EDLE 634: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

FALL 2013

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Meeting Times:	Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. (September 4 – December 4, 2013)
Meeting Location:	Broad Run High School Lab 1, 21670 Ashburn Rd., Ashburn, VA 20147

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examines current and emerging issues and trends impacting education to include: 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 OBJECTIVE

This course is intended as one of two culminating courses in the Masters in Education Leadership Program. Course content focuses on key contemporary issues in public education, which hold important implications for education leadership, policy, and practice in the 21st century. At the conclusion of the course, students will be expected to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to increase their effectiveness in working with multiple school and community stakeholders in increasingly diverse and complex education contexts.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Explain several of the seismic shifts and major trends in education and their implications for society at large and schools and districts in particular;
2. Create meaningful school policies that incorporate research and diverse stakeholder views and attend to complex issues;
3. 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;
4. 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;
5. Synthesize recent research relative to student achievement in diverse schools settings, with particular attention to the relationships between students achievement, gender, race, and poverty;

6. Identify various strategies to maximize the effective use of data to improve student achievement and effective ways to communicate results to various community stakeholders and groups;
7. Demonstrate the ability to make educational decisions supported by data rather than personal opinion.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

A variety of instructional methods will be used in this course to include large and small group discussions, cooperative learning, media, guest lectures, group presentations, and independent research. Because the creation of knowledge is a collaborative endeavor; your primary responsibilities are to: (1) read the literature; (2) share your questions, reflect on your experiences, and engage in productive discussion to make the literature relevant to the world or practice that we experience and understand; and (3) to write, share your written work, and provide feedback to others in a respectful fashion.

Written Assignments

All written assignments should be typed, formatted, and free from grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. They should also be clear, concise, and well organized; incorporating literature and research from and beyond the course to support discussion and debate. Students should use the APA Publication Manual, 6th edition as a guide. I maintain high standards and expectations for quality writing so make sure to consult APA guidelines, colleagues, and/or the GMU Writing Center [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/] to review and edit your work before turning it in to me. If you have any questions or concerns about your writing, please feel free to contact me before assignments are due.

Bias-Free Communications

In course discussions and in your writing, follow the recommendations outlined in the APA Publication Manual (6th edition) reference "Guide to Bias-Free Communications."

COURSE MATERIALS

The required text for this course is:

Noll, J. (2013). *Taking sides: Clashing views on educational issues*. (17th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.

Additional required readings, to include journal articles and book chapters, among other materials, will be available through the course website. Suggested readings may be added and provided throughout the semester based on student needs and interests.

To complete required assignments successfully, students will need access to a personal computer with Internet, the ability to use basic word processing software, and an active Mason email account. We will also use TaskStream in this course to facilitate communication, access assignments and handouts, and submit written work for feedback and assessment.

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

a) Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/].
b) Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/].

c) 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, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

d) 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/].

e) 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/].

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

g) 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/].

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, & GRADING

Below is a list of brief summary of the required assignments in this course. Please refer to the assignment rubrics at the end of the syllabus for more detailed information on exactly what is expected for each assignment.

1. Class Discussion and Participation (20 points)

Students are expected to actively participate in class by completing readings prior to class discussions. Weekly readings should be completed **prior** to the class meeting for which they are assigned. Students are also encouraged to share relevant materials and resources to stimulate discussion, learning, and improved practice in the field. If an unforeseen circumstance arises that keeps an individual from attending class prepared and on time, that student is responsible for notifying the professor prior to the scheduled class time. Failure to provide such notice may affect your class participation grade, as will arriving late to class and/or leaving early without prior notice.

2. Issue Brief (15 points)

Students will select a contemporary issue in education that is of great interest to them and holds important implications for the study and practice of education leadership. Once selected, the student will write an issue brief (3 to 5 pages) that: (a) clearly describes the underlying assumptions and arguments informing multiple perspectives on the issue; (b) integrates current research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue; (c) analyzes competing perspectives on the prevailing issue and their implications for education leaders, and (d) presents at least three recommendations for policy and/or leadership practice as possible solutions.

3. Stakeholder Interviews (25 points)

To expand and/or deepen your understanding of the issue examined in your issue brief assignments, students will conduct one-on-one interviews with at least two education stakeholders, each of whom hold competing perspectives on the issue you've selected to study. These stakeholders may be school board members, local politicians, parents, community organizers, business leaders, school administrators, school counselors, teachers, education researchers, etc. The assignment requires you submit a summary of the data collected from your interviewed, along with your interview transcripts and interview protocol.

4. Research Paper and Presentation (40 points)

In this culminating research paper and presentation, students will synthesize what they have learned about the education issue of their choice, highlighting the related research, stakeholder interview data, and the ways in which their thinking has developed since the initial issue brief. In order to demonstrate the student's mastery of the course learning objectives, the paper should draw upon **relevant course readings and class discussions**, while integrating the student's **stakeholder interviews** along with findings from at least **three peer-reviewed research articles** that expand the student's knowledge of the issue. The paper should also include the **student's reflections on** how her/his position has developed/changed since the first position paper and one or more **policy interventions**. The accompanying presentation should succinctly cover all paper components, not exceed 10-12 minutes, and followed by 5 minutes of Q & A with the audience.

Assignment Expectations and Possible Points:

All papers must be typed (12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced in APA format - 6th edition) and submitted electronically via TaskStream (taskstream.com). It is expected that student work will be submitted on time (before 11:59 p.m. on the due date). If you miss class the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to ensure the assignment is turned in before the deadline to avoid a failing grade. If you anticipate needing an extension (except, of course, in the case of a true emergency), please make arrangements prior the deadline.

Class Discussion and Participation	20 points
Education Issue Brief	15 points
Stakeholder Interviews	25 points
Research Paper and Presentation	40 points
TOTAL POSSIBLE	**100 points**

Grading

The grading scale for the final course grade is as follows:

A+	=	100 points
A	=	95-99 points
A-	=	90-94 points
B+	=	87-89 points
B	=	83-86 points
B-	=	80-82 points
C	=	75-79 points
F	=	below 75 points

COURSE CALENDAR

All required readings are to be read PRIOR to the class session in which they are listed. Please note that this calendar will be updated with additional reading made available via TaskStream. Assignments are to be turned in by 11:59 p.m. on the day under which they are listed. We will do our best to adhere to the schedule; however, it is flexible and subject to change.

	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS DUE
1	September 4	Course Introduction and Overview • Review of syllabus and course calendar • Hot topics in U.S. education	Syllabus Noll, Introduction
2	September 11	Philosophical and Ideological Issues • Traditional v. progressive education • Constructivism v. objectivism	Noll, Issues 1, 2, 4, 5
3	September 18	Social, Political, and Demographic Forces • Demographic divide in schools • Culture, diversity, and leadership	Noll, Issue 11; Horsford, Grosland & Gunn (2011) **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Issue Brief**
4	September 25	Closing the "Achievement Gap" • Race, class, and achievement • Culturally relevant leadership	Noll, Issues 14, 17; Ladson-Billings (2006)
5	October 2	Standardization and High-Stakes Accountability • Federal role (NCLB, RTTT) • Common Core, 21st Century Skills	Noll, Issues 7-9, 21; Welner & Burris (2014); Lewis & Fusarelli (2010)
6	October 9	School Choice and Privatization • Corporate reform movement • Charters, vouchers, EMO's	Noll, Issue, 13
7	October 16	School Governance: Who's in Control? • Local and state boards • Elected, appointed, hybrid boards	Noll, Issue 10 **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Stakeholder Interviews**
8	October 23	Teacher Preparation, Certification, and Evaluation • NCTQ findings and response • Alternative routes to licensure • Teachers evaluation and merit pay	Issues 15, 16; Cibulka, (2013)
9	October 30	Globalization and Education in an Interconnected World	Murakami-Ramalho (2010)
10	November 6	Special Topics – TBD by Students	
11	November 13	**Research Paper Presentations**	
12	November 20	**Research Paper Presentations**	
13	November 27	NO CLASS: Recess	**Assignment DUE: Research Paper**
14	December 4	Course Wrap-Up	

Assessment Rubric for Issue Brief

Due: September 25

Students will select a contemporary issue in education that is of great interest to them and holds important implications for the study and practice of education leadership. Once selected, the student will write an issue brief (3 to 5 pages) that: (a) clearly describes the issue, underlying assumptions and arguments, key players, and divergent points of view; (b) integrates current research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue; (c) discusses the prevailing issue and its implications for education leadership.

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Overview of Issue (25%)	The brief 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 issue's significance to education leadership.	The brief 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 issue's significance to education leadership.	The brief 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 issue's significance to education leadership.	The brief does not offer an accurate overview of the issue. The author neglects to call attention to key players, divergent points of view and the issue's significance to education leadership.
Related Research (40%)	The author effectively integrates publicly accessible research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue to further illustrate multiple and diverse perspectives on the issue.	The author integrates some publicly accessible research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue to present multiple and diverse perspectives on the issue.	The author does not present a sufficient discussion of the relevant research and popular media coverage or multiple perspectives on the issue.	The author does not include any research or popular media coverage of the issue.
Implications for Education Leadership (25%)	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.
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.

Assessment Rubric for Stakeholder Interviews

Due: October 23

To expand and/or deepen your understanding of the issue examined in your issue brief assignments, students will conduct one-on-one interviews with at least two education stakeholders, each of whom hold competing perspectives on the issue you've selected to study. These stakeholders may be school board members, local politicians, parents, community organizers, business leaders, school administrators, school counselors, teachers, education researchers, etc. The assignment requires you submit a report (3 to 5 pages not included transcripts and protocol) that includes: (a) an overview of the issue and stakeholders interviewed, (b) presentation of interview data collected, (c) interview transcripts, and (d) interview protocol.

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Overview of Issue and Stakeholders Interviewed (15%)	Report begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. The author introduces and describes the interview subjects.	Report begins with a general overview of the issue but fails to do so succinctly and with specific details. The author introduces the interview subjects.	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 Interview Data (40%)	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.
Interview Transcripts (25%)	The author includes the transcripts of at least 2 interviews.			The author does not include the interview transcripts.
Interview Protocol (10%)	The author includes the interview protocol questions (at least 5).			The author does not include the interview protocol questions.
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.

Assessment Rubric for Research Paper and Presentations

Due: December 4

In this culminating research paper and presentation, students will synthesize what they have learned about the education issue of their choice, highlighting the related research, stakeholder interview data, and the ways in which their thinking has developed since the initial issue brief. In order to demonstrate the student's mastery of the course learning objectives, the paper should draw upon **relevant course readings and class discussions**, while integrating the student's **stakeholder interviews** along with findings from at least **three peer-reviewed research articles** that expand the student's knowledge of the issue. The accompanying presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long, followed by 5 minutes of Q & A with the audience.

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Overview of Issue; Statement of Position (10%)	The paper 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 paper.	The paper 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 paper.	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 3 peer-reviewed research articles (20%)	The author highlights key points derived from the interviews and research (at least three peer-reviewed journal articles) and integrates these components into an organized and logical discussion. The author highlights salient points of continuity and divergence.	The author highlights key points from the interviews and research (at least three peer-reviewed journal articles, but does not put these two components into conversation.	The author speaks generally about the research and interviews but is unable to derive larger lessons learned from these.	The author does not speak about both the interviews and the research.
Policy intervention (25%)	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	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	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	The author does not offer a clear policy intervention.

	whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other).	cost (either financial or other).	cost (either financial or other).	
Reflection (15%)	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 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.	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 his/her position has evolved over time, but links this only in broad terms to the intervention proposed.	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 thinking on the topic has evolved over time, but does not link this to the proposed intervention.	The author does not reflect on the body of data collected over the term and offers no statement of larger lessons learned.
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
Associated Presentation (20%)	The presentation clearly highlights essential points of paper. Demonstrates attention to high quality standards visually, technologically, and creatively. Engages classmates in discussion of topic.	The presentation highlights essential points of paper and engages classmates in discussion of topic.	The presentation highlights content of research paper, but does not engage classmates in discussion.	The presentation did not highlight content of research paper nor engage classmates in discussion.