

MHS 1920: The Politics of Health

Medicine, Health, and Society

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Vanderbilt University

Course Description

Harold Lasswell defined politics as “who gets what, when, and how.” As such, studying the “politics” of health requires an investigation of *who* gets *what* and the factors that shape *when* and *how* they are impacted in the arena of health policy and health provision. Governments and political actors shape every facet of the US health care system, despite what many in the public believe. Health policy and health care are fundamental to American politics and the divisions that exist in American politics and society generally shape health disparities and experiences for individuals in the US.

As a result, understanding the world of politics is crucial to practicing medicine, influencing and implementing health policies, or even for understanding the landscape in which any health care organizations operate. Indeed, it is impossible to understand health policy outside of its political context.

We will examine the politics of the US health policy process, including the effects of political structure and institutions; interest groups, classes, and social movements; media and public opinion, and other factors that shape US health care. We will focus both on how health policy gets made and how the public shapes and responds to health policies and outcomes.

Location and Time

- Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:45-4:00pm. Wilson Hall 112
- Professor Office Hours:
 - In-person: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00am-12:00pm; 331 Calhoun Hall
 - Virtually by appointment (Zoom)

COVID-19 Protocols

Per CDC recommendations, Vanderbilt requirements, AND the realities of our inability to social distance in the classroom, **MASKS ARE REQUIRED** to attend this class. We cannot stay six feet apart in the classroom simply as a matter of fact. As a result, during the class session we will wear masks until the guidance from the university changes.

Textbook and Software

- This course requires [*Governing Health*](#) (most recent edition) by Weissert and Weissert.
- Readings beyond the text will be posted within modules on the course Brightspace or linked on the syllabus.

Learning Goals and Assessment

Learning objectives (LOs):

- LO1 Understand and articulate ways in which the distribution of power in society impacts health policies and health outcomes.
- LO2 Explain and critically evaluate the US political system in terms of its effects on health outcomes.
- LO3 Describe the political factors that shape health policy and behaviors in the US.

Assessment:

Final grades will be assigned based on the following weights:

- 20% Attendance/Participation
- 40% In-class Presentations
- 40% Final Project

Assignment and Participation (20%)

- Throughout the class, I will keep a folder of notes on who is attending class and asking questions, contributing to course discussion, and generally showing high vs. low engagement in the course. This includes an assessment of reading preparation for seminar. We will have a great deal of in-class discussions for which reading will be vital.

In-class Reading Presentations (40%)

- In lieu of having a midterm exam, students will select 2 of the “Recommend Readings” from across the semester to present in class. During the corresponding week on the syllabus, students will provide a 15 minute in-class presentation of the main themes/findings of the selected “Recommended Reading.” You are responsible for teaching the class this extra material for the week. Students are expected to be prepared to answer questions and lead a discussion of the reading.
- Presentations will be given a letter grade (A, B, C, F).

Final Project (40%)

- Students will complete an individual research project, due the week of April 25. Instructions and exact details will be provided later in the semester.
- Final projects will be similarly given a letter grade (A, B, C, F).

Grade Feedback and Grade Disputes

Feedback: if you want feedback *only*, you can simply make an appointment with the instructor or come to office hours. Feedback means you're there to listen to learn how to improve or ask questions from lecture.

Disputes: I only accept grade reconsideration requests in writing. You must email me, in writing, to dispute your grade after a 24-hour cooling-off period (yes, you must wait 24 full hours after the grade has been distributed to send this request. I promise this is going to be helpful for both of us). You must include a justification as to why you are disputing your grade. In some cases, I will schedule a meeting with you to discuss the issue.

- **Please keep in mind, grade disputes can lead to grade increases or decreases.**

Subject to Change

- The syllabus is a guide. All assignments and grading decisions are subject to change at professor's discretion. All changes will be announced in class and via email. Grades will be made available on the course website.

Course Schedule and Readings

This is a reading heavy course. You may find reading some of the scientific articles daunting. Fortunately, this skill can be developed with practice and some guidance. Prior to the start of the semester, I recommend reading Amanda Green's "[How To Read Political Science](#)" and Greta Krippner's "[How to Read a \(Quantitative\) Journal Article](#)". Each of these will help you understand how to read complex articles quickly.

*W&W refers to the course text *Governing Health*.

Week	Theme	Required Readings	Recommended
Jan 10-17 (combined due to COVID- 19)	What is health? Politics? Policy? A Brief Recent History of the Politics of Health Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scott. 2019. How the 2010s and Obamacare changed health care. Vox.• Michener. 2020. "Race, Politics and the Affordable Care Act." Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law.• W&W Chapter 1	
Jan 24	The American Welfare State	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taylor and Bradley. 2013. <i>The American</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starr. 1983 (2017 ed.) <i>The Social Transformation of</i>

	<p>and Health Care System</p>	<p><i>Health Care Paradox.</i> Ch. 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nolen et al.2020. “How foundational moments in Medicaid’s history reinforced rather than eliminated racial health disparities.” Health Affairs • Katznelson. 2006. “When Affirmative Action Was White.” Poverty & Race. • Gerber and Patashnik. 2006. “Sham Surgery.” 	<p><i>American Medicine.</i> Ch. 4; 5; 3b; or 4b.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smith. 2016. <i>The Power to Heal.</i> Ch. 1. • Pierson. 1996. “The New Politics of the Welfare State.” World Politics. • Hacker and Pierson. 2018. “The Dog that Almost Barked.” JHPPL. • Hacker. 1998. “The Historical Logic of National Health Insurance.” Studies in American Political Development. • Taylor and Bradley. 2013. <i>The American Health Care Paradox.</i> Ch1. • Katznelson et al. 1993. “Limiting Liberalism.” PRO. • Mettler. 1998. “Dividing Social Citizenship by Gender.” Studies in American Political Development.
<p>Jan 31</p>	<p>The Presidency and the Executive Branch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W&W Chapter 3 • Lewis and Moe. “The Presidency and the Bureaucracy.” • Gotein. 2019. “The alarming scope of the President’s emergency powers.” The Atlantic • Cohen. 2020. “Trump administration shuttered pandemic monitoring program.” CNN. • Shah and Forman. 2020. “The Case for Independent CDC.” JAMA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis. 2007. “Testing Pendleton’s Premise.” JOP. • Lewis. 2019. “Deconstructing the Administrative State.” JOP. • Carpenter. 2002. “Groups, The Media, Waiting Costs, and FDA Drug Approval.” AJPS. • Lewis. 2018. <i>The Fifth Risk.</i> Pg. 81-126. • Haeder and Yackee. 2015. “Influence and the Administrative Process.” APSR.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpenter. 2004. “The Political Economy of FDA Drug Review.” Health Affairs. • Dwidar. 2021. “Coalitional Lobbying and Intersectional Representation.” APSR.
Feb 7	Congress: Funding, the Agenda, and Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W&W Chapter 2 • Sarah Kliff and Margot Sanger-Katz.2020. “Surprise medical bills cost Americans millions. Congress finally banned most of them”. New York Times. • Christina Wolbrecht. 2019. “How women candidates are making girls feel better about politics.” Washington Post. The Monkey Cage • Timothy R. Bussey. 2020. “‘Rainbow wave’ of LGBTQ candidates run and win in 2020 election.” The Conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larry M. Bartels. 2016. <i>Unequal Democracy.</i> Ch. 2; 8 • Baumgartner et al. 2009. <i>Lobbying and Policy Change.</i> Ch. 10. • Lee. 2009. <i>Beyond Ideology.</i> Ch. 1. • Clayton et al. 2019. “All Male Panels?” AJPS. • Butler and Broockman. 2011. “Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents?” 2011. AJPS. • Huber et al. 2001. “Legislatures and Statutory Control of the Bureaucracy.” AJPS. • MacDonald. 2010. “Limitation Riders and Congressional Influence.” APSR. • Broockman and Skovron. 2018. “Bias in Perception of Public Opinion by Political Elites.” APSR. • Reynolds. 2013. “Representation and Rights.” APSR.
Feb 14	Money and Organized Health Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W&W Chapter 4 • Fuchs. 2021. “Sinema Rakes in Phama Finance Cash.” Politico. • Keefe. 2017. “The Family the Built An Empire of Pain.” The New Yorker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoffman B, 2003. “Health Care Reform and Social Movements in the United States,” American Journal of Public Health. • Hertel-Fernandez. 2019. Medicaid expansion

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitaker. 2020. "Money, Dinners, and Strip Clubs." 60 Minutes. 	<p>chapter. <i>State Capture</i>. Ch. 6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilens and Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics." Perspectives on Politics. Wilkerson and Carrell D, "Money, Politics, and Medicine." JHPPL. Smith. 2016. <i>The Power to Heal</i>. Ch. 3. McCarthy and Wolfson. 1996. "Resource Mobilization by Local Social Movement Organizations." ASR. Keller and Packell. 2014. "Going for the Cure." JHPPL. Strolovitch. 2006. "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged?" JOP. Michener. 2018. <i>Fragmented Democracy</i>. Ch. 7
Feb 21	Midterm		
Feb 28	The Submerged and Divided Health Care Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campbell. 2014. <i>Trapped in America's Safety Net</i>. Ch. 1-3. Michener. 2018. <i>Fragmented Democracy</i>. Ch. 1 Varney. 2014. "Why Obamacare Went South in Mississippi." The Atlantic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morgan and Campbell. 2011. <i>The Delegated Welfare State</i>. Ch. 1-2; 3; 5; 6; 7 Campbell. 2014. <i>Trapped in America's Safety Net</i>. Ch. 6. Michener. 2018. <i>Fragmented Democracy</i>. Ch. 3; 4; 5; 6
Mar 14	State Health Policy and Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W&W Chapter 6 Herd and Moynihan. 2020. "Administrative Burdens in Health Policy." Journal of Health and Human Services. Emily Badger and Margot Sanger-Katz. 2020. Take the quiz: Could you manage as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grumbach. 2018. "From Backwaters to Major Policymakers." Perspectives on Politics. Kreitzer. "Politics and Morality in State Abortion Policy." 2015. State Politics & Policy Quarterly.

		<p>a poor American? New York Times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drutman. 2018. "America has Local Political Institutions but nationalized politics." Vox. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montez et al. "US State Policies, Politics, and Life Expectancy." The Milbank Quarterly. • Mello et al. "Pharmaceutical Companies' Role in State Vaccination Policies." AJPH. • Rogers. 2017. "Electoral Accountability for State Legislative Roll Calls." APSR. • Beland et al. 2016. <i>Obamacare Wars</i>. Intro & Ch.1, • Callaghan et al. 2019. "Immigrant health access in Texas." BMC. • Soss et al. 2008. "The Color of Devolution" AJPS. • Lax and Phillips. 2009. "Gay Rights in the States." APSR. • Kreitzer et al. 2021. "Affordable but Inaccessible? Contraception Deserts in the US States." JHPPL.
Mar 21	Media and Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nyhan and Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail." Political Behavior. • Guess et al. 2019. "Less than you think." Science Advances. • Gilens. 1999. <i>Why Americans Hate Welfare</i>. Ch. 5. • Martin and McCrain. 2019. "Local News and National Politics." APSR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nyhan and Reifler. 2015. Vaccine "Does Correcting Myths about the Flu Vaccine Work?" • Eady et al. 2019. "How Many People Live in Political Bubbles Online." Sage Open. • Guess et al. 2018. "Selective Exposure to Misinformation." ERC. • Hayes and Lawless. 2015. "As Local News Goes." Journal of Politics. • Ladd. 2010. "The Role of Media Distrust and

			<p>Partisan Voting.” <i>Political Behavior</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lelkes. 2015. “The Hostile Audience.” <i>AJPS</i>. • Randolph and Viswanath. 2004. “Lessons Learned from Public Health Mass Media Campaigns. <i>Annual Review of Public Health</i>. • Hill et al. 2013. “How Quickly We Forget.” <i>Political Communication</i>. • Prior. 2007. <i>Post-Broadcast Democracy</i>. Ch. 4.
Mar 28	Social Identities, Public Opinion, and Health 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achen and Bartels. 2017. <i>Democracy for Realists</i>. Ch. 8; 10 • Zaller. 1992. <i>Nature and Origins</i>. Ch. 2-3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laymen and Carsey. 2002. “Party Polarization and Conflict Extension.” <i>AJPS</i>. • Flynn et al. 2017. “The Nature and Origins of Misperceptions.” <i>Political Psychology</i>. • Brewer. 2007. “The Importance of We.” <i>American Psychologist</i>. • Jacobs and Mettler. 2011. “Why Public Opinion Changes.” <i>JHPPL</i>. • Strickland et al. 2011. “Motivated Reasoning and Public Opinion.” <i>JHPPL</i>. • Kam. 2019. “And Why is This a Partisan Issue?” <i>JOP</i>. • Bartels. 2002. “Beyond the Running Tally.” <i>Political Behavior</i>. • Kinder and Kam. 2009. <i>Us Against Them</i>. Ch. 2-3.

<p>Apr 4</p>	<p>Social Identities, Public Opinion, and Health 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tesler, 2012. "The Spillover of Racialization Into Health Care." AJPS. • Jefferson and Yan. 2020. "How the two-party system obscures the complexity of Black Americans' politics." FiveThirtyEight.com. • Metzl. 2019. <i>Dying of Whiteness</i>. Intro; "Man-card"; "Unaffordable"; "Focus"; "Socialism" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egan. 2019. "Identity as Dependent Variable" AJPS. • Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004. "The Dynamics of the Partisan Gender Gap." APSR. • Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place." APSR. • Margolis. 2017. "How Politics Affects Religion." JOP. • Mendelberg et al. 2017. "College Socialization and the Economic Views of Affluent Americans." AJPS. • Egan. 2012. "Group Cohesion without Group Mobilization: The Case of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals." BJPS. • Rehm et al. 2012. "Insecure Alliances." APSR. • Winter. 2006. "Beyond Welfare." AJPS. • Gillion et al. 2020. "Party Polarization, Ideological Sorting, and the Emergence of US Partisan Gender Gap." BJPS. • White and Laird. 2020. <i>Steadfast Democrats</i>. Ch. 1-2. • Perez. 2014. "Xenophobic Rhetoric and Its Political Effects." AJPS. • Kuo et al. 2016. "Social Exclusion and Political Identity." JOP. • Kam. 2019. "Infectious Disease, Disgust, and Imagining the Other." JOP.
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<p>Apr 11</p>	<p>The Past Predicts the Future: the politics of previous pandemics, public health failures, and health care issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shilts. 1987. <i>And the Band Played On</i>. Ch. 27-29; 35-38; 45 & 47. • Navarro. "Politics, Pushback, and Pandemics." <i>American Journal of Public Health</i>. • Shachar. <i>Criminal Justice or Public Health?</i> • Harriet A. Washington. 2006. <i>Medical Apartheid</i>. Ch. 7. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adams. "Abortion: Evidence of Issue Evolution." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. • Price. "Public Opinion Toward AIDS Policies: The Role of Misinformation and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>. • Singer et al. "Public Opinion About AIDS Before and After the 1988 US Government Public Information Campaign." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>. • Kim et al. 2020. "Treatment Versus Punishment." <i>JHPPL</i>. • Alsan and Wanamaker. 2018. "Tuskegee and the Health of Black Men." <i>The Quarterly Journal of Economics</i>. • BK & H. "Concentrated Burdens." <i>APSR</i>. • Dollar. 2019. "Criminalization and 'Drug Wars.'" <i>Critical Criminology</i>. • Dionne. <i>The Politics of Pandemic Othering</i>. <i>International Organization</i>. • Quinones. 2015. <i>Dreamland</i>. (ALL SELECTIONS) 92-99; 107-110; 124-127; 132-139; 145-160; 197-221; 241-252.
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Apr 18	COVID-19: Policy and Political Responses to the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinton et al. 2020. “Partisan Pandemic” <i>Science Advances</i>. • Druckman et al. 2021. “The Role of Race, Religion, and Partisanship in Misperceptions about COVID-19.” <i>Group Process & Intergroup Relations</i>. • Palmer and Peterson. 2020. “Toxic Mask-ularity.” <i>Politics & Gender</i>. • Kim et al. 2020. “The Effect of Big City News on Rural America during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” <i>PNAS</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DeMora et al. 2020. “Reducing Mask Hesitancy Among White Evangelicals.” <i>PNAS</i>. • Patterson. 2020. “The Politics of Pandemics” <i>State Politics and Policy Quarterly</i>. • Bunch. 2020. “A Tale of Two Crises.” <i>HEC Forum</i>. • McKay et al. 2020. “The Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Americans.” <i>Policy Report</i>. • Gadarian et al. 2021. “Partisanship, Health Behavior, and Policy Attitudes.” <i>PLOS ONE</i>. • Nguyen et al. 2020. “Exploring Shifts in Anti-Asian Sentiment.” <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>. • Callaghan. et al. 2021. “Rural and Urban Differences in COVID-19 Prevention.” <i>Journal of Rural Health</i>. • Malik et al. 2020. “Determinants of COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance in the US.” <i>eClinical Medicine</i>.
Apr 25	<i>Final Projects and Concluding Thoughts</i>		

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN CLASS AND POSTED ONLINE

Inclusivity Policy

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact Student Access Services to get more information about specific accommodations.

Mental Health & Wellness

If you are experiencing undue personal and/or academic stress during the semester that may be interfering with your ability to perform academically, Vanderbilt's Student Care Network offers a range of services to assist and support you. I am available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in my course, and I can assist you in connecting with the Student Care Network. The Office of Student Care Coordination (OSCC) is the central and first point of contact to help students navigate and connect to appropriate resources on and off-campus, develop a plan of action, and provide ongoing support. You can schedule an appointment with the OSCC at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination/> or call 615-343-WELL.

The Student Care Network also offers drop-in services on campus on a regular basis. You can find a calendar of services <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/studentcarenetwork/satellite-services/>.

If you or someone you know needs to speak with a professional counselor immediately, the University Counseling Center offers Crisis Care Counseling during the summer and academic year. Students may come directly to the UCC and be seen by the clinician on call, or may call the UCC at (615) 322-2571 to speak with a clinician. You can find additional information at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/ucc/>.

Sexual Misconduct

Vanderbilt is committed to providing a community built on trust and mutual respect, where all can feel secure and free from harassment. Sexual misconduct including sexual violence, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking, violates a person's rights, dignity and integrity and is contrary to our community principles and the mission of the college. The University is committed to fostering a community that promotes prompt reporting of sexual misconduct and timely and fair resolution of sexual misconduct reports. Creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment is the responsibility of everyone at Vanderbilt.

We encourage all members of our campus community to seek support from the [Project Safe Center](#); 615-322-7233. We encourage community members to report all incidents of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct directly to the [Title IX](#) Coordinator (615-322-4705). Staff in these departments will assist in eliminating the misconduct, preventing its recurrence, and addressing its effects.

Mandatory Reporting

All faculty, many staff, and some students are "mandatory reporters" who are legally obligated to report any allegations of sexual misconduct (assault, harassment, dating violence, domestic

violence, stalking and child abuse) and any suspected discrimination (about age, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, sex/gender, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, military status, familial status or other protected categories under local, state or federal law) to Vanderbilt's [Title IX](#) Coordinator (615-343-9004).

This means that students who discuss such things with their peers and faculty do not have confidentiality. Students should be aware of that fact so they, both have choice about reporting, and options for other, confidential resources on campus. Title IX calls on the University to address the "impact" of sexual harassment and violence, so there are no time or geographical exclusions to what must be reported. Your reporting obligation extends to incidents that occur or occurred off-campus and to those that occurred prior to a person's affiliation with the University. Also, your reporting obligation applies in all situations, not just the classroom or in connection with a course. The only exclusion is a confidential support group setting, such as at the University Counseling Center or the Center for Student Wellbeing.

If you have any questions about the scope of your obligation, please contact the [University Title IX Coordinator](#) or the Director of the [Project Safe Center](#).

Safety

The safety of students, faculty, and staff at Vanderbilt University is of the utmost importance. As a Vanderbilt student, you are automatically enrolled in AlertVU, which is used in emergencies which pose an imminent threat to the community. If you need to contact the Vanderbilt Police in an emergency, call 911 from any campus phone or (615) 421-1911 from any other phone. Additional information about emergency preparedness is [available online](#).