**College of Education and Human Development**
**Graduate School of Education**

## EDLE 634.C01
## Contemporary Issues in Education Leadership
## Summer 2012

**T./Th. 7:20-10:00pm**
**Sat. 9:00-12:05am**
**Robinson Hall, A 325**

**Instructor:** Diana D'Amico, Ph.D.                    **Office:** Thompson, 1301
**E-mail:** ddamico2@gmu.edu                          **Phone:** 703.993.5596
                      **Office Hours:** By Appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examines current and emerging issues and trends impacting education. Includes demographic shifts; globalization; technology; data-based decision making; inclusion of diverse learners in American schools; and recent research on student achievement when influenced by race, gender, and poverty.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines a variety of issues and policy debates that shape current education discourse. Educational issues ranging from teacher quality to curriculum, federal reform to morality in the classroom and many others, inform our political landscape and highlight salient cleavages. Students will examine the intricacies of these debates and, in so doing, develop a heightened sense of the social, political, economic and historic forces that shape today's schools.

### NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

Each session will consist of a combination of large and small group discussions. Students will work with a variety of sources in class, both individually and in small groups. The creation of knowledge is a collaborative endeavor. For this reason, it is essential that students read the assigned materials carefully and come to each class prepared to participate in discussion.

### COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will:
- Be able to explain several of the seismic shifts and major trends and their implications for society at large and schools and school districts in particular.

- Be able to create meaningful school policies that incorporate research and diverse stakeholder views and attend to complex issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history of diverse groups in the United States and review education in the United States in reference to diverse groups as well as the privileges or inequities that members of these groups have encountered on the basis of race, ethnicity, and social class.
- Articulate how student diversity can help teachers and administrators develop curriculum that includes global literacy with a significant effect on economic, cultural, and political matters, with particular attention on how culture influences learning.
- Be able to synthesize recent research relative to student achievement in diverse school settings, with particular attention to the relationships between student achievement and gender, race, and poverty.
- Identify various strategies to maximize the effective use of data to improve student achievement and effective ways to communicate results to various community groups.
- Demonstrate the ability to make educational decisions which are supported by data rather than only on personal opinions.

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Readings
Jerry Aldridge and Renitta Goldman, eds. *Current Issues in Education*, 2nd edition. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007).
**All other readings will be available through the course website.**

*Students must have access to all assigned readings (either in hard copy or e-version) in class.*

### Outside-of-Class Resources
Online access is vital for the distance learning aspects of the course and is important if we experience problems with the classroom facility. **All students are required to activate and monitor their GMU e-mail accounts**. If you are uncertain about how to do this, please see me. I **strongly recommend** that you do not forward your Mason e-mail to a different account because attachments are often lost that way. It is best to check e-mail directly from your Mason account daily.

All students are required to use http://www.taskstream.com as part of this course. This is an Internet site at which I will post vital information for the course and through which we will communicate from time to time. Samples of student work will be archived on this site for purposes of course, program, and college assessment.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

### Class participation and attendance (15%)
Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions, group activities, workshops, and in serving as critical friends to other students. In addition, some classes will function as e-classes; students are expected to participate fully and actively in these learning experiences. Arriving at class more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes before the end of class may result in loss of points.

*Position Paper* **(20%)**

Students will select an educational issue or debate that is of high interest to them and write a 3-5 page essay in which they take a position on the issues. Students will [a] find evidence of this issue either at the school, district, state or national level through newspaper articles; [b] describe the issue or debate in clear and succinct terms, calling attention key players and points of contention; [c] take a position on the issue based only on their previous experiences and current understanding of the issue.

*Stakeholder Interviews* **(20%)**

In an effort to broaden their understanding of the issue (selected above) and the diverse opinions that surround it, students will conduct interviews with at least three different stakeholders [board members, local politicians, school administrators, school counselors, teachers, other school staff, parents, community members, etc.] Students will write up a synthesis of their interviews in a 3-5 page essay.

*School Board Presentation* **(15%)**

Students will deliver a 10-15 minute presentation, comprised of at least 5-10 PowerPoint slides at a "school board meeting" that will be attended by various stakeholders (parts to be played by fellow classmates). Students will [a] clearly identify the issue or debate; [b] identify the diverse opinions that surround the debate within your particular school community; [c] establish what is learned about the issue from academic research; [d] propose at least 3-5 possible policy interventions that will attend to the issue, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each option. Presenters will then field questions from the audience for 5 minutes. Part of the grade on this assignment will be based on peer-feedback.

*Policy Paper* **(30%)**

In this final 5-7 page essay, students will synthesize what they have learned about the core issue, highlighting the ways in which their thinking has developed and/or changed since the initial position paper. Students will then create an educational policy that attends to the issue and takes into consideration both the diverse views of the community and relevant research.

*Grading Scale*

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|---|---|---|
| A+ | = | 100 percent |
| A | = | 95 – 99 percent |
| A- | = | 90 – 94 percent |
| B+ | = | 86 – 89 percent |
| B | = | 83 – 85 percent |
| B- | = | 80 – 82 percent |
| C | = | 75 – 79 percent |
| F | = | 74 percent or below |

*Submitting Papers*

All papers must be submitted **on time**, electronically via TaskStream. I will provide assessments of your work and specific feedback on your papers via TaskStream. TaskStream will be set up to allow submission of any given assignment only up until 12:00 midnight on the date it is due.

*Late work*

 I expect all students to submit their work on time, meaning no later than by midnight of the due date. If you happen to be absent on the day a paper is due, the due date remains and the paper must be submitted electronically. If you anticipate needing an extension – except in the case of a true emergency – please make arrangements prior to the deadline.

## George Mason University Policies and Resources for Students:

a.  Academic integrity (honor code, plagiarism) – Students must adhere to guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/].

b.  Mason Email – Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly.  All communication from the university, college, school, division, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.  Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing
[See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301ge.html].

c.  Counseling and Psychological Services – The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops, and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

d.  Office of Disability Services – Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor in writing at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].

e.  Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

f.  The Writing Center (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

g.  University Libraries (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Libraries provide numerous services, research tools, and help with using the library resources
[See http://library.gmu.edu/].

**Core Values Commitment**:  The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice.  Students are expected to adhere to these principles.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/].

**Weekly Schedule (Subject to Change):**

| Session | Topics | Reading/Writing Assignment |
|---|---|---|
| **1: T. 7/3** | Course Introduction: Frameworks for Considering Public Schooling in the U.S. | |
| **2: Th. 7/5** | Political and Demographic Forces in U.S. Education | -*Current Issues and Trends*, chp. 1& 2. |
| **3: T. 7/10** | Stakeholder Rights and School Responsibilities<br><br>*Workshop: Identifying Stakeholders and Developing Interview Protocols* | -*Current Issues and Trends*, chp. 3.<br><br>**Position Paper Due** |
| **4: Th. 7/12** | Considering NCLB | -*Current Issues and Trends*, chp. 6.<br>-Moe, "Politics, Control, and the Future of School Accountability."<br>-Kohn, "NCLB and the Effort to Privatize Public Education." |
| **5: Sa. 7/14** | Trends in Teaching & Learning<br><br>[On-Line Session] | -*Current Issues and Trends*, chp 5&7. |
| **6: T. 7/17** | Special Education<br><br>*Workshop: Finding Research Articles*<br>**Please bring laptops to class** | -*Current Issues and Trends*, chp. 9. |
| **7: Th. 7/19** | Race, Achievement & Equity | -Payne, "Understanding and Working with Students and Adults from Poverty."<br>-Bomer, et. al., "Miseducating Teachers about the Poor."<br>-Bowles & Gintis, "Education, Inequality and the Meritocracy."<br><br>**Stakeholder Interviews Due** |
| **8: Sa. 7/21** | Multicultural Education & Teaching Controversial Topics<br><br>[On-Line Session] | -*Current Issues and Trends*, chp. 10.<br>-Additional Reading, TBD. |
| **9: T. 7/24** | Teachers: Academic Freedom and Professional Authority<br><br>*Workshop: Synthesis of Research* | -Ingersoll, "Are Teachers Professionals?"<br>-Apple, "Controlling the Work of Teachers." |
| **10: Th. 7/26** | Teachers: Training, Certification and Evaluation<br><br>** Please bring laptops to class** | -Duncan, "Working Toward 'Wow'."<br>-Selected Newspaper Articles |
| **11: T. 7/31** | School Board Presentation, I | |
| **12: Th. 8/2** | School Board Presentation, II | |
| **Sun. 8/5** | | ** Policy Paper Due** |

## *Position Paper (20%)*

Students will select an educational issue or debate that is of high interest to them and write a 3-5 page essay in which they take a position on the issues.

Students will:

[a] Find evidence of this issue either at the school, district, state or national level through newspaper articles.

[b] Describe the issue or debate in clear and succinct terms, calling attention key players and points of contention as well as its larger impact.

[c] Take a position on the issue based on previous experiences and current understanding of the issue.

[d] Explain how they believe school leaders ought to deal with this issue.

Possible Topics[1]:

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| Gifted Programs | Teacher Compensation |
| Standards | Teacher Evaluation |
| Assessments | Teacher Certification |
| Grouping and Tracking | Social Promotion |
| Zero Tolerance | School Choice |

| Criteria | Exceeds Expectations (4) | Meets Expectations (3) | Approaching Expectations (2) | Falls Below Expectations (1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview of Issue (30%)** | The essay begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. The author calls attention to key players, divergent points of view and the larger significance of the issue on the schools. | The essay begins with an overview of an issue, but may wander. The author does at least two of the following: calls attention to key players, divergent points of view and the larger significance of the issue on the schools. | The essay offers an overview of the essay but misstates critical details. The author does at least one of the following: calls attention to key players, divergent points of view and the larger significance of the issue on the schools. | The essay does not offer an accurate overview of the issue. The author neglects to call attention to key players, divergent points of view and the larger significance of the issue on the schools. |
| **Statement of Position (30%)** | The author provides a clear statement of position. The author turns to specific experiences from his/her professional and/or personal life to bolster the initial | The author provides a clear statement of position. He/she may draw from personal and professional experiences, but does not fully use these as evidence to bolster his or | The author does not provide a clear statement of position. It is unclear what the author believes. The author employs evidence from his/her personal life, but it is unclear how this | The author does not provide a clear statement of position. The author does not employ evidence from his/her personal and professional life. |

[1] Please do not feel limited by this list. Instead, use it as a starting point. You may choose any topic that intrigues you!

| | statement of position. The author takes care to establish both why he/she assumes this position and why he/she believes this position to be superior. | her view. The author attempts to establish why he/she assumes this position, but does not establish why he/she believes it is superior. | bolsters the a specific point of view. | |
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| **Statement of Policy (20%)** | The author offers a clear and specific statement and examination of how he/she would lead around this issue as a school leader. | The author offers a statement of how he/she would lead around the issue, but offers few specific details. | The author offers a vague statement of how he/she would lead around the issue with few specific details. | The author does not offer a statement or examination of how he/she would lead around the issue as a school leader. |
| **Evidence (10%)** | The author turns to external newspaper articles to learn about the issue. | | | The author does not turn to external newspaper articles to learn about the issue. |
| **Mechanics (10%)** | The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading. | There are occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice. | Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread. | There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. |

## Stakeholder Interview (20%)

In an effort to broaden their understanding of the issue (selected in the previous assignment) and the diverse opinions that surround it, students will conduct interviews with at least three different stakeholders [board members, local politicians, school administrators, school counselors, teachers, other school staff, parents, community members, etc.] Students will write up a synthesis of their interviews in a 3-5 page essay.

Students will:

[a] Begin with a clear overview of the issue and the various stakeholders interviewed.
[b] Fairly and accurately characterize the views of interviewees, using specific quotes as evidence.
[c] Analyze and reflect on the interviews considering the following questions:
- What key themes emerge from the interviews as a whole?
- Where are key points of consensus and divergence?
- How do you account for points of agreement and disagreement?
- What do these interviews reveal to you about the larger issue?
[d] Include interview protocol questions (at least 5) as an appendix along with the transcripts of at least 3 interviews.

| Criteria | Exceeds Expectations (4) | Meets Expectations (3) | Approaching Expectations (2) | Falls Below Expectations (1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview of Issue and Stakeholders Interviewed (10%)** | The essay begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. The author introduces the interview subjects while maintaining their anonymity. | The essay begins with a general overview of the issue but fails to do so succinctly and with specific details. The author introduces the interview subjects but does not maintain their anonymity. | The core issue is unclear. The author provides a vague introduction of the stakeholders. | The author does not offer an accurate and succinct overview of the issue. Nor does the author introduce the interview subjects. |
| **Presentation of Views (20%)** | The author fairly and accurately presents the views of the interviewees in an unbiased, organized fashion. The author provides specific quotes as discrete pieces of evidence. | The author summarizes the interviewees' primary points in an unbiased manner, but does not provide evidence (quotes). | The author does not offer a succinct summary of the interviewees' primary points in an organized manner. The author does not offer quotes. | The author does not quote interviewees and/or does not fairly characterize their views in an unbiased manner. |
| **Analysis of Interviews (40%)** | The author's analysis is logical and well-organized. The author considers the interviewees' responses as a | The author's analysis is sound, but may lack a cohesive logic. While the author may examine the critical questions | The author's analysis lacks organization. The author addresses fewer than 3 of the critical questions posed. | The author's analysis lacks a clear organization. The author addresses fewer than 2 of the critical questions. |

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| | whole and indentifies key themes that intersect each one. Using quotes as evidence, the author considers the following questions: What key themes emerge from the interviews as a whole?; Where are key points of consensus and divergence?; How do you account for points of agreement and disagreement?; What do these interviews reveal to you about the larger issue? | as they pertain to each interviewee, he/she neglects to consider these questions for the group, taken as a whole. | | |
| **Interview Protocol: Appendix (20%)** | The author includes the interview protocol questions (at least 5) and the transcripts of at least 3 interviews in an appendix. | | | The author does not include the interview protocol questions and/or the transcripts in an addendix. |
| **Mechanics (10%)** | The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading. | There are occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice. | Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread. | There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. |

***School Board Presentation* (15%)**

Students will deliver a 10-15 minute presentation, comprised of at least 5-10 PowerPoint slides, at a "school board meeting" that will be attended by various stakeholders (parts to be played by fellow classmates).

Students will:
[a] Clearly identify the issue or debate.
[b] Identify the diverse opinions that surround the debate within your particular school community.
[c] Establish what is learned about the issue from academic research.
[d] Propose at least 3-5 possible policy interventions that will attend to the issue, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each option.

Presenters will then field questions from the audience for 5 minutes. Part of the grade on this assignment will be based on peer-feedback.

| Criteria | Exceeds Expectations (4) | Meets Expectations (3) | Approaching Expectations (2) | Falls Below Expectations (1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview of Issue (10%)** | The presentation begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. | The presentation begins with a general overview of the issue but fails to do so succinctly and with specific details. | The core issue is vague or unclear. | The presenter does not offer an accurate and succinct overview of the issue. |
| **Stakeholder Views (10%)** | The presenter identifies the diverse views from within the school community and highlights key themes that characterize the whole. | The presenter identifies various views from within the school, but neglects to synthesize those opinions. | The presenter speaks generally about views from within the school but does not highlight larger points. | The presenter does not speak about views from within the school. |
| **Research Perspective (10%)** | The presenter identifies key points derived from the research articles, highlighting key arguments. | The author identifies key points derived from the research, but does not mention the details of specific arguments. | The presenter speaks generally about the research, making only vague points pertaining to argument. | The presenter does not speak about the research. |
| **Potential Policy Intervention (40%)** | The author proposes at least 3-5 possible policy interventions that will attend to the issue, highlighting the strengths and | The author may pose 3-5 policy interventions, but he/she does not mention the strengths and limitations of each | The author poses 3-5 very general interventions, but does not discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches. | The author poses less than 3 interventions. |

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| | limitations of each option. | option. | | |
| **Presentation Delivery (10%)** | The presentation was clear, engaging and conducted in a professional manner. | The presentation was clear, but the author failed to engage the audience. The presentation requires further polishing. | The presentation lacked focus and contained some errors. | The presentation was ill-conceived and sloppy. |
| **Visuals Aids (10%)** | The presenter made use of 5-10 PowerPoint slides. The slides were well-crafted and visually appealing. | The presenter made use of 5-10 PowerPoint slides. Some slides contained errors or were too crowded to make sense of. | The presenter made use of less than 5 slides. The slides were not visually engaging. | The presenter did not make use of PowerPoint slides. |
| **Audience Interaction (10%)** | The presenter engaged the audience as he/she spoke, made eye contact and did not read. The presenter responded thoughtfully and articulately to questions posed by the audience. | The presenter attempted to engage the audience but seemed uneasy or uncomfortable with the material. The author attempted to respond to questions, but was unclear in his/her responses. | The presenter did not adequately engage the audience. He/she may have read or failed to make eye contact. While the presenter attempted to field questions, she/he was unable to respond. | The presenter did not engage the audience and could not field questions. |

*Policy Paper* **(30%)**

In this final 5-7 page essay, students will synthesize what they have learned about the core issue, highlighting the ways in which their thinking has developed and/or changed since the initial position paper. Students will then create an educational policy that attends to the issue and takes into consideration both the diverse views of the community and relevant research.

| Criteria | Exceeds Expectations (4) | Meets Expectations (3) | Approaching Expectations (2) | Falls Below Expectations (1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview of Issue; Statement of Argument (20%)** | The essay begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. The author provides a clear thesis statement that highlights the author's position on the issue. The author offers readers a roadmap of the essay. | The essay begins with a general overview of the issue but fails to do so succinctly and with specific details. The author provides a thesis statement, but does not offer readers a sense of what will come next in the essay. | The core issue is unclear. The thesis statement is vague or unclear. There is no roadmap. | The author does not offer an accurate and succinct overview of the issue. There is no thesis. |
| **Synthesis of interviews and research (20%)** | The author highlights key points derived from the interviews and research and puts these two components into conversation. The author highlights salient points of continuity and divergence. The author's presentation is organized and logical. | The author highlights key points from the interviews and research, but does not put these two components into conversation. | The author speaks generally about the research and the interviews but is unable to derive larger lessons learned from these. | The author does not speak about both the interviews and the research. |
| **Reflection (20%)** | The author reflects on the data collected over the term (interviews and research) and considers what is learned from this collective body. The author reflects on how his/her | The author offers a general reflection on the data collected and offers some broad ideas about the lessons learned. The author offers general comments regarding how | The author offers a vague reflection on the data collected. The larger lessons learned are unclear. The author makes vague comments about the ways in which his/her | The author does not reflect on the body of data collected over the term and offers no statement of larger lessons learned. |

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| | position has evolved or adapted since the first position paper in thoughtful and meaningful ways. These reflections on lessons learned directly correlate to the policy intervention. | his/her position has evolved over time, but links this only in broad terms to the intervention proposed. | thinking on the topic has evolved over time, but does not link this to the proposed intervention. | |
| **Policy intervention (30%)** | The author offers a logical and well-conceived policy intervention that specifically attends to the core issue and takes into consideration both the views expressed in the interviews and the research. The author's plan is specific and outlines what action ought to be taken, by whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other). | The author offers a general policy intervention with some details. The intervention seems to attend to the core issue, but the author considers only the interviews or the research. The author's plan generally outlines what action ought to be taken, by whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other). | The author offers a vague policy intervention. It is not clear how the intervention takes into consideration the perspectives gleaned from the interviews and research. The author's plan only vaguely mentions what action ought to be taken, by whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other). | The author does not offer a clear policy intervention. |
| **Mechanics (10%)** | The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading. | There are occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice. | Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread. | There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. |