



Department of Health Administration and Policy

Syllabus Spring 2026

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Course Information	<p>HAP 442-DL1 Introduction to Health Care Politics and Policy</p> <p>Location: Distance Education/Canvas</p> <p>Pre-requisites: HAP 301 and a basic understanding of the structure and operations of American government.</p> <p>Course Dates: Jan 20, 2026 - May 12, 2026</p>
Instructors	<p>Debora Goldberg, PhD, MHA, MBA Associate Professor Email: dgoldbe4@gmu.edu</p> <p>Office Hours: Tuesdays 1 PM- 4 PM, or as needed</p> <p>Department of Health Administration and Policy College of Public Health George Mason University Peterson Family Health Sciences Hall, 4th floor 4400 University Drive MS IJ3 Fairfax, VA 22030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>In-Person or Telephone conferences</u> available during office hours. Contact your instructor by email to arrange a consultation. • <u>Video conferences</u> available by appointment. Contact your instructor to arrange a video conference via Zoom or Collaborate Ultra.
Course Description	<p>Reviews health care system issues, trends, and economic concepts as ways to understand the critical role of public health policy and the policymaking process in the United States. Major political institutions and policy processes that shape health policy are identified. Past and present health policy, and its impact on changes in 1) the ability of patients to access health services, 2) the practice of health sciences professionals, and 3) the quality and process of care, will be examined. The role of politics at both the federal and state government in health policymaking will be explored, and critical aspects of the U.S. health system are compared to those of other countries.</p>

<p>Course Objectives</p>	<p>Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the major elements and forces of the health care system. 2. Identify and discuss the important policy issues affecting the current health care system. 3. Explain the political, legislative, regulatory, and judicial processes and how they work to influence, make, and implement health policy. 4. Analyze the influencing factors and available policy options as they pertain to strategic and tactical considerations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical access to care • Financial access to care • Health care financing • Health care costs • The supply of health care professionals • Assuring quality of care 5. Critique a health policy to identify its impact on patients, health professionals, insurers, government, and others. 6. Discuss the role politics plays in establishing health care policy.
<p>Course Methodology</p>	<p>The class format will combine readings, videos, virtual presentations, and other learning tools. The class will be interactive and require every student to be engaged in the discussions and assignments. In addition to the video lectures, screencasts and timely completion of assignments, every student will be expected to be an active participant in the discussion boards and a dedicated individual applying learned concepts to the course work.</p>
<p>Required textbook(s) and/or materials</p>	<p>Required Text:</p> <p><i>Health Care Politics and Policy in America</i>. 5th Edition, 2020. Kant Patel & Mark Rushefsky. Routledge Publishers.</p> <p>Full text access through GMU Library: https://doi-org.mutex.gmu.edu/10.4324/9780429397875</p>
<p>Participation</p>	<p>Learning can only happen when you are playing an active role. It is important to place more emphasis on developing your insights and skills, rather than transmitting information. Knowledge is more important than facts and definitions. It is a way of looking at the world, an ability to interpret and organize future information. An active learning approach will more likely result in long-term retention and better understanding because you make the content of what you are learning concrete and real in your mind.</p> <p>Although an active role can look differently for various individuals, it is expected in this class that you will work to explore issues and ideas under the guidance of the professor and your peers. You can do this by reflecting on the content and activities of this course, asking questions, striving for answers, interpreting observations, and discussing issues with your peers on the</p>

	<p>Canvas discussion boards.</p>
<p>Computer Requirements</p>	<p>Hardware: You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content and a headset with a microphone is recommended for the best experience. For Hard Disk Space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for the storage amount needed to install any additional software and space to store work that you will do for the course. If you consider the purchase of a new computer, please go to Patriot Tech to see recommendations.</p> <p>Software: Many courses use Canvas as the learning management system. GMU ITS provides a knowledge base with information about Canvas. Log in to myMason to access your registered courses. Some courses may use other learning management systems. Check the syllabus or contact the instructor for details. Online courses typically use Acrobat Reader, Flash, Java, and Windows Media Player, QuickTime and/or Real Media Player. Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications.</p> <p>Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will also run on it. Watch this video about using Windows on a Mac. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.</p> <p>Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.</p> <p>Course-specific Hardware/Software</p> <p>This course may require the use of Zoom or other software to video conference with other students and/or the instructor.</p> <p>Hardware or software required for your course or program may be available for purchase at Patriot Computers (the University’s computer store that offers educational discounts and special deals).</p>
<p>Course Website</p>	<p>Canvas will be used for this course. You can access the site at http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu. Login and click on the “Courses” tab. You will see HAP 442 course – NOTE: Username and passwords are the same as your Mason email account. You must have consistent access to an internet connection to complete the assignments in this course through Canvas (http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu).</p>
<p>Rules and Expectations</p>	<p>In correspondence/communication, students will be expected to: be professional and respectful in correspondence and make reasonable requests of the instructor. I am happy to clarify course material and answer questions; however, please exhaust other information sources (e.g., syllabus, Canvas) for answering your</p>

	<p>question before contacting me and remember, “Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.”</p> <p>Regarding honesty in work, students will be expected to 1) review the University integrity and honesty policies in the student handbook for guidelines regarding plagiarism and cheating (summarized below), 2) refrain from dishonest work as it will receive a minimum penalty of zero on the assignment and a maximum penalty of a zero for the course with a report to the Honor committee. The GMU Honor Code requires that faculty submit any suspected Honor Code violations to the Honor Committee. Therefore, any suspected offense will be submitted for adjudication.</p> <p>The instructor for this course will use Turnitin to check for plagiarism. See information on Turnitin at: https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/turnitin-for-instructors/</p>
<p>Academic Standards</p>	<p>Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution’s goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.</p> <p>As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty: Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations. • Acknowledgement: Giving proper credit for all contributions to one’s work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, co-authored pieces, and project reports. • Uniqueness of Work: Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one’s own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work. <p>Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university’s academic standards procedures.</p>

	<p>Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.</p> <p>The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.</p> <p>Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.</p>
<p>Cheating Policy</p>	<p>Any form of cheating on an activity, project, or exam will result in zero points earned. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to, the following: reviewing others' exam papers, having ANY resources utilized when not allowed, collaborating with another student during an individual assignment. Review the information on plagiarism posted on the Academic Standards website.</p> <p>If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with your instructor or contact the GMU Writing Center to schedule an appointment.</p> <p>Instructors in HAP 442 may utilize Turnitin to monitor academic integrity in discussion board posts and the final policy paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnitin: An integrated tool for plagiarism detection that compares student submissions against a vast database of web pages, publications, and other student papers to flag potential matches and issues with citation.
<p>Plagiarism and the Internet</p>	<p>Copyright rules also apply to users of the Internet who cite from Internet sources. Information and graphics accessed electronically must also be cited, giving credit to the sources. This material includes but is not limited to e-mail (do not cite or forward someone else's e-mail without permission), newsgroup material, information from Web sites, including graphics. Review the information on plagiarism posted on the Academic Standards website.</p> <p>Students need to cite any sources used for discussion board posts, presentations and papers using APA style format. Basic rules for reference lists can be found at HERE.</p>
<p>Inclusive and Welcoming Environment</p>	<p>This course embodies the perspective that we all have differing perspectives and ideas and we each deserve the opportunity to share our thoughts. Therefore, we will conduct our discussions with respect for those differences. That means, we each have the freedom to express our ideas, but we should also do so keeping in mind that our colleagues deserve to hear differing thoughts in a respectful manner, <i>i.e.</i>, we may disagree without being disagreeable. The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME) provides resources for an inclusive and welcoming campus environment.</p>

<p>Individuals with Disabilities</p>	<p>Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the Disability Services website for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.</p> <p>Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor <i>in advance</i> of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.</p>
<p>Title IX Resources and Required Reporting</p>	<p>As a part of George Mason University’s commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the “Complainant”) will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.</p> <p>For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence. Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.</p> <p>Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone <i>confidentially</i>, please contact one of Mason’s confidential employees in Student Support and Advocacy (SSAC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Health Services (SHS), and/or the Office of the University Ombudsperson.</p>
<p>FERPA and E-Mail Policy</p>	<p>The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course. Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.</p>

	<p>Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.</p>																								
<p>Course Grading & Evaluation</p>	<p>The following grading scale is applied to the grades in this course. A passing grade is considered a C or above:</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>A+</td> <td>97-100</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>94-96</td> <td>C+</td> <td>77-79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A-</td> <td>90-93</td> <td>C</td> <td>73-76</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B+</td> <td>87-89</td> <td>C-</td> <td>70-72</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>83-86</td> <td>D</td> <td>60-69</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B-</td> <td>80-82</td> <td>F</td> <td>0-59</td> </tr> </table>	A+	97-100			A	94-96	C+	77-79	A-	90-93	C	73-76	B+	87-89	C-	70-72	B	83-86	D	60-69	B-	80-82	F	0-59
A+	97-100																								
A	94-96	C+	77-79																						
A-	90-93	C	73-76																						
B+	87-89	C-	70-72																						
B	83-86	D	60-69																						
B-	80-82	F	0-59																						
<p>Late/Missing Assignments</p>	<p>I take due dates and project specifications seriously, as will future employers in health care or other fields that you enter. <u>You must submit assignments on or before their due date. unless I tell you otherwise. I will not accept late work without advance written permission from me. An assignment that I receive after it is due will lose an incremental letter grade per day, and work will not be accepted more than 1 week after the initial due date.</u></p>																								
<p>Course Schedule</p>	<p>See Canvas for a weekly schedule of topics and course expectations.</p>																								
<p>Discussions – 40%</p>	<p>Your challenge is to immerse yourself in the topics and perspectives presented in the course. You are encouraged to make notes from your review of textbook chapters and outside sources, and on your own thoughts about the various concepts and issues. Your posts should be to the point and include sufficient technical detail for others to respond. You should present your opinions and justify your opinions with facts and proper sources. You can also discuss what you disagree with and why on a specific topic.</p> <p>Initial/Original Post Please post what you view as the appropriate responses to the above prompts. Your initial post should be 300-400 words. Please provide response with a clear, well-formulated thesis, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling count. Support all posts with appropriate rationale and citations from readings, appropriately document sources.</p> <p>Responding to Others Responses to at least two classmates' postings should be approximately 200 words and should be thoughtful, substantial, polite, and more extensive than a simple "well done" phrase or "I agree." Consider points of agreement, disagreement, assumptions, and value judgments. You will be able to respond to others after you submit your initial post.</p> <p>Instructions Each student will make at least one original post by Friday 11:59 PM, EST, and react to at least two of your peers' posts by Sunday 11:59 PM, EST. The following weeks require discussion board participation: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14. During weeks 8, 10, and 15 there will be no discussion board assignment.</p>																								

<p>Mid-Term Exam – 20%</p>	<p>The mid-term exam will cover material from the lectures and readings (textbook and other assigned materials) for the first seven (7) classes of the course. The test will include multiple-choice questions.</p> <p>The mid-term is a timed examination. Students will have 2 ½ hours to complete the exam once opened in Canvas.</p> <p>Due Date: Sunday 11:59 PM, ET on Week 8. Mid-Term Exam is due by March 22, 2026 by 11:59 PM.</p>
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<p>Legislative Hearing – 20%</p>	<p>Testimonies before Congress (Individual Assignment)</p> <p>5-Minute Video Presentations - to be posted on the discussion board</p> <p>Role of Presenters: You are knowledgeable and passionate about a specific health policy related issue. You receive a phone call from a health legislative aide from your U.S. Senator's office asking you to prepare and deliver a video-recorded testimony at an upcoming Congressional health committee hearing on a topic related to this issue.</p> <p>Each student will testify on a topic related to ONE of the below policy issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Insurance Coverage, the Uninsured and Uncompensated Care • Aging and Chronic Care • Health Promotion and Disease Prevention • Quality Improvement and Evidence-based Medicine • Health Professions Education and Supply • Medicaid and CHIP • Long-Term Care • Health Disparities and Vulnerable Populations (racial/ethnic minorities, rural/inner city residents, people with disabilities, immigrants, other) • Healthcare Spending and Cost Containment • Viability of the Healthcare 'Safety Net' Delivery System • Public Health • Patient Safety, Medical Injury and Malpractice • Medicare • COVID-19 Vaccinations and/or Care and Treatment • Reproductive Health • Child and Adolescent Health • Health Information Technology and Privacy • Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder • Military and/or Veteran's Healthcare • Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)/HIV/AIDS <p>Each student will develop and video record a 5-minute testimony (maximum time per student) to a (pretend) Congressional committee with health jurisdiction interested in your policy issue and considering legislation to address the issue. Be creative on how you approach your topic. For example,</p>
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	<p>you may be proposing a new piece of legislation, arguing a new policy angle to existing policy, etc. Students should submit their testimony as an assignment.</p> <p>Each student’s testimony on the panel should include: 1) brief background/facts on the issue, and 2) your proposal and arguments (pro and con). AT LEAST ONE-HALF OF YOUR TESTIMONY TIME MUST BE SPENT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF YOUR POLICY PROPOSAL. PRACTICE YOUR PRESENTATION. DO NOT SIMPLY READ YOUR NOTES.</p> <p>View the following short video that provides effective tips for testifying: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcMp3NTIyjQ</p> <p>The format should resemble actual short Congressional testimonies, which can be found on Congressional Committee websites. Go to http://help.senate.gov/, then click on “Hearings”, then the year you want to view (i.e., 2016), then the month (i.e., November), then the topic of interest (i.e., Ensuring Drug Safety: Where Do We Go From Here?), then view the individual testimonies to get a feel of format, content, etc.</p> <p>Due Date: This assignment is required to be uploaded to Canvas Assignments by Sunday, 11:59 PM, ET on Week 14. May 3, 2026 by 11:59 PM.</p>
<p>Final Paper – 20%</p>	<p>Final Paper - What Health Policy Issue are You Concerned About?</p> <p>This assignment requires the student to initially do some thinking about a current health care problem, issue or topic is interesting or concerning. Your interest or concern must be about a health-related problem that can be addressed by government. This may be the same problem you submitted for the lesson #2 discussion board and/or the congressional testimony presentation.</p> <p>Use the following format and components in completing the assignment:</p> <p>Steps to Determining the Health Policy Solution to Your Problem.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a health care issue and describe why this issue is of concern and/or interest to you. Include evidence that supports the need for this issue to become a public policy (not an action by the healthcare industry). YOUR TOPIC SHOULD BE VERY SPECIFIC AND NARROW IN SCOPE, MAKING IT A MORE FEASIBLE AND EFFECTIVE POLICY. <i>(Length of (1): 2 pages)</i> 2. Determine what kind of public policy your healthcare issue needs. From the textbook and what you learned from the Week 2 lecture, identify whether the policy should be a distributive or regulatory policy, and why.

	<p>Apply what you have learned in the class and produce a strategy for realizing your desire to have government address your health problem or concern. Your strategy will include the following:</p> <p>Whether (and why) the policy solution you desire is one that is best suited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Be addressed by the federal, state, or local government. If you choose a state or local government, it must be a specific state or local (county or city) government.b. Originate in the legislative, executive, or judicial branch of government;c. Be a new or modified action by government <p><i>(Length of (2): 2 pages)</i></p> <p>3. How you plan to accomplish your desire to have government address your problem. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identification of which individuals or organizations NOT PART OF GOVERNMENT you will work with to get your issue/concern on the political agenda of policy makers in government.b. Determination of how best to advocate/lobby for your issue to government policymakers, including to whom in government you will be targeting your lobbying efforts, and how you plan to get their attention and support. <p><i>(Length of (3): 2-3 pages)</i></p> <p>4. Draft a Proposed Policy that outlines your problem and what government should do. Which type of public policy you choose (law, regulation, ordinance, etc.) will be based on how you answer. Use the following templates for a:</p> <p>Law (Statute) or Ordinance: Use the "Bill Template" at: https://www.speechanddebate.org/legislation-templates/</p> <p>Regulation: https://www.epa.gov/web-policies-and-procedures/web-standard-regulatory-template#template</p> <p><i>(Length of C(3): 2 -3 pages)</i></p> <p>The paper should total 9-10 pages double-spaced (not including title page and references) with 1" margins, 11pt font.</p> <p>Feel free to speak with the instructor if you need help identifying some current health care issue that requires a government solution, and will provide you some guidance as to whether the health policy solution is one involving: 1. federal, state, or local government; 2. the legislative, executive, or judicial</p>
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	<p>branch of government; and 3. a policy that represents a new or modified action by government.</p> <p>Due Date: Sunday 11:59 PM, ET during exam week, May 10, 2026 at 11:59 PM.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Need Help? Utilize the "Course Q&A" discussion forum or email your instructor directly.</p>	