

Updated September 15, 2021

## **POL 108: Policymaking in the Public Sector – Focus on Health**

**Fridays 10 am-12 pm, at UCCS or by Zoom**

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**Office Hours:** Wednesday 10:30-11:30 am (open Zoom line) or by appointment (email me)

### **Instructor:**

Hello! I'm Richard Kravitz ("Professor Kravitz" or "Dr. Kravitz" is good; if you are British, "Mr. Kravitz" is just as appropriate – we'll learn *why*, about midway through the course.) I've taught at UC Davis (mainly in the medical school) for a long time, but I've been interested in health policy and undergraduate education for even longer. I was a TA for a health and public policy course in college, and my interest in systems has never abated. In addition to teaching this course, I see patients and teach in the general internal medicine clinic at UC Davis, and I'm director of UC Center Sacramento. My view is that health policy is everyone's business, and my hope is to demystify it a little bit. I am glad you are joining me in this adventure.

### **Required Textbooks:**

*Understanding Health Policy: A Clinical Approach*, Thomas Bodenheimer and Kevin Grumbach, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (available in hardcopy through bookstores or online through UC Davis' subscription to [Access Medicine](#). To obtain access to the UC Davis library VPN follow the instructions on this [link](#)).

### **Additional Readings:**

Additional readings will be assigned most weeks of the course. These readings will be available at Canvas, listed by author's last name in Files and also linked within each weekly Module. Students may download or print the articles. **All of the assigned readings for a given week should be completed before coming to class.** Many class sessions will include small group breakout sessions whose success depends on everyone being prepared.

### **Course Objectives:**

This course is designed specifically for students enrolled in the Health Policy Track at UCCS but, as in 2019 and 2020, is also open to selected students from the UC Davis University Honors Program. The course is broadly divided into two parts. In the first part, we will examine the meaning of health, the ways in which health policy can influence health, the tools available to health policy analysts, and ways in which health services researchers have examined health care access, quality, and costs. We will also examine the fundamental values that drive the health care debate, including health care as a right versus a privilege, the "right" amount of health care spending, and tradeoffs between quality and equity. Once again this year, we will also discuss the role of public health and personal health care

services in responding to a pandemic. This part of the course ends with a midterm examination. In the second part of the course, we turn our attention to the Affordable Care Act of 2010, the boldest stroke in health policy since the passage of Medicare in 1965 – paying special heed to implementation of the ACA in California. We will also cover continuing efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare. We will focus on two specific questions that represent larger issues in policy and politics. In asking, “how did the Congressional Budget Office conclude that repeal and replace legislation would cause 20-30 million Americans to lose health insurance coverage,” we examine some key principles of policy analysis. And in asking, “why did California Republican Members of the House support repeal and replace, despite the risk of harm to their constituents,” we look at the complex interaction between politics and evidence in shaping public policy.

Major course outcomes and assessment tools are as follows:

Outcome	How Assessed	% of total grade
1. Define health and health care; articulate goals of health care; identify biomedical and social determinants of health; analyze causes of health disparities; describe how US health care is organized and paid for; analyze policy solutions related to access, quality and costs	Question set #2 +  midterm examination	6% +  17%
2. Characterize the major features of the Affordable Care Act and explain why it has been so politically contentious; know how to obtain health insurance in California; critique the US health care system relative to other countries; identify gaps in current system and analyze proposed solutions.	Final examination	17%
3. Evaluate different types of evidence for health policy and generate health policy evidence of your own making	Question Set #1 +  Health Policy Research Project (divided into 3 parts: proposal, introduction, final draft)	6% +  33%
4. Connect class learnings to contemporary US and California health policy problems and issues	Podcast/video summaries +  Class attendance, class discussion, and discussion board participation	6% +  17%

**Course Outline** (All classes held at UCCS Friday 10am-12noon unless otherwise specified)

Session Number	Date	Lead Instructor	Coverage	Readings Due at Beginning of Class*	Assignments Due at Beginning of Class
1	Friday, 9/24	Kravitz	Course Requirements. Key Questions in Health Policy: What is health? What are the determinants of health? How does policy influence the health of populations?	B&G Chap 1; Pincus et al.	None
2	Friday, 10/1	Kravitz	Evidence for Sound Policy: Three Health Policy Research Case Studies	Baicker et al.; Haeder et al.; Meara et al	<b>Question Set #1</b>
3	Friday, 10/8	Kravitz	Kravitz: How is Health Care Organized and Delivered in the US?	B&G Chaps 2, 4, 5, 6; Fuchs 2013; Moses et al.	<b>Health Policy Research Proposal Draft</b>
4	Friday, 10/15	Kravitz	Defining and Measuring Health Care Access, Quality and Costs	B&G Chaps 3, 8, 9, 10	<b>Question Set # 2</b>
5	Friday, 10/22	Shim (accepted 7/23)/ Kravitz	Shim: Social Determinants, Equity, and Disparities in Health and Health Care Kravitz: Class Discussion and Midterm Review	To be announced	<b>Health Policy Research Proposal (Final)</b>
6	Friday, 10/29	Kravitz/Kasirye (accepted 7/14)	<b>Midterm Exam</b> (1 hour) Kasirye: Tales of a Public Health Officer	None	<b>Podcast/Video Synopses 1-3</b>
7	Friday, 11/5	Romano (invited)/Wilkes (accepted 7/14)	Pathways to Universal Coverage: Lessons from Abroad (Romano) Global Health (Wilkes)	Schneider 2017; Fuchs 2018	<b>Podcast/Video Synopsis</b>
8	Friday, 11/12	Kravitz/Mulkey (accepted 7/30)	The Affordable Care Act of 2010: Background (Kravitz) and Implementation in California (Mulkey)	B&G Chap 15; Obama; CHCF Timeline	<b>Draft Introduction/ Background section for health policy research paper</b>
9	Friday, 11/19	Kravitz	The Affordable Care Act of 2010: Accomplishments and Gaps (first 50 min); Case-Based Learning: Policy Successes and Failures During the Covid-19 Pandemic (second 50 min)	Butler; Woolhandler; Buntin	<b>Podcast/Video Synopses 4-5</b>
HOLIDAY	Friday, 11/26	No Class	Thanksgiving Holiday		
SPECIAL EVENT	Wednesday, 12/1 (time TBA)	N/A	STUDENT POSTER PRESENTATION AND AWARDS CEREMONY	No readings	
10	Friday, 12/3 (note extended time 10-12:30)	Kravitz	The Politics of Health Care (1 hour) <b>End-of-Term Exam and Course Evaluations</b> (1.5 hour)	Oberlander 2018	Work on health policy research paper
	Friday, 12/10	Kravitz	<b>Final Project: Health Policy Research Paper</b>		<b>Health Policy Research Paper due by noon</b>

\*B&G = Bodenheimer & Grumbach; Other readings available on Canvas.

## Grading

POL 108 course grades are based on the following components totaling 300 points. **All assignments should be turned in via Canvas as Adobe .pdf files.** This allows the instructor(s) to seamlessly edit and comment online.

Assignment	Points	Number	Total Points
Attendance (in person or Zoom) and Participation (either in class or on discussion board)	15	10 class sessions	150
Question Sets (n=2)	50	2	100
Podcast or Video Summaries (n=5)	10	5	50
Midterm Examination	150	1	150
Policy Research Proposal	50	1	50
Policy Research Paper (Draft Introduction)	50	1	50
Policy Research Paper (Final Version)	200	1	200
Final Examination	150	1	150
<b>Total Points</b>			<b>900</b>

*Attendance and participation:* Students are expected to attend all class sessions (Fridays, 10 am-12 noon); UCCS students should also attend Speakers Series talks (Wednesdays, 12-1pm). **Students should come to class having read the assigned readings and with all assignments completed.**


**As the Covid-19 is currently fluid, this class will be offered primarily by Zoom, but the lectures will be delivered from 830 K Street, Sacramento, so students are encouraged attend in person with restrictions.** We will follow UC Davis guidelines for on-campus courses, including masking and vaccination requirements. (All students must wear a mask in the classroom and either be vaccinated or, if excused by UCD for a valid medical or religious reason, follow UCD Covid testing guidelines.)

Written work should be turned in via Canvas by the designated due dates. *Students should retain a copy for their own in-class notes and reflections.* Realizing that illness, family issues, and internship responsibilities may occasionally necessitate your absence from class, **each student is permitted TWO absences from class without penalty or need for excuse.** With rare exceptions reserved for dire emergencies, **any absences beyond two will result a grade of NOT PASS for the class.** Please come to class on time. I will try to start at precisely 10 o'clock.

*Electronic devices.* Considerable research suggests that multi-tasking is a misnomer and that use of electronic devices during class time can inhibit learning. Furthermore, organizing handwritten notes helps to reinforce learning. Therefore, it is suggested that students take detailed handwritten notes and transcribe their notes into typewritten form for subsequent study. Students are encouraged to share notes, comments, and readings (outside of Question Sets and Examinations) with the entire class, either informally or through the Discussions section on Canvas. Very little work of significance is accomplished anymore by individuals. Learning to work in teams is an unwritten meta-objective of this course.

*Question sets:* Most class sessions will require some reading in advance. Because these readings are essential to understanding the course material, you will be asked to complete a brief question set in advance of two class sessions. Students will be asked to upload the assignments before the beginning of class (see Canvas) and to retain a copy for class discussion. Questions sets are designed to consolidate your understanding of the readings and prepare you for the class discussion. Answers should be succinct, in standard written English, and to the point; long essays are not required.

*Podcast/video summary:* **A list of sample health policy-related videos and podcasts are posted on Canvas.** Students are expected to listen to or view FIVE different programs (whether selected from the list or of your own choosing), each 20 minutes or longer, according to the schedule provided on the syllabus in Canvas. Students may turn in the summaries any time before the deadlines, but it is recommended that they start sooner and complete them on a weekly/regular basis rather than all at once. Instructions are as follows:

1. **Choose a health policy podcast or video** ([either from the list provided](#)  or search for your own). As you listen, think about key concepts, arguments, implications, or applications in current events.
2. **Write a response of approximately 250 words with the following information:**
  - Title of podcast/video and show name (Ex: Reopening without a plan by The Weeds)
  - Main issue presented by the podcast or video presenters. (What are their main claims? What is the crux of their argument? If they talked about empirical research, what does their research show?)
  - Your own points of agreement/disagreement with the presenter(s)' policy conclusions, supported by reasons (Do you agree? Why or why not?)
3. **Students are encouraged to read and comment upon other students' posts.** You may have emotional reactions to some posts. Emotions are a useful source of information; they signal “I care about this” or “something is wrong here.” Whether you agree or disagree with your classmates' opinions, please emphasize research-based evidence and dispassionate arguments, and be mindful at all times of the UC Davis [Principles of Community](#). Although comments will not be graded, participation in Discussions will be considered in assigning your participation grade. To be clear, **I expect every student to comment meaningfully at least three times during the term.** More is better, to a point (don't spend so much time “commenting” that you lose focus on your final project or other important life tasks).

**Remember, in addressing your points of agreement or disagreement with the podcast or video, a “reason” requires evidence (e.g. a citation from the literature) or a set of logically ordered facts. A feeling can (and should) motivate a response, but a feeling is not a reason.**

*Policy research proposal and research paper:* **This course requires a policy research project.** The purpose of the project is threefold: to explore a health policy issue or question in some depth; to learn something about the way policy researchers assemble evidence; and to enhance your ability as consumers of data to distinguish facts from fiction.

UCCS students please note: you are only asked to complete a **single** project to meet the requirements of POL 108 and the companion course POL 196E. Out of that project you will write a **paper** for this class and prepare a **poster** for 196E.

The project requirements for this class consist of a 3-5 page double-spaced **policy research proposal** and a 12-15 page double-spaced **policy research paper** including Background, Methods, Results, and Discussion/Policy Implications (tables and charts do not count as part of the page requirement). You should be aware of four important deadlines (see matrix):

Assignment	Date Due
<b>Draft Policy Research Proposal</b>	October 8, 2021
<b>Final Policy Research Proposal</b>	October 22, 2021
<b>Draft Background/Introduction to Policy Research Paper</b>	November 12, 2021
<b>Complete Final Policy Research Paper (including Background, Methods, Results, Discussion)</b>	December 10, 2021

This assignment is designed to provide students with a critical learning experience as well as an opportunity to engage in active public health policy research. **The policy research project will require students to gather, analyze, and report on an important public health policy issue relevant to California.** For more detailed guidance, see the Course **Assignments** section of Canvas.

**The research proposal [3-5 double-spaced pages] will cover EACH of the following: 1) the nature of the health policy problem, 2) the problem’s relevance to California, 3) background information needed to understand the problem, 4) the policy research question(s) to be addressed, 5) the proposed research approach (i.e. plan of attack), and 6) implications of anticipated results for policy (including the implications if the results of your literature review or empirical study do not come out as planned).** Please organize your proposal using these subtopics as section headings.

A draft of the proposal is due at the beginning of the *third* class session. Ideally, the topic will not only be relevant to some aspect of health policy but be of interest both to the student and (for UCCS students) to the student’s internship host. When such alignment can be achieved, students may be permitted to use internship hours to work on their policy project. When this is not possible, it is perfectly acceptable for students to work on health policy topics unrelated to their internships outside of the 20-required internship hours per week. A final version of the proposal is due at the beginning of the *fifth* class session.

The **health policy research paper** [12-15 double-spaced pages, plus tables and figures] is meant to summarize the results of a health policy research project undertaken by the student during the term. The project can either be in the form of a *systematic literature review* **or** an *empirical study*.

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If you chose to do a systematic **literature review**, the review should identify an important health policy question, specify a **systematic** strategy for combing the literature (including both published, peer-reviewed sources and the “gray literature”), enumerate the results of the literature in **one or more tables**, and summarize the results in the text. A systematic review requires a focused research question and a specific “search strategy” (string of search terms) developed with the help of a **reference librarian** (the ones at UC Davis are glad to help). Your literature review should conclude with a synthesis of the relevant literature, including a discussion of what the results mean and their implications for policy.

Good systematic reviews (SRs) are hard to do, but they are worth it if you really want to understand what the current body of research says about a topic. I’ve posted an example of an excellent SR from a prior class [here](#); it received a grade of 96%.

If you choose to do an **empirical study**, you should specify the research question(s); describe the empirical methods (e.g., how you developed survey questions and conducted a poll using Qualtrics; or how you examined the association between state abortion laws and teen-age pregnancy using Stata or Excel to analyze publicly available data); present the results in tables, figures, and text; and end with conclusions and implications for public policy.

**Students must submit a draft of the paper’s Background Section by the beginning of the eighth class session.** The Background Section (approximately 3 double spaced pages) should include the rationale for the project, citation of pertinent literature justifying your choice of a policy research question, specification of policy research questions or hypotheses, and a brief summary of the approach you intend to take in addressing the questions or hypotheses you have specified. Essentially, the purpose of the Background Section is to explain **why** you did the study.

***Note to UCCS Students: Whether your policy research paper is based on a systematic literature review or empirical analysis, you should also plan to present the results as part of a poster, in satisfaction of requirements for POL 196E. Students will display and verbally summarize their posters at the UCCS Academic Showcase at the end of the term. This is a requirement for passing POL 196E.***

*Midterm and end-of-term exams:* To help you consolidate key health policy concepts before you begin work in earnest on your final project, there will be a midterm examination during Week 5. The exam will cover lecture material and readings from Weeks 1-5, will likely include both multiple choice questions and a short essay, and will take one hour to complete. There will also be a one-hour end-of-term exam at the end of Class Session 10. The end-of-term exam will cover material from the entire course but will emphasize material introduced since the midterm exam.

**All work must be in line with the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct.**

### **Course Policies**

*Attendance, participation, and weekly readings:* **Class attendance and participation is mandatory and counts as 17% of the final grade. (Discussion Posts also “count” as participation.)** All students should come to class prepared to participate in class discussions. Many class sessions will involve lecture as well as discussion, conducted in a variety of formats (Socratic method, small group breakouts, etc.). As noted above, all students are allowed up to 2 absences without penalty, but additional absences not pre-approved by the instructor and that do not reflect a medical emergency will result in a grade of NOT PASS.

*Late policy and make-up exams:* **Make up exams and quizzes as well as extensions will be allowed only in the event of a medical or family emergency.** The emergency must be documented (e.g., in the form of a note from a licensed health care provider on office letterhead). If documentation is provided, then a decision will be made regarding whether you will be granted a make-up opportunity or receive an extension. Requests for an Incomplete grade must be accompanied by a written medical report from a licensed medical provider. If you are having difficulties in satisfying course requirements, I would encourage you to please contact me directly (rlkravitz@ucdavis.edu). It is the rare problem that gets better by ignoring it.

*Grade appeals:* Students will have one week from when grades are posted to appeal their grade. All appeals must include a typewritten statement explaining why you are requesting a grade appeal, and you must justify with evidence from your exam, research paper, critical appraisal, question sets, or summaries. If you choose to appeal your grade, the instructor reserves the right to increase or decrease the existing grade.

**An important message** (for those of you who have read this far): This course is not just about health policy. It is also about ways to think about the world critically and rigorously. These skills will be important to you not only in school but also in your future lives and careers.

Most students find the final health policy research project challenging. **You will need probably need help.** Please reach out early to the instructor, the course assistant, your internship host (if applicable), other academic mentors, or your peers. Please see me during office hours (or make an appointment via email). The journey we’re about to undertake may be new to you, but you will be surprised at what you can accomplish. Welcome aboard!

### **Academic Integrity**

As a student enrolled at the University of California, Davis, you have agreed to abide by the University’s Code of Academic Conduct (see <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/cac.html> ) A version of this code of conduct applies at every UC campus. Cheating and other violations of academic honesty are serious offenses. Students are expected to work independently on all graded assignments except the group debate scheduled for Session 5.



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Plagiarism deserves special attention in the age of the internet and the ease with which content can be “cut and pasted.” Specifically, passing off another’s words or ideas as one’s own, or using those words or ideas without proper acknowledgement or citation, is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct. Students interested in learning more should consult references such as this: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02602930301677>

Students who engage in cheating will receive a grade of “F” for the course and may be subject to proceedings of the UC Davis Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements, should contact the [UC Davis Disability Center](#) well before the start of the quarter. They should also notify the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation from the Disability Center for individual learning needs. UCCS (under the auspices of UC Davis) will make every attempt to accommodate all qualifying disabilities.

### **Title IX**

Please be advised that UC Center Sacramento professors, instructors, teaching assistants, and administrators are mandatory reporters under Title IX. This means that we are required to pass on reports from students, whether communicated verbally during class discussion or office hours or as part of a written assignment or exercise, to the UC Davis Title IX officer and other relevant UC Davis officials. If you wish to seek out help or resources with a non-mandated reporter, please see <https://sexualviolence.ucdavis.edu/get-support>.