., “Consumer-Directed Health Insurance Products: Local-Market Perspectives” *Health Affairs* May/June 2006

Devon Herrick, “Consumer Driven Health Care: the Changing Role of the Patient,” National Center for Policy Analysis Report, May 2005. Available online at <http://www.heartland.org/pdf/17863.pdf>

Sherry Glied et al, “Bare-Bones Health Plans: Are They Worth the Money?” The Commonwealth Fund, May 2002. Available online at http://www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/glied_barebones_518.pdf

Meredith Rosenthal and Norman Daniels, “Beyond Competition: The Normative Implications of Consumer-Driven Health Plans” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, June 2006 [to be supplied]

John Garamendi, “Priced Out: Health Care in California” California Department of Insurance Report, 2005, p. 1-32. Available online at <http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0100-press-releases/0080-2005/upload/Priced-Out-Health-Care-in-California.pdf>

9. October 25: Regulation, De-Regulation and Re-Regulation

Mila Kofman, J.D., Guest Lecturer

Readings:

Kirk, Adele M., “Riding the Bull: Experience with Individual Market Reform in Washington, Kentucky, and Massachusetts.” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, February 2000, pp. 133-172.

Mila Kofman and Karen Pollitz, “Health Insurance Regulations by States and the Federal Government: A Review of Current Approaches and Proposals for Change,” Alliance for Health Reform Issue Brief, April 2006. Available online at <http://www.allhealth.org/briefingmaterials/HealthInsuranceReportKofmanandPollitz-95.pdf>

Len Nichols, “First Do No Harm, Then Do the Right Thing,” Statement to Senate Finance Committee, April 6, 2002. Available online at <http://www.allhealth.org/briefingmaterials/LenNicholsTestimony-118.pdf>

Joseph Rossman, “Health Care Coverage for Small Business: Challenges and Opportunities,” Statement to Senate Finance Committee, April 6, 2002. Available online at www.allhealth.org/briefingmaterials/JoeRossmanTestimony-117.pdf

Final paper assignment. Students will be assigned a health reform proposal topic and asked to draft a briefing memo taking a position, pro or con, on the approach. Additional information about this assignment will be provided in class. Briefing papers should be no longer than 15 pages double spaced, and should be accompanied by a brief one-page summary of key points and arguments. Papers are due on November 22 and should be submitted via email no later than 5 pm. *However, students who would like feedback on their work prior to this deadline are encouraged to discuss their ideas, outlines, and drafts with me prior to November 15.* The final two class sessions are reserved for roundtable sessions during which students will present arguments for or against their assigned proposals and engage classmates in more extensive discussion.

10. November 1: Expanding Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance

Claudia Williams, “Tax Subsidies for Private Health Insurance: Who Currently Benefits and What are the Implications for New Policies?” based on “Tax Incentives for Health Insurance” report, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, May 2003. Available online at http://www.rwjf.org/publications/synthesis/reports_and_briefs/issue3.html

Jon Gabel et al., “Health Benefits In 2005: Premium Increases Slow Down, Coverage Continues To Erode,” *Health Affairs*, 2005, pp. 1-8

William S. Custer, Charles N. Kahn III, and Thomas F. Wildsmith IV, “Why We Should Keep The Employment-Based Health Insurance System,” *Health Affairs*, 1999, pp. 115-123

Uwe E. Reinhardt, "Employer-Based Health Insurance: A Balance Sheet," *Health Affairs*, 1999, pp. 124-132

Deborah Chollet, "State Regulation and Initiatives to Expand Small Group Coverage," Statement to Senate Finance Committee, April 6, 2002. Available online at <http://www.allhealth.org/briefingmaterials/CholletTestimony-120.pdf>

Jeanne M. Lambrew, John D. Podesta, and Teresa L. Shaw, "Change In Challenging Times: A Plan For Extending And Improving Health Coverage," *Health Affairs*, 2005, pp. 119-132

"Individual and Employer Mandates – Renewed State Interest" *St@teside*, State Coverage Initiatives, June 20, 2006. Available online at <http://news.statecoverage.net/ahstsd/issues/2006-06-20/5.html> (Also click on links to articles on Massachusetts and Vermont)

Reed Abelson and Michael Barbaro, "Judge Gives Wal-Mart Reprieve on Benefits," *New York Times*, July 20, 2006

11. November 8: High-Risk Pools

Readings:

Katherine Swartz, Reinsuring Health, Russell Sage Foundation, 2006. Chapter 5

Lori Achman and Deborah Chollet, "Insuring the Uninsurable: An Overview of State High-Risk Pools," The Commonwealth Fund, August 2001. Available online at http://www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/achman_uninsurable_472.pdf

Karen Pollitz and Eliza Bangit, "Federal Aid to State High-Risk Pools: Promoting Health Insurance Coverage or Providing Fiscal Relief?" The Commonwealth Fund, November 2005. Available online at http://www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/Pollitz_highriskpools_875.pdf

Bruce Abbe, Comprehensive Health Insurance for High Risk Individuals, Nineteenth Edition, 2005/2006, pp 13-19, 29-39

12. November 15: The Politics and Policy of Expanding Public Coverage

Readings:

"Proposal of the Physicians' Working Group for Single-Payer National Health Insurance," *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2003, pp. 798-805

Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, "Why Can't We Do What They Do? National Health

Reform Abroad,” *Law, Medicine, & Ethics*, 2004, pp. 433-441

Randall R. Bovbjerg et al., “State and Federal Roles in Health Care: Rationales for Allocating Responsibilities” in *Federalism and Health Policy*, 2003, pp. 25-58

Lawrence D. Brown and Michael S. Sparer, “Poor Program’s Progress: The Unanticipated Politics of Medicaid,” *Health Affairs*, 2003, pp. 31-44

Alan Weil, “There’s Something About Medicaid,” *Health Affairs*, 2003, pp. 13-30

Jocelyn Guyer et al., “A Review of Key Medicaid Provisions Affecting Children and Families,” GPPI: Health Policy Institute, March 2006. Available online at <http://jonesd.ihcrp.georgetown.edu/~jonesd3/reconbrief013006.pdf>

Jeanne Lambrew, “Making Medicaid a Block Grant Program,” *Milbank Quarterly*, March 2005, pp. 41-63

Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, “The Tenuous Nature of The Medicaid Entitlement,” *Health Affairs*, 2003, pp. 145-153

November 22: Class Will Not Meet – Happy Thanksgiving!

13. November 29: Roundtable Discussion #1

14. December 6: Roundtable Discussion #2