Term Paper

Rationale

In teaching this course and in my contacts with Duke undergraduates outside of class, it has become increasingly apparent that many students have inadequate exposure to writing and research. This has also become apparent to others as evidenced by the recent curriculum reform. Students often learn from lectures and their reading, but in the real world, you will have to define and implement your own methods for learning. Often, you will be asked to take a position on a certain issue and back it up with logical arguments and/or data. Finally, a paper will give you an opportunity to investigate a topic you find relatively interesting in greater depth.

Topics

Below are some suggested topics. All are current and policy relevant and relate to this course. You may take a pro or a con position on any of these topics. If you want to select a topic other than one on this list, I want to approve it first.

1. The federal government should enact a comprehensive patient bill of rights (regulation of HMO quality of care).
2. The U.S. should adopt Canadian-style universal health insurance coverage.
3. The federal government should limit spending on care at the end of life.
4. Antitrust scrutiny of hospitals and physicians should be limited.
5. State governments should more actively scrutinize hospital ownership conversions.
6. Medicare should implement a prescription drug benefit that is independent of beneficiaries’ ability to pay.
7. The federal government should adopt a prescription drug formulary.
8. Medicare should abolish its subsidy of graduate medical education (training of residents).

Researching and Writing Your Paper

Although you may discuss your ideas with anyone, this is to be an independent research project. Papers will be single-authored.

You are encouraged to use reference material from numerous sources, including EconLit and Medline. You may find the Center for Health Policy, Law and Management’s Cyberexchange useful. It’s address is www.hpolicy.duke.edu. You may use newspapers, but original sources, e.g., journal articles, provide stronger support for your point of view. You can get the New York
Times through the Cyberexchange. NYT archives are available on-line, but there is a charge for this.

The papers are to be 25-30 pages (regular type), double-spaced, exclusive of tables, figures, footnotes and references. Please limit the number of tables and figures to a maximum of five. Just as a guide, you might have 20-25 references.

You will be primarily graded on your paper’s analytic content. Thus, do not allocate too much space to description (e.g., describing Medicare’s current policy of subsidizing teaching hospitals). I will also consider writing style, but this is a secondary consideration.

Due Dates

The dates various parts of the paper are due are given in the course schedule. I will expect conformance with those dates. Late submissions will be penalized.

The schedule allocates the last two classes for presentation and class discussion of some of your papers. Four to six papers will be presented. My choices will be based on (1) strength of the papers and (2) achieving a diversity of topics.