

## **Special Issues in Social Work (The Public Policy Process)**

Social Work (SOWK) 3370 – 01

CRN: 18549

Political Science (POLS) 3351 – 004 (cross-listed)

CRN: 17795

The University of Texas at El Paso

Fall 2016

MW: 12:00pm - 1:20pm

UGLC 216

Instructor: Dr. Gregory S. Schober

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Office Hours: MW, 10:00am – 11:00am (and by appointment)

Class Website: Blackboard through your MY UTEP PORTAL

### **Course Description**

This course considers the public policy process, with a focus on health policy in the United States. We will study the different stages of the public policy process, with an emphasis on recent health policy changes. The course is designed for both political science majors and social work majors. We examine issues mostly at the national level, but we also will discuss applications for the state and local levels.

Throughout the course, we will focus on developing answers to the following four questions: (1) What are the main stages of the public policy process? (2) What were the main problems with the U.S. health care system prior to the Affordable Care Act? (3) How and why did the Affordable Care Act pass? (4) What roles do private individuals, health professionals, and nonprofit organizations play in implementing health policy and addressing community health problems?

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Identify and explain the different stages of the public policy process.
- Compare and evaluate the major models of the public policy process.
- Identify the problems with the U.S. health care system before the Affordable Care Act.
- Explain how health policy in the United States has changed in recent years and evaluate the tradeoffs.
- Recognize the role of civic engagement in community health.

### Required Readings (available at the UTEP Bookstore or elsewhere):

- An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making
  - Author: Thomas A. Birkland
  - 4<sup>th</sup> edition
  - 2016
  - ISBN-13: 978-0765646620
  
- Sick: The Untold Story of America's Health Care Crisis – and the People who Pay the Price
  - Author: Jonathan Cohn
  - 1<sup>st</sup> reprint edition
  - 2008
  - ISBN-13: 978-0060580469
  
- America's Bitter Pill: Money, Politics, Backroom Deals, and the Fight to Fix Our Broken Healthcare System
  - Author: Steven Brill
  - 1<sup>st</sup> edition
  - 2015
  - ISBN-13: 978-0812986686

### Course Requirements

- Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, class lectures, and/or class discussions up to the date of the midterm exam (20% of grade).
- Final Exam: The final exam will consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, class lectures, and/or class discussions after the midterm exam (25% of grade).
- Short Papers: Students will be required to write two short research papers, in lieu of a lengthy research paper due at the end of the course, with fixed deadlines (as noted in the syllabus). **Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for each class day they are late** (20% of grade).
- Civic Engagement Project: Students will have the option of completing community service through the Center for Civic Engagement or writing a research paper on civic engagement and community health (20% of grade).
- Class Attendance and Participation: Students will be able to earn participation points each class session by attending and participating in class discussions. Points will be awarded based on the quantity and quality of participation (15% of grade).

### University Policies

This instructor abides by university policies, such as excused absences and attendance, as stated in the UTEP undergraduate catalog: <http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic->

regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/. It is the student's responsibility to understand their rights and university policies. In addition to university policies, I add the following policies below.

### **Attendance Policy**

UTEP expects that students will not miss classes without valid excuses. Students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each class meeting. It is expected that you do not miss classes, which will result in a penalty to your grade. More specifically, after two unexcused absences, I will begin to deduct points from your attendance and participation grade for each subsequent unexcused absence. Note that the class participation portion of each student's grade is left solely to the discretion of the instructor.

Here are specific situations of absence and whether or not excuses will be accepted as valid or not:

- Valid university excuses include religious holy days, officially recognized university activities (with Dean of Students letter), and military leave.
- The instructor reserves the right to accept, or not, excuses related to medical issues. Naturally, it is not usually feasible to document in advance any time lost due to illness. The exception is planned surgeries and appointments (not normal check-ups). Any class time missed will not be excused without medical or other valid documentation. Documentation from Mexico is permissible. Students with severe medical problems that result in missing a majority of the semester may want to consider a complete withdrawal from the university for medical purposes.
- Absences due to conflicts with work, child care, etc. that make it impossible for you to regularly attend this class are not permitted. If you know you will have scheduling conflicts with this class, then you should make other arrangements or postpone this class until a future semester.
- According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course drop deadline and with a grade of F after the course drop deadline."
- Missed exams due to family hardship or family medical problems may not be accepted by the instructor as valid excuses. For example, helping family members move, picking up at the airport, driving family members to medical appointments when you know they conflict with class, and other such activities, will not be permitted as valid excuses. Emergencies such as deaths in the family must be documented, unfortunately.
- Missing any course assessments and work due to vacations and pre-booked travel arrangements are not valid excuses.

### **Final Exam Policy**

The date of the final exam is listed below in the Schedule of Classes. The final exam is considered over when the instructor is no longer in the room (all other students present have completed the exam), so do not be late. The exam must be taken on this day unless you have a valid university accepted excuse.

## Midterm Exam Policy

The date of the midterm exam is listed below in the Schedule of Classes. No make-up midterm exam will occur without a student having provided to the instructor valid documentation explaining or excusing the absence. The instructor has the discretion to decide if a make-up is allowable outside the university excused absences. If you miss an exam due to an emergency or illness, you must notify me (and confirm with me that I have received your notification attempt) as soon as possible to arrange a make-up exam. A make-up exam may be of a different format than the original exam.

## Short Papers

**SHORT PAPER #1:** In this paper, you will have the opportunity to identify and assess potential problems with the U.S. health care system before the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Further details and instructions will be provided in class (~1000 words, worth 10% of overall grade). **Printed copy is due on 9/19 (at the start of class).**

**SHORT PAPER #2:** In this paper, you will have the opportunity to identify and evaluate the role of lobbyists in the creation of the Affordable Care Act. Further details and instructions will be provided in class (~1000 words, worth 10% of overall grade). **Printed copy is due on 11/9 (at the start of class).**

## Civic Engagement Project

Students are to choose one of the following two options for the civic engagement project:

- **Option 1:** Complete a minimum of 20 hours of community service coordinated by the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE). We will have an in-class session to have class members registered and trained on how to do the project and another session where students will have an opportunity to share and discuss the activities they accomplished during the semester. You must submit your documentation verifying the hours of community service to the CCE by 11/30 at 5:00pm to receive credit (further details and instructions will be provided in class).
- **Option 2:** Write a research paper (minimum 15 pages - maximum 20 pages) on current efforts to improve the health of community members in the local area. What are the names of seven nonprofit organizations or community groups that try to address health problems in our community? How do these groups attempt to address health problems? How are their efforts similar (and how are they different)? Which groups and efforts do you think are most effective, and why? How could the groups be more successful at addressing local health needs? You should refer to relevant scholarly work as well as the official websites of the organizations that you are researching for the paper (minimum of 15 scholarly and official website sources). Students who choose this option will have the opportunity to discuss their project with other class members during a class session. You must submit a printed copy of your paper to the instructor by 11/30, at the start of class, to receive credit (further details and instructions will be provided in class).

## **Other Course Policies and Expectations**

- Debate and discussion are important in the critical evaluation of politics. It is expected that students will treat the instructor and other students with respect, including refraining from disparaging remarks, personal insults, derogatory comments, and other unprofessional behavior, in person or electronically. Any problem related to rude conduct, or any threats to violence, etc., likely will result in the student being dropped from the course by the instructor.
- Outside work and other non-class related activities are not permitted in our classroom.
- If you engage in behaviors that distract others or create a disturbance, you will be asked to leave the class. If you refuse to leave class, university police will be contacted.
- Cell phone/smart phone/PDA usage is not permitted during exams or at other times when it might pose a class disturbance. Laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices used for note-taking are permissible, but students using such must not engage in any activities that disturb other students.

## **Email Protocol**

When emailing me, please put the course and section number in the subject line. In the body of your email, clearly state your question. At the end of your email, be sure to put your first and last name. Please do not email me about information you can obtain from the syllabus. I generally do not answer substantive material from lectures or readings via email, as it is not an effective means of communicating. If there is class material you are confused about, please come see me during my office hours.

## **Academic Integrity and Dishonesty**

As stated in the UTEP undergraduate catalog, “Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, and is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the *Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP)*, and available in the Office of Student Life and on the homepage of the Office of Student Life at [www.utep.edu/dos](http://www.utep.edu/dos), can result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to a failing grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.”

## **Students with Different Abilities**

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass). CASS’ staff are the only individuals who can validate, and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities. The student is

responsible for presenting to the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions before arrangements need to be made for exams or other needs.

### Schedule of Classes

Mon	8/22	Introduction to the Course
Wed	8/24	Problems with the U.S. Healthcare System before the Affordable Care Act: Boston and Gilbertsville <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohn, Introduction and Ch. 1</li> <li>• Presentation by the Center for Civic Engagement</li> </ul>
Mon	8/29	Introducing the Policy Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 1</li> </ul>
Wed	8/31	Problems with the U.S. Healthcare System before the Affordable Care Act: Deltona <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohn, Ch. 2</li> </ul>
Mon	9/5	<b>No Class (Labor Day)</b>
Wed	9/7	Civic Engagement Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training by the Center for Civic Engagement (Option 1)</li> <li>• Description and Discussion of Research Paper (Option 2)</li> </ul>
Mon	9/12	Elements of the Policy Making System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 2</li> </ul>
Wed	9/14	Problems with the U.S. Healthcare System before the Affordable Care Act: Austin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohn, Ch. 3</li> </ul>
Mon	9/19	Overview of Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 6</li> <li>• <b>Short Paper #1 Due (submit printed copy to the instructor at the start of class)</b></li> </ul>
Wed	9/21	Problems with the U.S. Healthcare System before the Affordable Care Act: Lawrence County <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohn, Ch. 5</li> </ul>
Mon	9/26	Overview of Policies and Policy Types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 7</li> </ul>
Wed	9/28	Problems with the U.S. Healthcare System before the Affordable Care Act: Los Angeles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohn, Ch. 7</li> <li>• Review Session</li> </ul>
Mon	10/3	Problems with the U.S. Healthcare System before the Affordable Care Act: Washington (Overall) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohn, Conclusion chapter</li> </ul>
Wed	10/5	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Mon	10/10	Overview of Health Policy and the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assigned reading</li> </ul>

Wed	10/12	Background Politics related to the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 1 and Ch. 2</li> </ul>
Mon	10/17	Background Politics related to the Affordable Care Act (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 3 and Ch. 4</li> </ul>
Wed	10/19	Overview of Decision-making and Policy Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 8</li> </ul>
Mon	10/24	Federal Politics and Lobbying for the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 5 and Ch. 6</li> </ul>
Wed	10/26	Federal Politics and Lobbying for the Affordable Care Act (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 7 and Ch. 8</li> </ul>
Mon	10/31	Overview of Policy Design and Policy Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 9</li> </ul>
Wed	11/2	Legislative Politics and Negotiations for the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 9 and Ch. 10</li> </ul>
Mon	11/7	Legislative Politics and Negotiations for the Affordable Care Act (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 11 and Ch. 12</li> </ul>
Wed	11/9	Overview of Policy Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assigned reading</li> <li>• <b>Short Paper #2 Due (submit printed copy to the instructor at the start of class)</b></li> </ul>
Mon	11/14	Implementation Politics of the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 13 and Ch. 14</li> </ul>
Wed	11/16	Implementation Politics of the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 15 and Ch. 16</li> </ul>
Mon	11/21	Science and Theory in the Study of Public Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland, Ch. 11 (only pgs. 370-384)</li> </ul>
Wed	11/23	<b>Civic Engagement Project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reflection Session (Options 1 and 2)</b></li> </ul>
Mon	11/28	Enrollment and the Website Launch for the Affordable Care Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brill, Ch. 17</li> </ul>
Wed	11/30	New Health Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Session</li> <li>• <b>Civic Engagement Project Due</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Option 1: Due by 5pm</li> <li>*Option 2: Due by the start of class (submit printed copy to the instructor)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Fri	12/9	<b>Final Exam: 1pm-3:45pm</b>