I. Trying to understand Obamacare gives a good lesson in the chaotic approach to American democratic politics we call pluralism.
   A. Jacobs and Skocpol help us
      1. To appreciate the incredible complexity involved in creating and implementing a program like health care reform
      2. within that complexity, basically no one can understand the whole thing and we cannot anticipate how all of the elements and wrinkles will play out.
      3. They wrote three years ago and anticipated the incredible attacks by Republicans but treat this as surface level efforts by interest groups to change what they can.
      4. Jacobs and Skocpol encourage us to pay attention to long term impacts
         a. in terms of where we came from and why some sort of large change (planned or unplanned) was bound to happen
         b. in terms of transition effects as the program is put into effect, screw ups are ironed out, and short term high costs are dealt with
         c. the long-term acceptance of benefits, ironing out imperfections, determination of government to keep focus on the basic purposes of the program.
   B. While the controversy over legislation is bothersome, the basic reality is that things had to change and probably even a Republican administration would have had to do something.
      1. Long-term inflation in overall health care costs have started to bog down the economic system so that continued economic recovery requires putting a cap on costs.
      2. The health insurance system had an accelerating pattern of failure
         a. where it was getting so expensive that big businesses and institutions and well-to-do consumers could not afford it.
         b. the expense of insurance meant that more and more people were being pushed off of insurance so that the uninsured rate was rising.
         c. the industry had a profiteering focus that was denying coverage while allowing excessive profits and unacceptable levels of fraud by companies
      3. Members of the public were finding that they did not actually have insurance coverage that was essential when they actually needed it.
a. people who were sick were losing coverage as their treatment costs went up.
b. People with pre-existing conditions could not get insurance and could not change jobs.
c. Young people could not afford insurance when they got their first, low-paying jobs.

C. Key things to know about Obamacare
1. Five main components plus the mandate
2. Ten essential elements of an insurance plan
3. Insurance exchanges and how they work
4. Medicaid reform

D. Political assessment in terms of short-term success of Obamacare; Jacobs and Skocpol provide short term descriptions of what is happening and will happen and long term assessments in terms of reasons to expect success.
1. One of the challenges of policy making is that private interests hire lobbyists and embark on PR campaigns with the public and the more money they have the more effective their efforts can be.
2. J&S say that looking at implementation of Medicare you see long term determination by Congress to keep the law intact and long-term civil servants who are smart and experienced in terms of making adjustments and being determined to make the law work.
3. There are likely to be many adjustments and changes made in response to lobbyists desires at the federal and 50-state level but good civil servants
   a. are likely to make these adjustments so that they do not undermine the intent of the law
   b. while satisfying lobbyists and thereby building the coalition of support for the program.
4. Hostile opposition by Republicans is to be expected but if elections go well and Supreme Court rules are OK what we can expect is an issue-by-issue skirmish and retreat
5. Widespread program reforms are not likely to happen
   a. because Republicans do not have alternative plans to offer
   b. as the law is in place for a longer time, different groups of citizens will find things to like and it will be impossible to negate specific, positive parts of the law
   c. Thus incrementally the law will become established and popular.

E. J&S look at the record of Medicare to guess how Obamacare will fare.
1. in the short term, the law will have lots of opposition but over 10-years or so it will become popular and established.
2. A key part of success of the law will be the determination and ingenuity of long-term bureaucrats maintaining and improving the law.

3. In the short term the law will be relatively expensive but after the initial conflicts are worked through and resolved, more structural cost control initiatives built into the law will take hold and gradually reduce health cost inflation making the law seem less destabilizing to government and debt.

4. Specific provisions of the law are positive so as the noise abates these popular elements will provide the basic support for the law.