GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
College of Education and Human Development

Course Title: *Advanced Policy Issues in Education*
EDUC 871 Sec: 001
Spring, 2014

Instructor: Dr. Penelope M. Earley
Class Date & Time: Wednesday 4:30 – 7:10 p.m.
Class Location: Research Hall 202
Contact Information:
    Room 2101 West
    E-mail: pearley@gmu.edu
    P: (703) 993-3361
    F: (703) 993-2013
Office Hours: By Appointment: MTWRF 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Advanced Policy Issues in Education

In-depth analysis of selected education policy issues. Focuses on issue interactions and education-related policy actions by different levels of government.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on in-depth analysis and study of selected education policy issues. Review of various points of view on the issues is considered. Particular attention will be given to interactions and connections between selected education issues, and the similarities and differences in policy approaches at the K-12 and higher education levels. Prerequisite: 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 a detailed and sophisticated understanding of major policy issues.
2. Analyze and describe the legal and political forces that influence decision making on these issues.
3. Understand and explain the intersections of various policy issues.
4. Understand and explain how and why different levels of education may approach these policy issues in a different manner.
5. Demonstrate ability to describe and analyze the research bases for major policy issues.

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 and Evaluation 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 discussions supplemented with outside speakers.

TEXTS AND READINGS

Required

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (6th Edition)

Useful References

Sykes, G., Schneider, B., & Plank, D.N. (Eds.) (2009). *Handbook of Education Policy Research.* New York: Routledge.

Heck, R. H. (2004). *Studying educational and social policy: Theoretical concepts and research methods*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cross, Christopher (2004). Political education: National policy comes of age. New York: Teachers College Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Identify a topic of interest to you (ideally, this topic should be related to your dissertation research). During the course of the semester you will explore all of the policy aspects of your topic including if and how it is influenced by local, state, or federal government actions and which interests groups are advocates for the issue. This work will culminate in a 20 – 30 page paper describing and analyzing the policy and summarizing policy research and/or evaluations on it. Drafts will be submitted during the course of the semester for feedback and the final paper should be in a form that ultimately may become part of your dissertation. Your final paper should be APA perfect.
2. Participate in periodic consultations with student colleagues on policy issues

Assignment Submissions: Please submit assignments to me electronically.

Schedule for Written Assignments

2/26   Summary outline (this will be come your introduction)
3/19   Revise introduction and add legislative or policy history
3/26   Revise document and add section on support or opposition for the policy
4/02   Revise document and add analysis of policy evaluations
4/16   Revise the document and add the conceptual framework
4/23   Final paper due (APA perfect). This will include a conclusion with policy recommendations and an abstract.

EVALUATION

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached. All written work must conform to the APA 6th Ed. Manual of Style.

Grading Scale:

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week-Class   **Topic and Readings**

January 22   **Introduction and Overview: What is a policy brief?**
Assignment for 1/29: Find and bring to class what you think is a good example of a policy brief. (a proposed outline is attached)

January 29   **Policies, Policy Research, Policy Analysis & Evaluations**
Where will you find research on the problem or policy you study is intended solve?
Assignment for 2/05: Review material on conceptual frameworks (such as in Sykes or Heck).

February 05 **Policy Theories and Conceptual Frameworks**
Be prepared to briefly describe the policy you intend to research for your brief to the rest of the class (who, what, where, why) ***This is not a written assignment***. Discussion of conceptual frameworks.

February 12 **Discussion of Policy Topics and Resources**
What is Thomas and how do you use it? What are some common data sources?
Assignment for Feb. 26 (due before class): Prepare a summary or outline of the policy topic, who is governed by it and how, what problem it is intended to solve ***and*** what data are used to document the problem. This summary or outline will become the introduction to your final policy brief.

February 19 **No Class: time for individual meetings (email to set a time)**

February 26 **Student discussions: summarizing the policy & problem**
  Discussion of constructing a legislative/policy history.
Assignment for March 19: Make revisions to the first part of your paper based on instructor feedback. Write-up of the policy/legislative history. This is due before class on the 19th. Be prepared to discuss this in class.

March 05   **No Class: time for individual meetings (email to set a time)**

March 10-16 **Spring Break**

March 19   **Student discussions: policy/legislative histories**
Who supports your policy and why? Who opposes it and why?
How might this support or opposition influence data about and
evaluations of the policy you are analyzing?
<u>Assignment for March 27</u>: Revise your paper as needed and
include a discussion of who (individuals, groups, organizations)
supports or opposes this policy and why. Due before class on the
28th.

March 26   **Student discussion: Policy Support/Opposition and class**
Discussion of Policy Evaluations
Discussion of policy evaluation analysis. How do we determine
objectivity or bias. Presentation and discussion of who supports or
opposes your policy and why?
<u>Assignment for April 02</u>: Revise paper based on instructor
feedback; include a critique/analysis of evaluations done on this
policy.

April 02   **Presentation of Evaluations and Discussion of Conceptual**
Frameworks and Education Policy
<u>Assignment for April 16:</u> Revise paper based on instructor
feedback; design a conceptual framework and explain and justify it
in your narrative.

April 09   **No Class**

April 16   **Presentation of Conceptual Frameworks**
<u>Assignment for April 23</u>: Write the conclusion to your paper and
an abstract. Check citations, read and proof carefully. The final
product is due before class on April 23.

April 23   **Presentation of Policy Briefs**
Each student will have 20 minutes to present his or her policy
brief. For this presentation you should assume the audience is
made up of decision makers who would have authority to support
or oppose your policy. (6 presentations)

May 01   **Presentation of Policy Briefs** (5 presentations)

Important Information for All Students

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/honorcode/**]. Please note that:

- Plagiarism encompasses the following:
  1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
  2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
  (from Mason Honor Code online at
  http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm)
- Paraphrasing involves taking someone else′s ideas and putting them in your own words. When you paraphrase, you need to cite the source.
- When material is copied word for word from a source, it is a direct quotation. You must use quotation marks (or block indent the text) and cite the source, including the appropriate page number.
- Electronic tools (e.g., SafeAssign) may be used to detect plagiarism if necessary.
- Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are treated seriously and may result in disciplinary actions.

b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See

http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].

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/**].

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. **http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/**

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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

Grading Guidelines: Advanced Policy Issues in Education

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	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. .	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.	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.	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.
C 75 - 84	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 74 or below	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.

Policy Brief Paper Components (General Outline)

I.   What is the policy/program? (This must be an actual policy that is now in place or that has been proposed and is under active consideration)
   A. Describe the policy/program (a policy is the process by which a person or body makes a decision, a program is the vehicle to carry out that policy)
   B. What does it do and who is responsible for doing it?
   C. Are there rewards or sanctions for doing or not doing this?
   D. Is there some sort of reporting or accountability associated with it?
   E. What person or agency is responsible for oversight of the policy/program?
   F. Essentially, the reader will understand what the policy/program does, how, when, and why.
   G. What is the problem (or problems) this policy is intended to fix? What evidence or data have been presented to indicate this policy is a valid solution?
II.   What is the legislative history of the policy/program?
   A. When was the policy enacted and by whom (Congress, General Assembly, President's executive order, school board etc.)
   B. Is the program funded? How? (General revenue, special tax, lottery money, special appropriation or earmark, etc.)
   C. What is the funding history for the life of the policy/program. That is, has support for it increased, decreased, or remained the same. This can be done in the form of a chart.
   D. If this is a proposed policy, how do those advocating for it plan to fund its implementation? What is the proposed funding level and is this realistic?
III. Has the policy/program been evaluated and what did these evaluations find?
   A. Has the policy/program been evaluated and by whom?
   B. Did the evaluation/s follow rigorous standards for evaluation work?
   C. What were the findings of these evaluations?
   D. Note: governments often award think tanks or individuals grants to evaluate programs. These evaluations may or may not be published in scholarly journals so you may have to dig a bit.
   E. ***If you can document there has never been an evaluation of this policy/program, please develop a proposal to evaluate it.***
IV.   Who supports this policy and why? Who opposes it and why?
   A. Specifically, what interest groups support or oppose this (there should be groups on both sides of the issue)
   B. Can you find evidence that pressure from these interest groups has influenced evaluations of the policy/program or how citizens and law makers perceive it?
V.   What do you predict will be the future of this policy?
VI.   References