

Workshop on Contemporary Issues in Health Law and Policy Workshop (501Y)

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Office hours: Monday, 3.00-5.00 pm (but please try to make an appointment by email first).

The goals of this course are as follows:

1. To teach you how to write a critical reaction essay
2. To expose you to a range of disciplinary approaches (law, political science, economics, philosophy, and health services research) to contemporary issues in health law and policy
3. To encourage you to debate issues and ask questions in a public forum.

Evaluation

This course will be evaluated by five papers (85% of the grade) and by participation in the workshops (15% of the grade).

Each paper will be devoted to a particular presenter's recommended readings. The readings for each presentation will be handed out at least 1 week in advance. Each paper is due by 5.00 pm the day after (Friday). Please submit all papers to my secretary, Bernadette Mount, in Flavelle, 343. I will return all papers the following week and they can be picked up from my secretary's office, Bernadette Mount, in Flavelle, 343.

There are 16 presentations to be held over the course of the year. You are only required to write 5 reaction papers. If you wish you can hand in 6 papers and your grade will be assessed on the best 5 papers.

Although you are only required to write only 5 reaction papers you are expected to read the materials and participate in discussion at 14 presentations. I will note attendance and participation.

Each paper should be 5-6 pages long of double spaced print; that is, around 2000 words.

The Reaction Papers

You should begin with a short general introduction (not a summary of the readings) and then you must begin to analyze the issues. The more critical your approach, the better, though “critical” does not necessarily mean negative criticism. The questions that are posed by participants at the seminar and the answers given are the best clues to what sorts of issues you should address. What I want to see is your ability to pick out clearly themes, the merits of the different arguments made, and to discuss and explain tensions, in the paper(s) or flaws in the logic/reasoning. You may try to point out how different disciplinary approaches (law, political science, economics, philosophy, and health services research) would approach the questions/issues discussed and whether there is any value in considering a particular issue from a different discipline than the one the author has selected.

You may wish to participate in a couple of seminars before writing a reaction paper in order to first see how people from different disciplines critique a presentation in health law and policy. **At all costs DO NOT summarize the reading(s) or just describe the author’s arguments.**

Some further points on the reactions papers:

1. Strive for clarity. To achieve this you must have at least three elements: a short introductory paragraph that poses the issues/questions/concerns and how you are going to deal with those issues/questions/concerns; an argument or series of arguments which together make up your response to those issues/questions/concerns; a brief conclusion that ties your arguments together.
2. Do not waffle or simply describe the contents of the readings.
3. Come to a conclusion. However, in reaching a conclusion you do not have to agree with any one position or argument or present a “solution” that the presenter (or anyone else) has not thought of. It is much more important to identify the important questions raised by the topic and to explore the range of answers to those questions particularly from the perspective of how different disciplinary approaches would approach the questions.
4. Whatever your conclusion is, it must be based on the arguments you have made in the body of the work. You should try to write at least two drafts, for it is unlikely that your first draft will be a successful essay. You cannot know what your conclusion is before you have tried to articulate the problems in writing. Writing is the real discipline as it makes you realize the holes in your argument(s) and perhaps even what your argument is!

5. Your arguments must have addressed the central positions and themes articulated in the reading. On the one hand, this means that you cannot deliver a series of your own opinions about the issue. On the other hand, it does not mean that you should summarize or deal with everything the author said. You have to identify the themes and positions that arise out of the different positions. **To do that, you have to be well acquainted with, that is to have *struggled with*, and thought about the readings *prior* to the time you write your reaction paper.**

Participation in the Seminars

15% of the grade will be allocated to participation in the seminars. The way to approach this course is to read carefully the prescribed readings as we go along. Ask questions of the author as you read. This will assist you in preparing questions for the presenters at the seminar or in formulating a general comment. You can also ask questions of other participants at the seminar if you require clarification of a question or comment. Don't sit in silence thinking that you will expose your ignorance in front of the wise. The wise ask questions seeking clarification on the most basic issues and then seek reclarification.

I am happy to meet with you at any time to discuss your approach to the reaction papers and participation in the seminar series. Please email me to make an appointment.

Colleen M. Flood