George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Graduate School of Education

Course Title: Contemporary and Emerging Issues in Education Policy
EDUC 875
Summer 2011

Instructor: Penelope M. Earley, Ph.D.
Class Date & Time: Summer B Tuesday & Thursday 7:30 – 10:00
Class Location: Innovation Hall, Room 316

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the forces and factors that lead to the emergence of initiatives on the Pre/K-16 policy agenda. Students will consider topics that have emerged in recent years (such as federally mandated school and teacher accountability programs) and identify and analyze sources of new education policy ideas. These will include but not be limited to: studies published in on-line publications; education blogs; articles in the mass media; and statements by candidates for office. Perquisite: Admission to the Ph.D. program and completion of EDUC 870 or equivalent doctoral-level policy coursework.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1.   Demonstrate the ability to critique new education proposals.
2.   Be able to locate and evaluate a variety of sources of education proposals.
3.   Be able to implement and manage a system to track new education proposals.
4.   Demonstrate ability to connect education proposals to policy options

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

There are no specialized standards specific to education policy studies. The conceptual framework for this course is linked to the mission of the Center for Education Policy as outlined in its Charter: (1) Translate education research into policy options and recommendations for a variety of audiences (decision makers, practitioners, and the public); (2) Conduct timely, sound, evidence-based analysis; and (3) Develop interdisciplinary and cross-sector policy networks. The student outcomes (in particular 3, 4, and 5) are linked to this mission as are the analytic assignments.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course is taught using lectures and class discussions

TEXTS AND READINGS

<u>Students will select one of the following to analyze (see course requirements)</u>

Brafman, O. & Brafman, R. (2008). *Sway: The irresistible pull of traditional behavior.*
    New York: Broadway Books.
Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference.*
    Boston, MA: Little, Borwn, and Co.
Kingdon, J. (1995). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies 2nd ed.* Harper Collins
    College Publishers.

<u>Online Resources</u>
ESEA Reauthorization Blueprint:
 http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/publicationtoc.html

Administration's Research Base for ESEA Blueprint:
http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/05/research-behind-the-obama-
administration%E2%80%99s-proposal-for-reauthorizing-the-elementary-and-secondary-
education-act-esea/

Race To The Top:
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html

Hursh, D. (September 2007). Assessing no child left behind and the rise of neoliberal
education policies. *American Educational Researh Journal (44)*3 pp. 493-518. DOI:
10.3102/0002831207306764

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Book Summary and Application to Policy Analysis (40 points)
2. Presentation of data source (10 points)
3. Build a School (10 points)
4. Analysis of article with demographic data (5 points)
5. Analysis of article from <u>non-education</u> periodical (5 points)
6. NCLB Blueprint (analysis of one provision) (10 points)
7. Analysis of one state's winning Race to the Top proposal [Delaware, District of
   Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North
   Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee] (10 points)

EVALUATION

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached. All written work must be completed on a
typewriter or a word processor and must be within the page limits established by the
instructor.

Grading Scale:

A =	96-100	A- =	92-95	B+ =	89-91
B =	85-88	B- =	80-84	C =	75-79
F =	74 and below				

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY:

June 09: Presentation of data source (10 points). Select one of the publicly available data sources on the attached list. Provide a one page brief on the data source (with URL) for each class member and the instruction. You will have 7-10 minutes to describe the data source so focus on the information available and how a policy analyst or researcher could use the data to inform policy.

June 14: Presentation of demographic data (05 points). Select an article from a non-education publication that includes demographic data. Please do not use an article that is merely a re-write of a press release from the data source. Be prepared to very briefly summarize your article (2-3 minutes) and then discuss what you see as the possible policy implications of the data presented in the article (this is not a written assignment).

June 16: Analysis of non-education media article (05 points). Select an article from a non-education source that could have implications for education decision makers. If it is an electronic source (blog etc) it must be a source that archives and allows articles to be downloaded (i.e. could actually be cited in a research article). Be prepared to summarize the article (2-3) minutes and the discuss what you see as the possible policy implications of it. Think broadly about Pre-K-16 education (this is not a written assignment).

June 21 and 23: Analysis of Race to the Top (20 points): Students will review the Race to the Top grant guidelines and select a state that won funding in either the first or second round of grants. Summarize in one to one and a half pages how what the state promised to do, how much money they received to do it, and over what period of time (How long do they have to show results?). Spend 2-4 pages discussing the policy implications of the state's proposal and whether or not the work can be supported by the available funds during the prescribed time period and whether they will lead to the expectations in the grant. Paper due before class on June 22.

June 30: Presentation of changes to NCLB/ESEA and analysis of implications (10 points. Students will select one provision from the Administration's proposal to reauthorize NCLB/ESEA. Discuss how this is different from existing law, why the administration thinks it is a good idea, and how it may impact PreK-16 education? Who is likely to support or oppose this proposal and why? Please summarize in 3-4 pages to be turned in before class on June 30.

July 12: Build a School (10 points). Using your future thinking skills and data from any data base (census would be a good start) decide where and why you would create a new education institution (PreK-16, public or independent). What, where, and why? Be as creative as you wish in your presentation.

*July 23: **Book summary and policy application (40 points).** Select one of the three books on the syllabus (no substitutions). Summarize the authors' key points (one page maximum) focusing on how the ideas presented can be used to study emerging or contemporary policy. Apply the framework to a policy issue of your choice (hint: focus on a narrow topic) and analyze it. Your total paper, including the one page summary) should be no longer than 10 pages including any references.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Topics and Assignments

1. June 07 -- Overview:
    a. Introduction & Housekeeping Issues
    b. Syllabus and schedule review
    c. Issues Sensing vs. Crystal Ball
    d. What's a new idea?
    e. New ideas in unusual venues: How an article in an in-flight magazine was translated into a federal program.
    f. Policy Analysis exercise
    g. Select data source for June 10 assignment
    h. APA Tip of the week

    Assignment for June 09: Select a publicly available data source useful for identifying or tracking information on education (see attached list). Provide a one page brief on the data source (with URL) for each class member and instructor

2. June 09—Data Sources (Inform & Predict Policy)
    a. Presentation and discussion of data sources.
    b. Discussion: What kinds of information does the data base provide? Where does it come from? Are there possible sources of bias? How might the data from this source be combined with other data sets to inform policy?
    c. Using LexisNexis

    Assignment for June 14: Select an article from a non-education publication that includes demographic data. Please do not use an article written from a press release by a data gathering agency. Be prepared to summarize the article and present policy implications of it for Pre-K-16 schools

3. June 14 – Demographics and policy decisions
    a. Presentation and discussion of articles and implications
    b. Discussion: Does the article give a complete picture? Are there implicit or explicit sources of bias? How might a policy analyst use this information
    c. APA Tip of the week

    Assignment for June 16: Select an article from a non-education source that could have implications for education decision makers. If it is an electronic source (blog etc.) it must be one that archives and allows articles to be downloaded. Be prepared to summarize the article and present policy implications of it for Pre-K-16 schools.

4. June 16 -- Role of the media in reporting/shaping education priorities

  a. How are print media responding to the demand for immediate information?
  b. Can we trust what they tell us or what we read?
  c. Who decides what's covered?
  d. Selection of Race to the Top States

Assignment for June 21/23: Students will review the guidelines for the Race to the Top grant competition, select and state, and summarize how the state intends to comply with grant expectations, how much money they will get to do this, and then consider whether (a) the activities can be supported by the available funds; (b) whether the activities can result in school reform in the designated time period; and (c) whether the funded activities are likely to lead to increased student achievement.

5. June 21 – Race to the Top and School Improvement
  a. Where did Race to the Top come from?
  b. What are the general expectations of the grant competition?
  c. Where is Virginia on this topic?
  d. Presentation and discussion of four states
  e. APA Tip of the week

6. June 23 – Still Racing…
  a. Presentation and discussion of five states
  b. What broad policy themes emerge?
  c. Will this competition have national impact? Why or why not?
  d. APA tip of the week.

Assignment ESEA Reauthorization. Read Hursh article, ESEA Blueprint, and the Administration's presentation of research to support their reauthorization proposals.

7. June 28 -- The Good, the Bad, and the Nonsensical: Reauthorization of NCLB
  a. What is the administration proposing? What research do they cite for their proposals?
  b. What's the bias?
  c. What would Hursh have to say about this?
  d. How does this connect to Race to the Top?
  e. Will ESEA be reauthorized this year? Why or why not?
  f. APA Tip of the week

Assignment: Select one provision from the Administration's proposal to reauthorize ESEA/NCLB. Summarize briefly and analyze the implications of this proposal for PreK-16 education. Consider who would support or oppose this proposal and why? Be prepare to present your analysis on June 30.

8. June 30 – Proposed changes to NCLB
  a. Presentation of student analysis of reauthorization provisions
  b. APA Tip of the week

Assignment: Prepare a list of 10 items that have essentially disappeared in the last 10 years and five things you expect to disappear in the next to years.

July 5 – No Class

9.	July 07 – Phone booths and other disappearing things
	a.	Discussion of disappearing things and education policy.
	b.	Discussion of emerging things and education policy.
	c.	Discussion of book summary and analysis.
	Assignment: Build a School. Using future think and existing data sources, describe where you would build a PreK-16 education institution and why?

10.	July 12 – Build a School
	a.	Student presentations of education institution proposals
	b.	APA Tip of the week

11.	July 14 – Debates over the Common Core Standards

12.	July 19 -- What's the next new thing?
	a.	Discussion of what's on the horizon
	b.	What are policy barriers?
	c.	What will the presidential candidates carve out as their position on education?

13.	 July 21—Discussion of book framework applications
	a.	Course wrap up

Important Information for all students

The College of Education and Human Development expects all students to abide by the following:

- ✓ Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See www.gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions.
- ✓ Students must know and follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full Honor Code.
- ✓ Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See http://mail.gmu.edu and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
- ✓ Students with disabilities to seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/students/drc or call 703-003-2474 to access the DRC.

Grading Guidelines: Contemporary and Emerging Issues in Education Policy

Grade/Points	Quality of Written Work	Completeness of Work	Timeliness	Team Assignments
A 96 – 100 A- 92 – 95	Exceptional quality and insight; a rare & valuable contribution to the field. Convincingly on target; demonstrates evidence of understanding and application; clear and concise writing; the reader is not distracted by grammar and/or spelling and citation errors.	100% complete Accurate & seamless writing; virtually a complete product	100% on time Almost always on time; rare but forgivable tardiness (such as serious personal or family illness). Instructor is notified in advance that a paper may be late.	Outstanding; facilitates and promotes conversation focused on the topic; questions & comments reveal thoughtful reaction. Good team participant Well above average doctoral student; actively helps move group toward goal.
B+ 89 –91 B 85 – 88 B- 80 – 84	Competent; provides credible evidence of understanding and application; some lapses in organization, citations and/or writing clarity. Evidence of understanding presented but incomplete; writing indicates gaps in logic; grammar and/or spelling errors distract the reader. Weak or insufficient citations. Barely passable for graduate credit; only enough to get by; little evidence of understanding; assignments lack clarity and organization; little evidence of proof reading. Citations absent or inaccurate.	Moderate shortcomings; minor elements missing that distract the instructor's ability to see the product as a whole. Evidence of effort but one or more significant and important points are missed or not addressed. Barely sufficient; work is the least that could be done to justify graduate credit.	Assignments late more than once or without prior conversation with instructor; not necessarily chronic. More than half the assignments are late, but none are excessively late. Excessively or repeatedly late.	Reliable and steady worker; questions and comments reveal some thought and reflection. Doesn't contribute often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection. Follows rather than leads group activities. Few meaningful contributions to class discussions. Little evidence of participation.
C 79 and below	Undergraduate level and quality; unsophisticated; assignments show little or not connection to course content or concepts.	Insufficient evidence of understanding and application; important elements missing or difficult to find.	Excessively or repeatedly late.	Weak or minimal participation; passive; often sidetracks group.
F	Unacceptable	Difficult to recognize as the assigned task.	Missed or not submitted. Incompletes not made up.	No constructive participation; destructive; demeaning toward other points of view.

Data Sources

Population Research Bureau
http://www.prb.org/

World Health Organization
http://www.who.int/research/en/

UNESCO
http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev_en.php?ID=2867_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Bureau of Labor Statistics
http://www.bls.gov/

U.S. Census Bureau
http://www.census.gov/

Annie E. Casey Foundation
http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/

U.S. Department of Agriculture
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navid=DATA_STATISTICS
&parentnav=EDUCATION_OUTREACH&navtype=RT

National Center for Education Statistics – *Condition of Education*
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/