

Paper Assignment

**Background Information:** Many plans to alter the health-insurance system have been proposed.

Some (not all) Republicans have focused on policies such as (i) removing the business tax deduction for health insurance premiums, and providing tax credits to some people to help them buy individual health insurance, and (ii) promoting the use of Health Savings Accounts.

During his campaign, Pres. Obama described a plan that might have the following features. (i) Creating a system in which interested individuals would have access to join large pools of people who would be get private insurance coverage (but prices that would be subject to government rules and/or negotiations between government and insurers), along with providing tax credits to lower-income individuals and small businesses. (ii) Requiring large employers to either provide insurance coverage for their employees or to pay into system designed to fund broad-based health-insurance coverage. (iii) Mandating health-insurance coverage for children, and creating ways to enforce/promote that mandate.

The Obama campaign also proposed policies such as an expansion of medicaid and CHIP (the child health insurance program), increasing funding into plans to identify the most effective forms of health treatment, and changing funding plans to provide increased rewards for actions designed to prevent medical problems rather than only treating health problems.

The final form of the Obama Administration plan for health-care reform has not yet been written.

**Assignment:** Pick any three of the five ideas (those numbered (i)-(iii)) listed above. Of the three you choose, two must be from one set of proposals, and one must be from the other.

For each idea, provide a brief description of the proposal, and briefly summarize the advantages and disadvantages of it (emphasizing *economic* arguments).

There will be no grading penalty if your paper is rather disjointed. In other words, you can submit what is essentially three distinct short essays rather than a single flowing essay.

Each idea should be covered in roughly one-to-one-and-a-half pages, meaning that your overall submission should be roughly three-to-five pages long.

**Due Date:** The paper is due by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 1st, but can also be submitted in the last day of class (Tuesday, April 28th). [The 28th is the due date given on the syllabus.]

If a paper is not completed by May 1st, a student can submit it late. Each school-day late will cause a 25% reduction in the paper's score.

**Importance to Grade:** The numeric score on this assignment makes up 10% of the overall semester score, which means it is worth 40 points out of the 400 possible over the semester.

**Format:** Papers must be word-processed (or typed). The length guideline above is based on a paper that is double spaced. Students who prefer to use single, or one-and-a-half-line, spacing can do so — simply adjust the recommended length in the obvious way.

While I'm suggesting a length of 3–5 pages, any student is allowed to write a longer paper. Specifically, papers can be up to 8 (but no more) pages long. [Writing a paper of this length is *not* a requirement for a good grade.] To enforce this upper 8-page limit, I'll read only the first 8 pages of any paper that exceeds the limit; the paper's grade will be based on only the pages I read.

**Optional Rough Draft:** A student who writes a rough draft of the paper on or before Tuesday, April 21st, can submit it to me. I'll be happy to read it and write some comments on the draft, which I'll then return on Thursday the 23rd.

The score a student receives for this assignment will depend solely on the quality of his or her final paper. Handing in an earlier version will improve a grade only to the extent that it improves the ultimate quality of a paper.

**Reference List:** All papers should include a list of whatever references were used in writing the paper. I have no specific requirements concerning the format of the reference list (general neatness is, of course, helpful). Make sure to supply enough information so that I could easily find each of the references used.

Your textbook can certainly be used as a source, but you'll probably have to do some additional research.

There's no need to use in-text citations, footnotes, etc.

**General Information:** The following point may be obvious, but I'll mention it anyway. The score on this paper will depend not only on the accuracy of your content, but also on the quality of a your writing, the organization of the paper, etc. Make sure to spend some time editing and rewriting your paper; don't hand in your first draft.

You should write your paper so that it can be understood by an intelligent person with no formal training in economics. You should be careful not to overuse "jargon"; in other words, explain (concisely and clearly) any terms and issues that a non-economist may not be able to understand.

You should feel free to discuss this assignment and how you will approach it with your classmates (or with me). You can often learn a lot from such discussions. However, the paper you hand in must consist solely of your own work. Any indication that you collaborated with another person during the actual writing of your paper will severely affect your grade.