

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**EDUC 875.B01 CONTEMPORARY & EMERGING ISSUES IN
EDUCATION POLICY**

SUMMER 2016 (3 credits)

Instructor: Sonya Douglass Horsford, Ed.D.
Title: Associate Professor of Education
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Office Hours: By appointment in person or virtually
Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7:10 p.m. (June 7– July 26, 2016)
Meeting Location: Arlington Campus, Founders Hall 479

Prerequisite: Admission to Ph.D. program or permission of instructor

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description: Emphasizes economic foundations of U.S. education, and evolution of school, district, and state leadership. Students complete work on analytical literature review.

This course examines the changing politics of education policy and school reform in the U.S. and emerging issues resulting from this shifting policy landscape. Students will explore in-depth an education policy issue related to their respective area of inquiry amid widening social and economic inequality, political polarization, and policy entrepreneurship in the current context. The course also explores critical policy analysis as a research method for assessing education policy in an era of inequality, high-stakes accountability, and corporate reform with a focus on implications for future research, policy, and practice in education.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the major national trends and conditions contributing to the shifting U.S. education policy landscape
2. Assess contemporary and emerging issues in education policy and their implications for research, policy, and practice
3. Construct a conceptual framework that guides the examination of a contemporary or emerging issue in ways that contribute to the extant research literature
4. Expand scholarly knowledge of emergent policy research theory and methods

COURSE DELIVERY

A variety of instructional methods will be used in this course to include small group discussions, instructor and guest lectures, case studies, individual and 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 research and practice; and (3) write, share your written work, and provide feedback to others in a respectful fashion.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following is the required text for the course:

Henig, J. (2013). *The end of exceptionalism in American education: The changing politics of school reform*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Additional required and recommended readings (i.e., peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, policy reports, newspaper articles, blog posts, etc.) will be provided by the instructor via Blackboard or in class based on student needs and interests.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class Participation (20 points)

Students are expected to attend all classes on time and participate actively in class discussions, small group activities, and serve as critical friends to one another. This requires completing the readings in advance, ensuring contributions to the discussion are informed and relevant to the topic at hand, and providing other students the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences in an intellectually stimulating but supportive classroom environment.

For this hybrid course, we will meet face-to-face on Tuesdays in Founders Hall 479, Arlington Campus, from 4:30 to 7:10 p.m., except our final Tuesday session on July 26, which will be an e-session. The online component of this course, which is asynchronous (meaning you will not be required to log in or be available virtually for any pre-set times) must be completed before the following Tuesday face-to-face session.

Required Readings. All readings should be completed PRIOR to the Tuesday face-to-face class session for the week under which their listed. (For example, for our first night's class, you should have read the course syllabus and Chapter 1 of the required text). An up-to-date required readings list and copies of assigned readings will be available on the Bb course site.

Required Online Activities. Each week, I will post online learning activities that will require your participation and engagement (equivalent to time spent in a face-to-face course) in addition the time typically spent outside of class time. As such, make sure to complete required

online activities prior to/in preparation for our Tuesday face-to-face sessions and check the Bb course site regularly for class announcements, updates, and additional resources.

Self-Reflection of Participation. At the end of the course, you will be asked to submit a self-reflection of your participation, which will be considered along with the instructor's assessment of participation. Your participation and engagement in both the on-ground and on-line sessions is particularly important since 50% of the course will be conducted on-line.

Assignments (80 points)

At the end of this course, you will be expected to submit a research paper proposal to the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) prior to its deadline for all proposal submissions. Preparing a successful research conference proposal takes time, requiring you to think carefully and clearly about (a) what you plan to study (i.e., contemporary/emerging policy problem or issue) and why; (b) what the research literature says about what you plan to study and how it frames your particular inquiry; (c) how you will conduct the inquiry; (d) what you have found/plan to discover from your inquiry, and (e) its relevance and significance to education research, policy, and practice.

Each assignment below will support the development of the key components of your AERA proposal submission and must be submitted using Blackboard.

- 1. Background and Purpose (15 points) (DUE June 16)**
- 2. Conceptual Framing of Problem (20 points) (DUE June 30)**
- 3. Methods and Data Sources (20 points) (DUE July 7)**
- 4. Findings and Significance (15 points) (DUE July 14)**
- 5. AERA Proposal & Submission Confirmation (10 points)**

All written assignments (unless otherwise noted) must be submitted to Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. on the due date as a Word file attachment and formatted according to APA Publication Manual, 6th edition. Late assignments will receive a reduction in points if accepted at all.

Final grades are based on class participation (20 points) and quality, completeness, and timeliness of assignments (80 points) as described below

Possible Points

Class Participation	20 points
Assignments	80 points
Background and Purpose (15 points)	
Conceptual Framing of Problem (20 points)	
Methods and Data Sources (20 points)	
Findings and Significance (15 points)	
AERA Final Proposal & Confirmation (10 points)	

TOTAL POSSIBLE

100 points

Grading

A	=	94-100 points
A-	=	90-93 points
B+	=	87-89 points
B	=	83-86 points
B-	=	80-82 points
C+	=	77-79 points
C	=	70-75 points
F	=	below 70 points

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.

CEHD 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: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>. For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website at <http://gse.gmu.edu/>.

Academic Integrity

The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. When you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. When in doubt (of any kind), please ask for guidance and clarification.

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Summer 2016 Course Calendar

Note: A weekly calendar of required readings and copies of assigned readings (beyond the required text, which you must purchase) will be available on the Bb course site on the first night of class. Make sure to check the Bb Announcements page on our course site regularly during the course term to stay current on readings and online course activities.

WEEK 1: June 7 and June 9

Topic: Introduction to EDUC 875

- Welcome and introductions
- Course overview, calendar, and assignments
 - Review required text and readings
 - Review guidelines for and components of main deliverable for this course: AERA Annual Meeting Submission
- Assessing the education policy landscape
 - Centralization vs. decentralization
 - Public sector vs. private sector
 - Single-purpose vs. general purpose government
- Question: *Are we witnessing the end of exceptionalism in American education?*

Required Reading (by Tuesday night's class):

- Henig, Chapter 1
- Cross, "The U.S. needs a national policy on education" (via Bb)

WEEK 2: June 14 and June 16

Topic: The Politics of Education Policy, From ESEA to ESSA

- The market and the polis: A theory of policy politics
- The politics of federal education reform

Required Readings (by Tuesday night's class):

- Stone, Chapter 1, "The market and the polis" (via Bb)
- Darling-Hammond, L. "What can PISA tell us about U.S. education policy?" (via Bb)

➤ **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Background and Purpose (Thursday, June 16)**

WEEK 3: June 21 and June 23

Topic: New Governance and the New Professional

- Education executives and policy entrepreneurs
- Privatization as reform

Required Readings (by Tuesday night's class):

- Henig, Chapter 2
- Scott, J., & DiMartino, C. (2009). Public education under new management: A typology of educational privatization applied to New York City's restructuring. *Peabody Journal of Education*.

WEEK 4: June 28 and 30

Topic: Policy Framing and Analysis in an Era of Ideology and Inequality

Required Readings (by Tuesday night's class):

- Dumas, M.J., & Anderson, G. (2014). Qualitative research as policy knowledge: Framing policy problems and transforming education from the ground up. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(11), 1-20.
- Diem, S., Young, M. D., Welton, A. D., Mansfield, K. C., & Lee, P. (2014). The intellectual landscape of critical policy analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27(9), 1068-1090.

➤ **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Conceptual Framing of Problem (Thursday, June 30)**

WEEK 5: July 5 and July 7

Topic: New Policy Actors, Issues, and Regimes

- Role of state legislatures, courts, local school boards, and community groups
- Negotiating multiple constituencies and competing interests

Required Readings (by Tuesday night's class):

- Henig, Chapters 3 and 4

➤ **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Methods and Data Sources (July 7)**

Week 6: July 12 and 14

Topic: Student Presentations

- Each student will present her/his AERA research proposal (with preliminary discussion of findings and significance) for peer and instructor feedback and recommendations to strengthen final submission. Presentation should last 15 minutes with 5 additional minutes for audience Q&A.

➤ **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Findings and Significance (Thursday, July 14)**

Week 7: July 19 and 21

Topic: Prospects for American Education – What Does the Future Hold?

Required Readings (by Tuesday night's class):

- Henig, Chapters 5
- **ASSIGNMENT DUE:**
 - **AERA Conference Proposal (July 19) and Submission Confirmation** (forward your confirmation email from AERA to me at shorsfor@gmu.edu)

Week 8: July 26 (E-SESSION)

Topic: Final Reflections and Concluding Thoughts

- **ASSIGNMENT DUE: Class Participation Reflection**

EDUC 875.BL1 Grading Criteria for Written Assignments

	Levels of Performance			
	Unsatisfactory (F)	Basic (C)	Proficient (B)	Distinguished (A)
Quality of Work	Unacceptable	Undergraduate level and quality; unsophisticated; assignments show little or no connection to course content or concepts.	Competent; provides credible evidence or 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.	Exceptional quality and insight; a rare and 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.
Completeness of Work	Difficult to recognize as the assigned task.	Insufficient evidence of understanding and application; important elements missing or difficult to find.	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 points are missed or not addressed.	100 % complete and error free. Accurate and seamless writing; virtually a complete product.
Timeliness	Assignments missed or not submitted. Incompletes not made up.	Assignments excessively or repeatedly late.	Assignments late more than once without prior conversation with instructor. Not necessarily chronic.	100% on time. Almost always on time; rare but forgivable tardiness (such a serious or personal family illness). Instructor is notified in advance that a paper may be late.

Class Participation Reflection
(due last day of class)

Name: _____

Number of absences _____ Reason(s) _____

Number of tardies _____ Reason(s) _____

Based on the Class Participation Rubric and instructor expectations for participation, how many points (out of 20 possible) would you grant yourself for class participation and why?

How would you describe the quality and effort associated with your contributions to **in-class and on-line interactions and discussions**?

Anything else you would like to share?

Class Participation Criteria

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Below Expectations
Attendance	Exemplary attendance, no tardies.	Near perfect attendance, few tardies.	Occasional (1-3) absences or tardies.	Frequent (>3) absences or tardies.
Quality of Questions, Interaction	Most queries are specific and on point. Deeply involved in class dialogue. Challenges ideas, seeks meaning.	Often has specific queries, stays involved in class dialogue, though sometimes tentative or off base.	Asks questions about deadlines, procedures, and directions or for help with little specificity. Little discussion of ideas.	Rarely asks questions of any quality.
Effort	Willingly participates when asked. Plays a leadership role in groups. Engages and brings out the best in others.	Willingly participates when asked. Takes on group tasks. Engages others.	Reluctantly participates when asked. Seeks easiest duties in groups. Tolerates others.	Actively avoids involvement when possible. Complains about others. Has large set of excuses.
Engagement	Enthusiastically initiates discussion. Personalizes and takes ownership of activities. Always knows where class or group is.	Sometimes initiates discussion and always works well with direction. Generally knows what's going on.	Seeks direction, but does not initiate discussion. May know where class or group is.	Waits for direction. Knows little of what is going on. Cannot describe where class or group is.