

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
ARLINGTON CAMPUS
Schar School of Policy and Government, and
College of Education and Human Development
PUBP710-002 — Education Policy Challenges
EDUC797-001--- Education Policy Challenges

Spring 2018

Anne Holton

**POVERTY AND OTHER CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION
POLICYMAKERS
SYLLABUS Final 1/22/2018**

Credit Hours: 3
CRN
Date/Time: Monday 7:20 pm – 10:00 pm
Classroom: Arlington Campus, Founders Hall 470
Website: Blackboard
Instructor: Anne Holton
Office: Arlington Campus, Founders Hall 649
e-mail: aholton2@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Monday 5-7 p.m. or by appointment

Course Description

Policy makers throughout state, local and federal government struggle with major challenges in seeking to ensure all young people have a pathway to success as adults. Public school funding is typically a third of every state and local budget, but revenues shrank in the recession and in most states have not fully recovered, while expectations and needs continue to increase. Education reform efforts have had intended and unintended consequences. Research is often not well connected to policymaking and practice. Most schools in high poverty communities continue to struggle despite years of scrutiny. Schools everywhere are facing teacher shortages especially in high-demand fields and in the neediest communities. Colleges and businesses express frustration that graduates are not well matched to existing career options and more generally are not adequately prepared for life after high school.

This course will discuss crucial policy choices from the perspective of the policymakers facing these challenges today. Topics to be covered will include, among others, the special challenges posed by high-poverty schools, school funding, teacher shortages, standards/testing reform, charter and other choice school options, and the role of schools in preparing students for the 21st economy. The class will also address who are key policymakers on these issues, and whether and how other stakeholders may or may not influence their deliberations.

Learning Outcomes

Students will have a basic fluency in education policy challenges confronting policymakers today.

Students will develop an understanding of how education policy is made in contemporary settings, who gets to participate and how, and the role of research in effecting policy.

Students will develop an appreciation of the role of, and develop skills to facilitate, cross-sector collaboration to improving education outcomes.

Class Website

This class uses Blackboard in order to enhance the online learning experience of students. This website contains the class syllabus and the class assignments. Note that the syllabus is subject to revision. The class assignments will be kept current under “Course Content” on the Blackboard -- if the Blackboard listings differ from the syllabus, follow the Blackboard listing.

Course Prerequisite

Enrollment is limited to Graduate or Non-Degree level students.

Students in a Non-Degree Undergraduate degree may not enroll.

Open to master’s and doctoral students in CEHD and Schar, with additional requirements for doctoral students.

Course Type

Seminar/Lecture.

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Tough, Paul (2016). *Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why* (2016). New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Ravitch, Diane (2013). *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America’s Public Schools*. New York: Knopf.

Rhee, Michelle (2013). *Radical: Fighting to Put Students First*. New York: Harpercollins

These texts are available in the campus bookstore and in bookstores everywhere as well as in the GMU library. All other readings will be available on the course Blackboard page and/or online.

Course Requirements:

Class Attendance/Participation/Behavior/Reading Assignments

Students are expected to prepare the readings and other assignments, attend class, arrive on time, and participate in class discussions. If students have to miss class for professional, i.e., a time conflict at work, or medical reasons they are expected to notify the instructor in advance and make arrangements to make up the missed work. Students should complete the assigned reading for each date before class begins and come prepared to discuss the policy implications thereof.

Please plan to bring a laptop or tablet to class regularly if possible. In-class activities will use them on occasion.

Assignments and Deadlines

Each student will be expected to do independent reading on one of the specified course topics, including research on evidence-based solutions. Students will identify a policy problem from within those topics and submit a **1-page initial problem statement** by Feb 26, 2018. Students will submit a **3-5 page policy brief** to a hypothetical policymaker on the identified problem. The policy brief should identify the hypothetical recipient and sender, describe the problem, provide brief background to enable the policymaker to understand the problem, recommend one or more solutions, and provide support for the recommended solution(s). In partnership with other students, students will give a **20-30 minute presentation** including appropriate slides based on their policy briefs. For the presentation, students will be assigned to a group of 4-5 students working on related topics. Each student's policy brief should be submitted one week prior to his/her assigned presentation date. Presentation dates will be assigned in class on Feb. 19, taking into consideration student preferences. Doctoral students will additionally complete an 8-12 page survey of the research literature on one of the course topics, including a summary of existing literature, a brief analysis thereof, and suggestions for potential further research. The literature surveys are to be submitted by April 30.

All written materials are to be submitted via the class blackboard site no later than midnight on the assigned day. Copies of the class presentation slides will be submitted to the professor no later than one hour prior to the beginning of class on the assigned presentation date. Late submissions will be penalized 5 points (out of 100) for every 24 hours late, unless prior arrangements are made with the professor, which will be allowed only for good cause.

Grading

Grades will be based on the following:

For Master's Students:	
Class participation	30%
Written Assignment:	
Problem Description	10%
Written Assignment:	
Policy Brief	40%
Presentation	20%

For Doctoral Students:	
Class participation	30%
Written Assignment:	
Problem Description	10%
Written Assignment:	
Policy Brief	20%
Presentation	20%
Written Assignment:	
Literature Review	20%

For All:

Class participation grades will depend in part on occasional micro-assignments based on the readings and class discussion, to be completed during class or sometimes in advance to assist in preparing to discuss the readings. Presentation grades will be assigned for the group, with potential to be adjusted up or down based on individual contribution to the group's work product as assessed by group members.

Academic Accommodation for a Disability

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Services. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services (<http://ds.gmu.edu/>).

GMU/Schar Policy on Plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For international students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. <http://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/masters-advising/academic-policies-forms/>

Resources:

GMU Writing Center <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

GMU Libraries <http://library.gmu.edu/>

GMU Counseling and Psychological Services <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

GMU Emergency Preparedness Guides

<https://ehs.gmu.edu/emergencymanagement/plans-guides/>

GMU/CEHD Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/> .

Course Outline

Note assignments listed for each date are to be completed in advance of the class session on that date. Assignments are subject to change at the Professor's discretion with reasonable notice to the class.

January 22 Class Introductions, Course Overview, Introduction to the Policymaker's Perspective, and Overview of Virginia Education Policymaking Structure

Assignment:

Listen to:

With Good Reason Podcast Series Degrees of Separation

Part I: Origins March 24, 2017 52 min.

<http://withgoodreasonradio.org/episode/degrees-of-separation-origins/>

Harvard EdCast Interviews with School Leaders on Contemporary Education Challenges:

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/17/06/harvard-edcast-mythbuster>

Newark Superintendent Christopher Cerf 11 min. June 20, 2017

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/17/05/harvard-edcast-green-mountain-education>

Vermont Secretary of Education Rebecca Holcombe 13 min. May 31, 2017

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/17/04/harvard-edcast-change-agent>

Boston School Superintendent Tommy Chang 11 min. April 26, 2017

SECTION I: The Challenges of Public Education in High-Poverty Communities

January 29 Introduction to the Challenges Facing Schools in High-Poverty Communities

Guest: Schar Librarian Helen Mcmanus

Assignment:

Tough, Paul, *How Children Succeed*, Chapters 1-12
Low Performing Schools in Urban High Poverty Communities, Report to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia, by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (June 2014)
<http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt454.pdf>

February 5 What factors impede or encourage success? How do we evaluate success? Class will include guest presentations from local education leaders on challenges and successes in high-poverty schools.

Guest: Dr. Christopher Phillips, Principal, Jefferson Houston School, Alexandria Public Schools

Assignment:

Tough, Paul, *How Children Succeed*, Chapters 13-23
Learning Policy Institute: *Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement*, June 5, 2017, by Jeannie Oakes, Anna Maier, and Julia Daniel.

February 12 What Works in High-Poverty Schools – Bold Innovations

Guest: Dr. Kaya Henderson, former Superintendent DCPS

Assignment:

Rhee, Michelle, *Radical: Fighting to Put Students First*.
Ravitch, Diane, *Reign of Error* – Chapter 15 “The Mystery of Michelle Rhee”
Future Ed Reports: *How DC Schools are Revolutionizing Teaching*, May 30, 2017, By Thomas Toch, Future Ed Director, Georgetown University
McCourt School of Public Policy, published in Washington Monthly, June 2017

February 19 Segregation and Its Impacts,

introduction to program evaluation in education context, Relevance of Research to Policymaking

Assignment:

Bracey, G.W. (2006) *Reading Educational Research: How to Avoid Getting Statistically Snookered*. New Hampshire: Heinemann. Pp. 62-84.
Ryan, James E., *Five Miles Away, A World Apart: One City, Two Schools, and the Story of Educational Opportunity in America* 2010: Oxford University Press. Excerpts TBD.
Billings,SB, Deming, DJ, Rockoff, JE. (2014). *School Segregation, Educational Attainment, and Crime: Evidence from the End of Busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg* The Quarterly Journal of Economics 129 (1), 435-476.

SECTION II: THE EDUCATION REFORM WARS AND THEIR IMPACT ON K12 POLICY

February 26 Standards and Testing
NCLB/ESSA Accountability
How Research interacts with Policy and Practice

Assignment:

Weiss, Joanne and McGuinn, Patrick. (2017). *The Evolving Role of the State Education Agency in the Era of ESSA and Trump: Past, Present, and Uncertain Future*. CPRE Working Papers.
Ravitch excerpts TBD

March 5 Charters, Vouchers, Privatization
Assignment: TBD to include Ravitch excerpts

March 8 **OPTIONAL**
Symposium: Strengthening the Pipeline from School to Work, March 8, 2017, 9:30 a.m – 2:30 p.m. GMU Arlington Campus Founders Hall Auditorium

March 19 Merit Pay, School Closures/Takeovers, Teacher tenure changes
Assignment: TBD

SECTION III: FOLLOW THE MONEY, AND OTHER RESOURCE CHALLENGES –

March 26 **Implications of Federal, State and Local Education Funding**

Guest: Honorable Tag Greason, former member Virginia House of Delegates, 32nd District; member House Appropriations and Education Committees

Assignment:

Efficiency and Effectiveness of K12 Spending: Report to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia, by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (September 2015)

<http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt472.pdf>

other TBD

April 2 Teacher Shortages

Assignment:

D'Amico, D., Pawlewicz, R., Earley, P., and McGeehan, A., (2017) *Where Are All the Black Teachers? Discrimination in the Teacher Labor Market*. Harvard Educational Review: Spr 2017, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 26-49.

Learning Policy Institute Research Brief: *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (September 2016).

Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven Trends: The Transformation Of The Teaching Force*, updated April 2014. CPRE Report (#RR-80). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

**SECTION IV: - FOSTERING INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATION;
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

Additional Assignments: TBD

April 9 Addressing the Workforce Interest Gap
Project-Based Learning,
New Roles in Career Exploration

Assignment:

Documentary: *Most Likely to Succeed*, Produced by Greg Whiteley and Ted Dinstersmith, 2015

Center for American Progress Policy Brief on High School Re-design

April 16 Technology in Education, Student Presentations

April 23 Student Presentations

Assignment: Badheka, Gijubhai, *Divasvapna: An Educator's Reverie*. In English, National Book Trust 2004.

April 30 Student Presentations and Course Wrap-Up