Myths and Realities of American Public Policy

Policy Costs and Benefits
- Costs
- Benefits
- Distribution

Policy Assessment
- Costs and Benefits
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Equity
- Political feasibility
- Technical feasibility

Myths of Economic Policy
- Cutting taxes increases government revenue
- Most Americans will have to pay a “death tax”
- We are paying more income taxes than ever
- We can significantly cut the budget deficit by reducing fraud and waste
- We can significantly cut the budget deficit by reducing foreign aid
- Our long-term debt is a social security problem

Income Tax rates

[Graph showing income tax rates over time and across countries]
Myths of Health Care Policy

- The U.S. has the best health care in the world
- Universal care is too expensive
- Universal coverage means socialized medicine
- With “repeal and replace” we can pay less for better health care
- Medicare for All will solve all of our problems
American health care: not so great

U.S. HEALTH CARE RANKS LAST AMONG WEALTHY COUNTRIES

A recent international study compared 11 nations on health care quality, access, efficiency, and equity, as well as indicators of healthy life as assessed by infant mortality.

Overall Health Care Ranking

Potential Years of Life Lost Due to Diseases of the Respiratory System per 100,000 Population, 2006

Mortality Amenable to Health Care, 2006-07

Lots of people without coverage

Potential Years of Life Lost Due to Diseases of the Circulatory System per 100,000 Population, 2006

Mortality Amenable to Health Care

Lots of people without coverage

C.3.1 Health insurance coverage for a core set of services, 2008

Percentage of children under 18 who are uninsured

Children with health insurance

Children without health insurance

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/AAP-PCPIS.
Health Care Spending per Capita by Source of Funding, 2012
Adjusted for Differences in Cost of Living

Note: Calculations weighted relative to U.S. consumption patterns. U.S. retail prices were discounted from manufacturer prices according to the rebates obtained by the Medicaid program.


And you still have to wait!
Myths of Criminal Justice Policy

- The CJ system treats people pretty equally with regards to race
- We can solve our mass incarceration problem by cutting penalties on non-violent drug offenders
- America has a violent crime problem and mental health problem, not a gun problem
- Enacting more background checks, banning assault weapons, and limiting concealed carry, would substantially lower our murder rate
- The death penalty is an effective deterrent
Myths of immigration policy

- Illegal immigrants do not pay taxes
- Immigration hurts the economy and takes away jobs from Americans
- Current immigrants are not assimilating as well as previous generations of immigrants
- Americans only object to illegal immigrants
- There is strong support for deporting most illegal immigrants
Miscellaneous Policy Myths

- There is a genuine scientific controversy over global warming
- Social Security is in a crisis
- NCLB created national educational standards
  - Common Core is national education mandate from Obama and the Democrats

What’s Next?

- The test
- The rest of your life (i.e., this stuff matters)