

# Sociology 247/STS 247 | Universal Health Care: Could it Work Here?

MW 7:00-8:15PM | Diamond 221

**Instructor** Dr. Natalie Aviles

**E-mail** nbaviles@colby.edu

**Office** Diamond 205

**Office Hours** Tuesdays 1:00-3:00 or by  
appointment/drop-in Tues-Fri

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## Description:

Why does the US lack a universal health care system? What would it take to implement universal health care in the US? What would an American system of universal health care look like? In this course, we analyze the historical evolution of the patchwork of institutions and organizations that make up US health care systems. We read recent scholarship and reporting that compares the US to other developed countries to understand how different health care systems function. We apply concepts from these readings to debate whether the US can achieve the political and economic requisites of a universal health care system.

## Assigned Texts:

1. (\*)Texts available on Moodle.
2. Beatrix Hoffman. 2012. *Health Care for Some: Rights and Rationing in the United States since 1930*. University of Chicago Press.

## Evaluation:

Please see assignment pages and rubrics on Moodle for evaluation criteria and expectations.

Memo 1 (due October 25)	20%
Memo 2 (due November 20)	20%
Final paper (due December 13)	30%
Student-led discussion (sign-ups week 2)	15%
In-class participation	15%

## Course Schedule:

Week	Topic	Required Reading
<b>1.2: Wednesday, 9/6</b>	How should we talk about American health care?	N/A
<b>2.1: Monday, 9/11</b>	Health care reform in America	*Quadagno, Jill. 2010. "Institutions, Interest Groups, and Ideology: An Agenda for the

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		Sociology of Health Care Reform.” <i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i> 51(2): 125-136.
2.2: Wednesday, 9/13	The state of American health care: Affordable Care Act passage and repeals	<a href="#">Margot Sanger-Katz. 2014. “Is the Affordable Care Act working?” <i>New York Times</i>, October 6.</a>  <a href="#">Julie Rovner. 2017. “7 years of ACA's near death legislative maneuvers.” <i>Healthcare Finance</i>, July 26.</a>
3.1: Monday, 9/18	Health care rationing: concepts and debates	Hoffman, Introduction-Prologue
3.2: Wednesday, 9/20	Health care rationing: patterns of access then and now	Hoffman, Ch. 1
4.1: Monday, 9/25	Health policy and public interest groups	Hoffman, Ch. 2
4.2: Wednesday, 9/27	Health care in the welfare state	Hoffman, Ch. 3
5.1: Monday, 10/2	Hospitals as health care organizations	Hoffman, Ch. 4
5.2: Wednesday, 10/4	Health insurance as an industry	Hoffman, Ch. 5
6.1: Monday, 10/9	Entitlement programs and political action	Hoffman, Ch. 6
6.2: Wednesday, 10/11	Activism and health-oriented civic action	Hoffman, Ch. 7
7.1: Monday, 10/16	NO CLASS (Fall recess)	N/A
7.2: Wednesday, 10/18	Public consequences of rationing by ability to pay	Hoffman, Ch. 8
8.1: Monday, 10/23	Health care reform: failures and successes	Hoffman, Ch. 9 & Epilogue
8.2: Wednesday, 10/25	The medical-industrial complex	*Steve Brill. 2013. “Bitter Pill: Why medical bills are killing us.” <i>Time Magazine</i> , March 4.
9.1: Monday, 10/30	Bringing down the cost of health care: a view from both sides	<a href="#">Shawn Tully. 2017. “The Big Problem (and Benefit) of the GOP’s Health Care Plan.” <i>Fortune Magazine</i>, March 15.</a>  <a href="#">Bernie Sanders. 2017 “Why Medicare-for-All is Good for Business.” <i>Fortune Magazine</i>, August 21.</a>

Week	Topic	Required Reading
9.2: Wednesday, 11/1	Health care models around the world	*T.R. Reid. 2010. <i>The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care</i> . New York: Penguin Books. Ch. 2, 3, and 10.
10.1: Monday, 11/6	Are we being taken for a ride? Over-billing and fraud in American healthcare	<a href="#">Reed Abelson, Julie Creswell, and Griffin J. Palmer. 2012. "Medicare Bills Rise as Records Turn Electronic." <i>New York Times</i> September 21.</a>  <a href="#">Beth Jones Sanborn. 2017. "HHS announces 'largest fraud takedown in history', charging 400 defendants in schemes involving \$1.3 billion in false billings." <i>Healthcare Finance</i>.</a>
10.2: Wednesday, 11/8	Pharmaceuticals in America	*Joan Busfield. 2008. "Pills, power, people: Sociological understandings of the pharmaceutical industry." Pp. 411-427 in <i>Perspectives in Medical Sociology</i> , Fourth edition. Edited by Phil Brown. Waveland Press, Inc.  <a href="#">Sydney Lupkin. 2017. "Medicaid's budget bursting over climbing prices of older drugs." <i>Healthcare Finance</i>, August 14.</a>
11.1: Monday, 11/13	Clinical trials as access to care	*Steven Epstein. 2008. "Democracy, expertise, and AIDS treatment activism." Pp. 539-554 in <i>Perspectives in Medical Sociology</i> , Fourth edition. Edited by Phil Brown. Waveland Press, Inc.
11.2: Wednesday, 11/15	Clinical trials as markets	<a href="#">Skloot, Rebecca. 2006. "Taking the Least of You." <i>The New York Times</i>.</a>  <a href="#">Elliot, Carl. 2008. "Guinea-pigging." <i>The New Yorker</i>, January 7.</a>
12.1: Monday, 11/20	Global markets for drug development and testing	*Padmanabhan, Swathi, Tahir Amin, Bhaven Sampat, Robert Cook-Deegan, and Subhashini Chandrasekharan. 2010. "Intellectual Property, Technology Transfer and Manufacture of Low-Cost HPV Vaccines in India." <i>Nature Biotechnology</i> 28 (7): 671–78.
12.2: Wednesday, 11/22	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)	N/A

Week	Topic	Required Reading
13.1: Monday, 11/27	Complex health care issues in the new economy: Mental health and substance abuse	<a href="#">Margaret Talbot. 2017. "The Addicts Next Door." <i>The New Yorker</i>, June 5-12.</a> *Jason Houle. 2014. "Mental health in the foreclosure crisis." <i>Social Science &amp; Medicine</i> 118: 1-8.
13.2: Wednesday, 11/29	Can universal health care rectify racial/ethnic health disparities?	*Williams, David R. and Pamela Braboy Jackson. 2005. "Social Sources of Racial Disparities in Health." <i>Health Affairs</i> 24(2): 325-334.
14.1: Monday, 12/4	Looking forward: prospects for a single-payer national health care system in the US	*Gaffney, Adam et al. 2016. "Moving Forward from the Affordable Care Act to a Single-Payer System." <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 106(6): pp. 987-988. *Gaffney, Adam et al. 2016. "Beyond the Affordable Care Act: A Physicians' Proposal for Single-Payer Health Care Reform."
14.2: Wednesday, 12/6	Universal health care: could it work here?	N/A

#### Expectations:

Assigned readings are listed on the syllabus according to the day they will be discussed. You are expected to have completed these readings prior to coming to class on the day we discuss the relevant material. This course is taught in a seminar style. As such, you are expected to come to class prepared to actively participate in discussions about the reading assigned for that day. Always bring a copy of the assigned material to class.

Attendance in seminar is mandatory. If you must miss more than 3 class sessions it is important you notify me or your advising dean.

While you are welcome to study with other students, the work you submit should reflect your individual intellectual effort appropriately applied to the class assignments. I take academic integrity very seriously and will forward any suspected academic integrity to the appropriate disciplinary body without hesitation.

If you are concerned about your ability to complete any of these assignments in a timely manner, please communicate with me well in advance. I will always consider granting extensions where they are appropriate.