

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 2014

Instructor: Penelope M. Earley, Ph.D.
Class Date & Time: Summer B Tuesday & Thursday 4:30-7:10
Class Location: Innovation Hall, Room 316

Contact Information:

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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. *Prerequisites:* Admission to the Ph.D. program and completion of EDUC 870 or equivalent doctoral-level policy coursework. *Catalog description:* *Focuses on identifying and analyzing factors that promote new initiatives in education policy agenda. Attention given to nontraditional sources of education policy initiatives.*

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

Johnson, C.A. (2010). *The information diet: A case for conscious consumption*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Presentation of data sources (15 points)
2. Analysis of article with demographic data (10 points)
3. Claims & Evidence write up (70 points)
4. Citizenship (05 points)

EVALUATION

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached. All written work must be completed on 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:

Presentation of data source (15 points). Select two 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 instructor. You will have 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.

Presentation of demographic data (10 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).

Identification and analysis of policy claims (70 points). Each student will be responsible for analyzing a specific education policy proposal. The analysis will focus on whether or not the policy claim can be supported by empirical literature.

Citizenship: (5 points). The outcome of this class will be a document placed on the Center for Education Policy and Evaluation web site. Everyone will have an assignment (from organizing text to proof reading) to assure that the document is letter perfect (and APA perfect).

CLASS SCHEDULE

Topics and Assignments

1. June 3-Overview:
 - a. Introduction & Housekeeping Issues
 - b. Syllabus and schedule review and meeting decisions
 - c. Issues Sensing vs. Crystal Ball
 - d. Discussion of *The Information Diet*
 - e. Discuss Policy Brief Assignment: National Goals or *A Nation at Risk?*
Assignment: 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 4-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: 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 (such as the Census Bureau). Be prepared to summarize the article and present policy implications of it for Pre-K-16 schools. Consider whether there is an editorial slant to the article. The article must have been published in the last four weeks.

3. June-10 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

4. June 12-Evaluating policy claims
 - a. What is evidence and what is not evidence
 - b. Criteria for weighing evidence
 - c. Evaluation tools
 - d. Identifying sources of bias (confirmation and other)
 - e. The role of foundations, interest groups, and advocacy-based “think tanks”

5. June 17-What evidence is needed the specific goals/findings/recommendations being analyzed for the Policy Brief? Create a format for the Policy Brief

6. June 19-Break
7. June 24-Student Presentation 1: What is the evidence (data) that the goal/finding/recommendation has been met or not met?
8. June 26-Break
9. July 1-Student Presentation 2: Narrative: Describe the goal/finding/recommendation; discuss the data or indicators needed to evaluate the goal/finding/recommendation and present conclusions
10. July 3-Break (pre July 4)
11. July 8-Student Presentation 3: Policy recommendations for the goal etc.
12. July 10-Review and critique merged document; make final decisions on presentation of the information, format and the like
13. July 15-Outline and write the introduction and conclusion (may be done in teams of two)
14. July 17-Edit and present final document.

Important Information for all students

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

- 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/>].

- 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/>

- For GSE Syllabi:

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

For RHT Syllabi:

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

Grading Guidelines: Contemporary and Emerging Issues in Education Policy

Grade/Points	Quality of Written Work	Completeness of Work	Timeliness	Citizenship
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/>

National Household Education Survey 2007 (U.S. Department of Ed)

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009024>

State Education Data (U.S. Dept. of Ed)

<http://www.eddataexpress.ed.gov/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/DataStatistics/>