

Pitt Public Health

HPM 2063

The Politics of Health Policy

Course Meeting Days and Times: Thursday 1-2:45pm

Class Location: A719 Public Health -- Crabtree

Credit Hours 2

Spring 2025

Logistics/Contact Information:

Instructor: Miranda Yaver, PhD

Office: A654 Public Health

Email: miranda.yaver@pitt.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30 or by appointment

Course Rationale

This course, HPM 2063, The Politics of Health Policy, is a required course for all MPH students in the Department of Health Policy & Management (HPM).

Course Description

This 2-credit course is designed to provide an understanding of the key political dimensions of the health policy-making process in the United States. The course is designed for students with an interest in health policy, although no previous formal training in policy or politics is required. We will examine the roles of government institutions and political actors both inside and outside government in developing and implementing health policy. Perspectives from both elite actors and community activists will be considered in the context of using politics and policy to advance public health. Historical and present health policy debates will be used to illustrate the concepts and theories discussed in class. Students will acquire an understanding of the political processes in which health policies are considered and gain practical experience executing political strategies in the context of health policy.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe U.S. political institutions and understand how they interact in the formulation of health policies.
2. Develop an understanding of the key differences and tensions between *policy* analysis vs. *political*
3. Build skills in the areas of issue advocacy, coalition building, and community organizing.
4. Apply political science theories to current health policy issues and debates.
5. Analyze the role of elite and community actors and processes in the development of health policymaking and implementation.

REQUIRED Textbook

In this course, we will be using the textbook, *Health Politics and Policy, 6th Edition*, by James Morone and Dan Ehlke. This textbook will be supplemented with articles from the disciplines of political science, public policy, and health policy, and will be available on Canvas. These readings may be supplemented and/or changed as deemed appropriate.

Canvas Instructions

This course utilizes Canvas. Students are expected to regularly utilize Canvas for readings and information regarding assignments. Canvas announcements will be used to provide any updates to readings and assignments so be sure to set your Canvas settings accordingly. This website provides useful information regarding using Canvas: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student>

Class Expectations/Behavior and Ground Rules

Each student is expected to read the assigned materials and be prepared to discuss them in class. Your active participation in the course is required in the form of in-class exercises, group discussions and debates, exams, attendance at lectures, viewing any recorded material in advance, and presentations.

In order to provide an effective learning environment, ***please use computers/iPads for class purposes only and turn off cellphones prior to class.*** If you cannot turn your phone off, please set it to vibrate rather than ring.

Student Performance Evaluation

Grades for the course will follow the letter format:

93 – 100%	A	73 – 76%	C
90 – 92%	A-	70 – 72%	C-
87 – 89%	B+	68 – 69%	D+
83 – 86%	B	63 – 67%	D
80 – 82%	B-	60 – 62%	D-
77 – 79%	C+	< 60%	F

Assignments and Descriptions

Course grades are determined as follows, based on a maximum possible 100 points:

- 1. Final Exam** (20 points) – 48 hour take-home open-book, open-note exam comprised of short answer questions.
- 2. Short Paper** (10 points) – 4-5 page paper (double-spaced) on an example of policy feedback in health policy.
- 2. Data Interpretation and Advocacy Assignment** (20 points) – In groups of approximately 3, write a 2-3-page memo and an accompanying graphic (figure or table) based on an interpretation of a public opinion poll data set, from the position of a public health/health care advocacy organization.
- 3. Field Work Assignment** (10 points) – Engage in organizing conversations with three other public health students, regarding avenues for health reform. Develop a three-page memo summarizing your assessment.
- 4. Community Organizing Assignment** (30 points) – In groups of approximately 3, choose a relatively broad health policy topic of interest to you (*e.g.*, carceral health, private equity in health, food insecurity, dental health, opioid epidemic, nursing home quality & safety, physician shortage), choose a local community that is relevant to your topic, use available data to develop a description of the relevant community, write a plan for how to conduct initial outreach in the community and write an organizing script, develop goals for the organizing and how to develop a campaign around the issue, identify expected allies and adversaries, and identify what you expect to be the core political factors conducive to or hindering success. Present the project for the class (15 minutes).

5. Engagement (10 points possible) – This grade is based on a student’s behavior in the classroom, including attendance, class participation, attendance in office hours, and communication with the professor regarding course content.

In addition to attending class and using technology appropriately, students should actively participate in class discussions, debates, and group exercises in a respectful and constructive manner.

Assignment Submission/Late Work Policy

All students are expected to complete all assignments and exams on time. If an extension is needed due to extenuating circumstances, the student must request an extension prior to the due date. Extensions requested after the deadline will not be granted. For late assignments that were not granted an extension by the instructor, a one-third letter grade reduction will be applied per day late. Late assignments will not be accepted for partial credit more than one week beyond the deadline.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 as early as possible in the term.

Academic

Integrity

Statement

All students are expected to adhere to the school’s standards of academic honesty. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Pitt Public Health’s policy on academic integrity, which is based on the University policy, is available online in the Pitt Public Health Academic Handbook www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-requirements. The policy includes obligations for faculty and students, procedures for adjudicating violations, and other critical information. Please take the time to read this policy.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting and Title IX Statement

If you are experiencing sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking, please report it to me and I will connect you to University resources to support you.

University faculty and staff members are required to report all instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence to the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. When a report is made, individuals can expect to be contacted by the Title IX Office with information about support resources and options related to safety, accommodations, process, and policy. I encourage you to use the services and resources that may be most helpful to you.

As your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me. You can also report directly to Office of Civil Rights and Title IX: 412-648-7860 (M-F; 8:30am-5:00pm) or via the Pitt Concern Connection at: [Make A Report](#)

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as a relevant part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University’s Title IX office.

If you wish to make a confidential report, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- The University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)
- Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (community resource): 1-866-363-7273 (24/7)

If you have an immediate safety concern, please contact Pitt Police, 412-624-2121

Any form of sexual harassment or violence will not be excused or tolerated at the University of Pittsburgh.

For additional information, please visit the [full syllabus statement](#) on the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webpage.

From the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity Statement

The University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. Pitt Public Health is committed to creating and fostering inclusive learning environments that value human dignity and equity and promote social justice. Every member of our community is expected to be respectful of the individual perspectives, experiences, behaviors, worldviews, and backgrounds of others. While intellectual disagreement may be constructive, no derogatory statements, or demeaning or discriminatory behavior will be permitted.

If you feel uncomfortable or would like to discuss a situation, please contact any of the following:

- the course director or course instructor;
- the [Pitt Public Health Associate Dean responsible for diversity and inclusion](#);
- the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion at 412-648-7860 or <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civil-rights-title-ix-compliance/make-report/report-form> (anonymous reporting form)

Gender Inclusive Language Statement

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Content Warning and Class Climate Statement

Our course readings and classroom discussions may focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful

(even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach me ahead of time if you would like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

Statement on Scholarly Discourse

In this course we will be discussing very complex issues of which all of us have strong feelings and, in most cases, unfounded attitudes. It is essential that we approach this endeavor with our minds open to evidence that may conflict with our presuppositions. Moreover, it is vital that we treat each other’s opinions and comments with courtesy even when they diverge and conflict with our own. We must avoid personal attacks and the use of ad hominem arguments to invalidate each other’s positions. Instead, we must develop a culture of civil argumentation, wherein all positions have the right to be defended and argued against in intellectually reasoned ways. It is this standard that everyone must accept in order to stay in this class; a standard that applies to all inquiry in the university, but whose observance is especially important in a course whose subject matter is so emotionally charged.

Campus Resources

The University Counseling Center is here for you: call 412-648-7930 and visit their website.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, call someone immediately, day or night:

- University Counseling Center (UCC): 412 648-7930
- University Counseling Center Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930 x1
- Resolve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226 (888-7-YOU-CAN)

If the situation is life threatening, call the Police:

- On-campus: Pitt Police: 412-624 -2121
- Off-campus: 911

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed to improve your learning experience. If I change the syllabus, I will explain the rationale and the changes at least one week in advance.

Date	Topic	Required Readings
January 9	Course Overview Introduction to Health Politics	<i>Health Politics and Policy</i> , Introduction Lynch, Julia. “The Political Economy of Health: Bringing Political Science Back in.” <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> . https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-103015

Date	Topic	Required Readings
		<p>“What Trump’s 2024 Victory Means for the Affordable Care Act.” https://www.kff.org/quick-take/what-trumps-2024-victory-means-for-the-affordable-care-act/</p>
January 16	A Brief History of Health Policy	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 1</p> <p>Oberlander, Jonathan. “Learning from Failure in Health Reform.” <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i>. https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp078201</p> <p>Cohn, Jonathan. “The ACA, Repeal, and the Politics of Backlash.” <i>Health Affairs</i>, https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/aca-repeal-and-politics-backlash</p> <p>Starr, Paul. “Rebounding with Medicare: Reform and Counterreform in American Health Policy.” <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>. https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/43/4/707/134455/Rebounding-with-Medicare-Reform-and-Counterreform</p>
January 23	Structural Racism in American Politics and Health Policy	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 4</p> <p>Michener, Jamila and Alana LeBron. “Racism, Health, and Politics: Advancing Interdisciplinary Knowledge.” <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>. https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/47/2/111/181612/Racism-Health-and-Politics-Advancing</p> <p>Michener, Jamila. “Politics, Pandemic, and Racial Justice Through the Lens of Medicaid.” <i>American Journal of Public Health</i>, https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2020.306126?casa_token=Zu-xuvDzt8AAAAA:hzvEphqfAPauw5n9_rGtgAKOHdYF7LtigmaScudGEfsYVarOxpRjPLFD_kao12bxg5SXFDeuW8_s</p> <p>“The Black Maternal Health Crisis: Federal and State Policy Solutions.” Institute for Women’s Policy Research Issue Brief. https://iwpr.org/the-black-maternal-health-crisis-federal-and-state-policy-solutions/</p>
January 30	Congress and Health Politics	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 5</p> <p>Volden, Craig and Alan Wiseman. “Breaking Gridlock: The Determinants of Health Policy Change in Congress.” <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i> https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article-abstract/36/2/227/13357/Breaking-Gridlock-The-Determinants-of-Health</p> <p>Garlick, Alex. “Mercy and Malice: An Inside View of the Push to Repeal and Replace Obamacare.” <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/mercy-and-malice-an-inside-view-of-the-push-to-repeal-and-replace-obamacare/D99E9DDD8FD7D5050B97DBA589E1487A</p>
February 6	Presidents and Health Politics	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 6</p> <p>Bagley, Nicholas. “Executive Power and the ACA.” <i>Book chapter</i>.</p>

Date	Topic	Required Readings
		Gusmano, Michael and Frank Thompson. "The Administrative Presidency, Waivers, and the Affordable Care Act." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i> , https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/45/4/633/160623/The-Administrative-Presidency-Waivers-and-the
February 13	Courts and Health Politics: <i>NFIB</i> , <i>Dobbs</i> , and Beyond	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 7</p> <p>Sunkara, Vasu and Sara Rosenbaum. "The Constitution and the Public's Health: The Consequences of the U.S. Supreme Court's Medicaid Decision in <i>NFIB v. Sebelius</i>." <i>Public Health Reports</i>, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0033354916670870</p> <p>Bagley, Nicholas. "<i>California v. Texas</i> – Ending the Campaign to Undo the ACA in Courts." <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2110516</p> <p>Roth, Louise Marie and Jennifer Hyunkyung Lee. "Undue Burdens: State Abortion Laws in the U.S., 1994-2022." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>, https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/48/4/511/342856/Undue-Burdens-State-Abortion-Laws-in-the-United</p> <p>Harned, Elizabeth and Liza Fuentes. "Abortion Out of Reach: The Exacerbation of Wealth Disparities After <i>Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization</i>." <i>Human Rights</i>, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/wealth-disparities-in-civil-rights/abortion-out-of-reach/</p>
February 20	The Health Care Bureaucracy and the Administrative State	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 8</p> <p>Herd, Pamela and Donald Moynihan. "Administrative Burdens in Health Policy." <i>Journal of Health and Human Services Administration</i>. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.37808/jhhsa.43.1.2</p> <p>Yaver, Miranda. 2024. "Rationing by Inconvenience: How Insurance Denials Induce Administrative Burdens." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>. https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article-abstract/49/4/539/385337/Rationing-by-Inconvenience-How-Insurance-Denials?redirectedFrom=fulltext</p> <p>Hoffman, Allison, Lauren Hallice, Noah Stein, and Rachel Totz. "Drilling Down on <i>Loper Bright</i> and Health Care Regulation." <i>The Regulatory Review</i>, https://www.theregreview.org/2024/11/04/hoffman-hallice-stein-basila-drilling-down-on-loper-bright-and-health-care-regulation/#:~:text=The%20Loper%20Bright%20decision%20leaves,%E2%80%9Cbest%20reading%E2%80%9D%20of%20statutes.</p>
February 27	Federalism and Health Policy Diffusion	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 9</p> <p>Sparer, Michael and Lawrence Brown. "States and the Health Care Crisis: The Limits and Lessons of Laboratory Federalism." <i>Book Chapter</i>.</p> <p>Volden, Craig. "Policy Diffusion in Polarized Times: The Case of the Affordable Care Act." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>, https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/42/2/363/13890/Policy-Diffusion-in-Polarized-Times-The-Case-of</p>

Date	Topic	Required Readings
		Gordon, Sarah, Nicole Huberfeld, and David Jones. "What Federalism Means for the US Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019." <i>JAMA</i> , https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2766033
March 6	NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK	
March 13	Lobbying Over Health Policy	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 16</p> <p>Hertel-Fernandez, Alex, Theda Skocpol, and Daniel Lynch. 2016. "Business Associations, Conservative Networks, and the Ongoing Republican War Over Medicaid Expansion." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i> https://read.dukeupress.edu/jh ppl/article/41/2/239/13814/Business-Associations-Conservative-Networks-and</p> <p>Hacker, Jacob. "Out of Balance: Medicare, Interest Groups, and American Politics." <i>Generations</i>, https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/asag/gen/2015/00000039/0000002/art00020</p> <p>Garlick, Alex. "Legislative Against Medical Advice." <i>Book chapter</i>.</p> <p>Schpero, William, Thomas Wiener, Samuel Carter, and Paula Chatterjee. "Lobbying Expenditures in the U.S. Health Sector, 2000-2020." <i>JAMA Health Forum</i>, https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2797734</p>
March 20	Medicare Politics and Policy	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 11</p> <p>Hacker, Jacob. "Medicare Expansion as a Path as well as Destination: Achieving Universal insurance through a New Politics of Medicare." https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0002716219871017</p> <p>Peterson, Mark. "Third Rail of Politics: The Rise and Fall of Medicare's Untouchability." <i>Book Chapter</i>.</p> <p>Kelly, Andrew. "Private Power in Public Programs: Medicare, Medicaid, and the Structural Power of Private Insurance." <i>Studies in American Political Development</i>, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/studies-in-american-political-development/article/private-power-in-public-programs-medicare-medicaid-and-the-structural-power-of-private-insurance/428CFCC7CD545BEE9BC49843A5383D02</p> <p>Oberlander, Jonathan and Steven Spivack. "Technocratic Dreams, Political Realities: The Rise and Demise of Medicare's Independent Payment Advisory Board." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>, https://read.dukeupress.edu/jh ppl/article/43/3/483/133592/Technocratic-Dreams-Political-Realities-The-Rise</p>
March 27	Medicaid Politics and Policy	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 12</p> <p>Grogan, Colleen. "Medicaid's Post-ACA Paradoxes." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i> https://read.dukeupress.edu/jh ppl/article/45/4/617/160621</p>

Date	Topic	Required Readings
		<p>Herd, Pamela and Rebecca Johnson. "Rationing Rights: Administrative Burden in Medicaid Long Term Care Programs." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i> https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/doi/10.1215/03616878-11567708/391180/Rationing-Rights-Administrative-Burden-in-Medicaid</p> <p>Michener, Jamila. "Medicaid and Policy Feedback Foundations for Universal Health Care." <i>Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i>, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0002716219867905</p>
April 3	Public Opinion on Health Policy	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 17</p> <p>Grogan, Colleen and Sunggeun Park. "Medicaid Retrenchment Politics: Fragmented or Unified?" <i>Journal of Aging & Social Policy</i> https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08959420.2018.1462675#abstract</p> <p>Jacobs, Lawrence and Suzanne Mettler. "When and How New Policy Creates New Politics: Examining the Feedback Effects of the Affordable Care Act on Public Opinion." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i>, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/when-and-how-new-policy-creates-new-politics-examining-the-feedback-effects-of-the-affordable-care-act-on-public-opinion/D6AB7C1731CC530B5674473642C21E45</p> <p>Campbell, Andrea, Nolan Kavanaugh, and Adrianna McIntyre. "Medicare Eligibility and Reported Support for Proposals to Expand Medicare." <i>JAMA</i>, https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2815256</p>
April 10	Public Trust in Medicine and the Health Care System	<p><i>Health Politics and Policy</i>, Ch. 20</p> <p>Del Ponte, Alessandro, Alan Gerber, and Eric Patashnik. "Polarization, the Pandemic, and Public Trust in Health System Actors." <i>Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law</i>. https://read.dukeupress.edu/jhpl/article/49/3/375/383872</p> <p>Jones, David and Monika McDermott. "Partisanship and the Politics of Vaccine Hesitancy." <i>Polity</i>, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/719918</p> <p>Blendon, Robert and John Benson. "Trust in Medicine, the Health System & Public Health." <i>Daedalus</i> https://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/trust-medicine-health-system-public-health</p>
April 17	Class Presentations	