

America's Challenges

What can we learn from other countries

Approach

- Several years ago, I taught a class about what America can learn from other countries.
- I took a country by country approach
- This time I'm taking a problem by problem approach

Areas to cover

- Health care system (1st two weeks)
- Political system (week 3)
- Mass murders (week 4)
- Crime and police (week 5)
- Transportation (week 6)
- Economic problems (week 7)
- Some peculiar American traditions and language (week 8)

Need to belong

- Many of us identify with the nation in which we happened to be born
- Much of this class will involve criticism of American institutions and what we could learn from how other societies handle these problems
- If you would take criticism of the United States personally, you may be offended by the content of this class.

Ohio River Watershed Petition

- Let's start a chain of stores named Kroger
- Kroger itself can't sue me but someone representing it will because the Kroger corporation is recognized as a legal person.
- The Ohio River watershed is more vital to our existence but it's not recognized as a legal entity
- Petition to put a charter amendment on the ballot to recognize the Ohio River Watershed in the city of Cincinnati
- Those who are voting residents of city of Cincinnati (vote in city council elections) can sign the petition.
- For more info: <https://crowohio.org/>

America's Health Care

- High cost of healthcare system
- Life expectancy not as high as other countries
- High cost of prescription drugs
- Lack of universal access
- Shortage of doctors
- Cost of medical malpractice
- Medical fraud
- Bankruptcies resulting from medical bills
- Needless use of the emergency room
- Inequities among racial and ethnic groups

Cost of Healthcare

- <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/31/health/us-health-care-spending-global-perspective/index.html>
- Our per capita healthcare costs are over 50% higher than those for Switzerland and Germany, the countries with the next most expensive healthcare systems
- Trend of costs
- <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/28/why-health-care-costs-are-rising-in-the-us-more-than-anywhere-else-.html>
- Cost are rising

What country has the best healthcare?

- US healthcare rating varies by survey
- <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/best-healthcare-in-the-world>
- Another ranking
- <https://ceoworld.biz/2023/08/25/revealed-countries-with-the-best-health-care-systems-2023/>
- Taiwan ranked number 1 United States is 15th
- Another ranking
- <https://www.internationalinsurance.com/health/systems/>
- Ranked 69th

Life expectancy by country

- One performance measure of a health care system is life expectancy
- <https://www.worlddata.info/life-expectancy.php>
- A citizen of Hong Kong, the top rated country, will live, on average, 10 years longer than an American
- U.S. Life expectancy is declining, particularly among Blacks and Latinos
- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/us-life-expectancy-sees-massive-decline-especially-in-black-and-brown-communities>

High cost of prescription drugs

- Prescription drugs are more expensive in the U.S.
- <https://www.pgpf.org/blog/2022/11/how-much-does-the-united-states-spend-on-prescription-drugs-compared-to-other-countries#:~:text=According%20to%20a%202021%20study,Switzerland%20and%20the%20United%20Kingdom>).
- <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/22/tech/prescription-drug-prices-mark-cuban-goodrx-bettermed/index.html>
- Personal experience: Urea cream for cracked feet
- \$500 (not covered by insurance) as a prescription
- \$15 per jar OTC from Walmart

Lack of universal access

- Uninsured

- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/number-of-uninsured-americans-drops-to-an-all-time-low>
- 26 million Americans remain without insurance
- I was once one of them

- Underinsured

- <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2022/sep/state-us-health-insurance-2022-biennial-survey#:~:text=Underinsured%20adults%20are%20individuals%20who,to%205%20percent%20or%20more>
- 43% of working age adults were underinsured
 - Out of pocket costs for medical care were equal to 10% of annual income

Rural Areas

- <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/08/why-wont-doctors-move-to-rural-america/379291/>
- 6000 areas with shortage of primary care physicians
- Rural areas have about 68 primary care doctors per 100,000 people
84 in urban areas
- “Digital divide” limits role of Telehealth in rural areas
- <https://www.wvxu.org/show/cincinnati-edition/2023-04-26/digital-divide-rural-communities-affects-health-care>

Malpractice insurance

- 2021 medical malpractice payments of over \$3.1 billion
- <https://online.tamucc.edu/degrees/business/mba/healthcare-administration/malpractice-and-its-effects-on-the-healthcare-industry/>
- Premiums have been rising consistently
- Defensive medicine: doctors order additional tests to cover themselves against possible malpractice suits
- <https://wealthkeel.com/blog/9-medical-malpractice-insurance-questions-that-every-physician-should-know/>

Shortage of Doctors

- Article from the Atlantic Monthly “Why America has so few doctors”
- [Why America Has So Few Doctors - The Atlantic](#)
- <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/doctors-per-capita-by-country>
- Typical doctor attends 12 years of education and training
 - 4 years of college
 - 4 years of med school
 - 3 years of residency
 - 1 year as chief resident
- U.S. lower than many nations in general practitioners per 10,000 persons
- In Europe continuous six-year program
- Up to \$200,000 to \$400,000 in debt incurred
- Lack of residency slots
- Resistance to expanding responsibility of nurses and importing foreign doctors

“Concierge Doctor” Trend

- <https://www.partnermd.com/blog/concierge-medicine-patients-pros-cons>
- Some doctors are frustrated that they can't spend as much time as they'd like with individual patients
- They limit their practice to a smaller number of patients paying an annual premium (generally not covered by insurance) to be a patient
- [Concierge Medicine: the good, the bad, and the ugly | Women's Health Research Institute \(msu.edu\)](#)
- Limits physicians available to the masses, shifting more burden on those physicians
- Twice my primary care physician went to concierge medicine

Medical fraud

- Medicare fraud is rampant in the U.S.
- <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/09/how-medicare-and-medicaid-fraud-became-a-100b-problem-for-the-us.html>
- **Medical identity theft**
- <https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/consumer-alerts/medical-identity-theft/>

Medical bankruptcies

- Medical bills are a major cause of personal bankruptcies
- <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/22/100-million-adults-have-health-care-debt-and-some-owe-10000-or-more.html>
- <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/06/16/americans-medical-debt/>
- <https://news.yahoo.com/medical-debt-uniquely-american-problem-155327746.html>
- Causes of bankruptcies
- <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0310/top-5-reasons-people-go-bankrupt.aspx>

Emergency Room Use

- Unnecessary emergency room use
- <https://www.wave3.com/story/32708729/diaper-rash-in-the-er-its-happening-and-youre-paying-for-it/>
- Emergency rooms being used about half the time
- [Emergency Rooms: Why So Many People Use Them \(healthline.com\)](#)
- Emergency rooms should be available for true emergencies: traffic accidents, fires, heart attacks and strokes

Inequities of health care

- Significant disparities of health care among racial groups
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/washington-post-live/2023/06/29/effects-racial-social-inequality-health-care/>
- Increasing rate of maternal mortality, especially among persons of color

Next week

- Health care – how American life styles contribute to its high cost
- Health care systems in other countries.
- Petition