The objective of this course is to understand the origins of the contemporary health care system, particularly focusing on finance, insurance, and systems organization. Public policy scholars talk about “windows” in which reform is possible, when the worsening or growing awareness of a problem intersects with a political situation that allows change and policy ideas that might improve it. We will explore the current debate on health insurance and health care system reform in light of prior moments of reform and retrenchment in US health care in 1914, 1935, 1948, 1965, 1973, and 1993.

Educational Objectives:
1. Describe the financial payment systems for most US health care.
2. Differentiate between the history of the US health care system and those of other industrialized countries.
3. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of current health care proposals in light of the success or failure of similar policy options in the past.

Requirements: Attendance is required. Students will be asked to write a 5-page paper on any question that interests them in health care organization or financing. These papers can include a history of a specific health care program or approach, an analysis of the historical origins of a current problem in health care organization, an analysis of a policy proposal currently being debated or other approaches. Emphases on changes over time or comparative approaches (between countries, states) are particularly encouraged. All students should discuss their paper topics with the professor by the end of the first week to ensure suitability and obtain suggestions for approach or research sources. The class will meet three times per week for two weeks, for a total of 12 hours. Reading in preparation for class is essential.

Evaluation: Students will be graded on class participation (70%) and their paper (30%). Students will graded on the standard range (Honors, High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail) using the standard evaluation form. All students are expected to attend each class session, read assigned material beforehand, and come prepared with at least one question or point for discussion. The student is evaluated based on attendance, preparation for class discussion and participation and the final paper. The grade of Honors will be awarded for a superior and well-researched paper, and contributions to class discussion that show particular insight into the subject matter and contribute to the education and understanding of other students. The grade of Pass reflects commitment and work that is appropriate for the level of training. The grade of Fail denotes deficits in attendance, performance and responsibility.

Reading Material: Articles or chapters from a variety of sources may be used to help illuminate the evolving health care debate this year and its relationship to past choices in US health care.

Feedback: The standard evaluation form includes a faculty feedback section. Student papers will receive written comments, and we will assess group dynamics and participation regularly.

October 12, 2009: Overview of the History of US Health Reform Debates


**October 14, 2009: Structure of the US Health Care System, Providers, Payers and Government**


- Rosemary A. Stevens, Introduction (1-9)

Atul Gawande, *The Cost Conundraum*, *The New Yorker*, June 1, 2009

**October 16, 2009: State Provision of Care: the UK National Health Service**

*Showing and Discussion of PBS Frontline: Sick Around the World*, hosted by T. R. Reid


Optional Reading:


BBC Timeline of UK NHS
http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/int/ms/health/health/timeline/

UK National Health Services Timeline prepared for 60th Anniversary
http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Documents/HistoryNHS.html

**October 19, 2009: State as Regulator of an Insurance Market and Service Providers**


**Resources:**

For information on life expectancy, disease rates and health status around the world: http://www.who.int/whosis/en/

European Observatory on Health System Policies
http://www.euro.who.int/observatory/ctryinfo/ctryinfo

The World Bank, Health Systems & Financing

Health Systems Performance Assessment: Debates, Methods & Empiricism
WHO commissioned report edited by Murray and Evans, Harvard School of Public Health


PBS Timeline of Clinton Health Care Debate
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/may96/background/health_debate_page1.html


Optional Reading:


October 23, 2009: Current Models for Health Care Reform

For Friday compare the major proposals for US Health Care Reform using the Kaiser Family Foundation or Rand Health Compare tools and analyses

http://www.kff.org/healthreform/sidebyside.cfm
http://www.randcompare.org/analysis/


Glossary of Key Health Reform Terms, Kaiser Family Foundation
http://www.kff.org/healthreform/upload/7909.pdf

Optional Reading:


Hayward RA, Kent DM. 6 EZ steps to improving your performance: (or how to make P4P pay 4U!). *JAMA*. 2008 Jul 16;300(3):255-6.

Additional Resources:

Department of Health & Human Services Site on Health Care Reform
http://www.healthreform.gov

2009 US Federal Poverty Guidelines and History of the Measure
http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml
New York Times Interactive Timeline for Health Care Reform (all my major landmarks in the early years, and lots of blow-by-blow for recent events)

New York Times

New England Journal of Medicine Timeline of Health Care Reform with NEJM PDFs
http://healthcarereform.nejm.org/?page_id=1647

New England Journal of Medicine's series of columns, commentaries, and analyses
http://healthcarereform.nejm.org/

Rand Health Compare, Policy Analysis Tools
http://www.randcompare.org/

Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care
-- US expenditures by geographic region, created from Medicare data
Extensive query system available on their website to look at different maps
http://www.dartmouthatlas.org/index.shtm

Washington Post
http://voices.washingtonpost.com/health-care-reform/

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
http://www.rwjf.org/healthreform/

Kaiser Family Foundation
http://healthreform.kff.org/

Commonwealth Fund
http://www.commonwealthfund.org/

American Enterprise Institute (Free Market Think Tank)
http://www.aei.org/ra/43

Heritage Foundation (Conservative Think Tank)
http://www.heritage.org/Research/HealthCare/

National Association of Manufacturers

America's Health Insurance Plans
http://www.ahip.org/

American Association of Retired Persons
http://www.aarp.org/health/articles/health_reform_get_the_facts.html

... and an interesting assessment of the challenge the AARP faces because its members aged 50-64 have different interests in health reform than those 65+