

Access to Health Care: Local and Global Perspectives
Thursday, 10/12/06, F-Block (1:25 – 2:45)
MA Theater

Presenters:

Drs. Patricia and Richard Gibbs founded the San Francisco Free Clinic in 1994 as a service to people who do not have health insurance. The clinic has had fifty thousand visitors since its opening, and among its many services are preventive health care, cancer and heart disease screening, childhood and adult vaccinations, and onsite social work services. Doctors Patricia and Richard Gibbs both received their medical degrees from Yale University.

Dr. William H. Dow is an associate professor of health economics at University of California, Berkeley. He has written many articles on the economics of international health care, one of which received the Kenneth J. Arrow award, which is given to the best health care economics article for the year. In addition to his work as a professor, Dr. Dow serves as a senior economist on the White House council of Economic advisors. He received his B.A., from Cornell University, and his Doctorate in Economics from Yale University.

Framing Questions:

1. In his 2004 State of the Union Address, President Bush said, “Americans have the best medical care in the world.” In your view, is this true? Are there areas in which the U.S. health care system lags behind other countries? To what extent does the lack of access to health care in the U.S. call into question the president’s statement?
2. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that, in 2004, close to 16%, or 46 million Americans, did not have health insurance, including 8.3 million children. What are the governmental and corporate policies that have lead to this situation? Are people in the Bay Area insured at similar rates to those in the rest of the country?
3. The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee access to health care as a right of citizenship. What are the underlying arguments for and against universal health care in the U.S.?
4. If universal health care were adopted in the United States, what effects would it have on the economy? If it were detrimental in some ways to the economy, would it still be worthwhile? What lessons can the U.S learn from other nations?

5. How does the quality and access to health care in the Bay Area compare to that of the rest of the United States?
6. How are poorer nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America developing their health care systems and what can be done to help them?
6. What demographic receives the best health care? What demographic receives the worst? Why? Locally and globally, to what extent is access to health care based upon race or class?
7. How can the absence of access to healthcare affect a person's everyday life? What are some specific examples from the experience of the San Francisco Free Clinic?
8. For someone, especially a young person, who is interested in improving access to health care, what steps can they take? Are there specific programs or organizations in which they can participate?