George Mason University

College of Education and Human Development

School of Education

EDLE 813.002

Social and Political Forces in Education Leadership

Fall 2022, 3 credit hours

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Office Hours: Online or in person by appointment

Course Meetings: **Time:** Thursdays 4:30-7:10 pm
Term: August 22 – December 14, 2022
Location: Horizon Hall 1011

I.   COURSE DESCRIPTION

University Catalog Course Description
Social and Political Forces in Education Leadership (3:3:0) Examines the social and political forces that shape education in the United States and the effect of these forces on school leadership. Examines the social and political functions of schooling in the past and present.

II.   COURSE OVERVIEW

The nation's schools exist within and are shaped by a complex nexus of social and political forces. In various ways, administrators, teachers, parents and even students behave as political actors at the local, state and federal levels. Schools socialize the nation's youth, affirming and imparting important lessons about citizenship and power. Fundamentally and inextricably, school leadership is a political act. In today's political milieu, debates surrounding critical race theory, anti-Black racism, leadership, and accountability assume center stage. While these are not new issues, the social context of American education is one that has evolved over time to include new groups, issues, explanations, and solutions. What may work for one group may not

work for another. In this course, we seek to understand the social and political forces undergirding school leadership so that this knowledge can lead to better design and implementation of solutions.

This course begins with a consideration of education as a social institution as well as the ways in which education and politics intertwine. In what ways is educational leadership political? How and in what ways do economic, social and cultural transformations unfolding beyond the schools' doors shape education and school leadership? Where and in what ways is power exercised? The course is divided into four units – Democracy & Demography; Social Stratification in Society and in Schools; Accountability-Driven Policies; and Educational Leaders as Social and Political Actors with a supplementary week on a topic of the class's choosing – Reflecting on the Present Moment.

III. COURSE DELIVERY METHOD

The intention is for this course to be primarily in-person with select sessions fully asynchronous (not "real time"). In the event of inclement weather, quarantine, or university building closure, this course will be delivered 100% fully online using a hybrid synchronous and asynchronous format via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal and the instructor's Mason Zoom account. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before "@gmu.edu") and email password.

Under no circumstances, may students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

IV. COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts

Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge.

Welton, A. D., & Diem, S. (2022). *Strengthening anti-racist educational leaders: Advocating for racial equity in turbulent times*. Bloomsbury.

Other Assigned and Optional Sources

Assigned and optional source material will be available on their links listed on Blackboard. Assigned sources will also be listed on the tentative schedule below.

V. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Each class will include a variety of activities and exercises. Specific process goals for this class are as follows:

1. Classes will reflect a balance of activities that encourage the exploration of and the use of research in instructional leadership. To promote an atmosphere that allows us to accomplish this, we will:
   a. agree to disagree respectfully during class discussions;
   b. give others a charitable read by assuming good intentions;
   c. strive to be open to new ideas and perspectives; and
   d. listen actively to one another.

2. Student work will reflect what is expected from researchers. Hence, it is expected that students will:
   a. write papers that are well-researched, proofread, submitted in a timely fashion, and conform to APA guidelines;
   b. participate actively in class discussions in a manner that challenges the best thinking of the class; and
   c. provide constructive feedback to others both on their ideas and on their written work, striving to learn from each other and to test each other's ideas.

3. We will endeavor to create an online environment that approximate what we know about learning organizations. Consequently, it is important that we create a space that allows participants to try out new ideas and voice opinions without fear or ridicule or embarrassment. The hallmark of a learning organization is a balance between openness and constructive feedback; hence, everyone is expected to:
   a. demonstrate appropriate **respect for one another**;
   b. voice concerns and opinions about the class process openly;
   c. engage in **genuine inquiry**;
   d. recognize and celebrate each other's ideas and accomplishments;
   e. show an awareness of each other's needs; and
   f. **maintain strict confidentiality** regarding any information shared.

VI.   **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The course will require students to:
- Understand the relationship between the social context of education and educational leadership and policy;
- Examine the philosophical divisions, competing goals, and array of social and ethical values that undergird educational organizations and the students and families they serve;
- Explore the opportunities and limitations of educational organizations for addressing major social, political, and philosophical dilemmas;
- Examine developments in research and policy related to evaluating key social and economic problems of education in the United States;
- Consider ways in which school leadership is a political act;
- Develop a broad framework that will support and help shape future research;
- And hone critical thinking skills and the craft of academic writing.

Fundamental questions about the relationship between schools and society include:
- What is the purpose of public education?
- How do race and class affect the educational experiences of students?
- How do interventions in one sector of education affect the outcomes for another sector in the long-term educational pipeline of the United States?
- What elements define the new legal landscape on race and class and education?
- How has accountability, testing, and data reframed the debate about public education?
- In what ways have technology and privatization altered schools?
- How is the role of educational leaders informed by political and social change?
- What does it mean to be an anti-racist or democratic school leader?

VII.   **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

This course will be partially delivered on GMU's Blackboard platform, so students are required to have access to Blackboard. A Blackboard site is available to all students enrolled in the course at http://mymason.gmu.edu. You need to log on using your GMU username and password. To participate in this course, students will need the following resources:
- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers
  To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems
- Consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard (at least daily access on weekdays), as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs are available for free download by clicking on the link next to each plug-in:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: http://get.adobe.com/reader/
  - Windows Media Player: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player
  - Apple QuickTime Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/
- You will use **Google Docs** to complete select assignments and to participate in various learning activities throughout the semester.

Email: Per university policy and in compliance with federal law, I will only communicate with students via their GMU email accounts and will be unable to respond to emails sent from other accounts (i.e., Gmail, yahoo, work email, etc.).
- **All students are required to activate and monitor their GMU e-mail accounts.**
- Any announcements concerning the course will be sent to your GMU email address.
- I will respond to emails within one business day of email receipt (i.e., excluding holidays, weekends).

VIII. **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

General Expectations

This course is structured to productively engage all participants in co-constructing learning from readings, activities, and our interactions. Coming prepared to class having completed readings as well as contributing to our class discussion and activities are part of building our learning community that will be necessary to meet the goals of the course.

Consistent with the expectations of a PhD-level course, students will complete several major written assignments. The assignments constructed for this course reflect a mix of skills associated with the application of research to education leadership. The goal of these assignments is less about assessing learning and more about developing students' writing skills and ability to craft a compelling empirical framework guided by a critical conceptual framing. Overall, the instructor will provide feedback on written work using the following broad criteria:

- Application of concepts embedded in assigned readings and other materials and reinforced in class activities
- The quality of analysis, synthesis, and application
- The ability to write in a clear, concise, and organized fashion

Note that this course does not rely on traditional grades to determine whether students have met a pre-determined standard. Students will be asked to participate in several self-reflection exercises on their course experience and performance. Self-assessment will guide the determination of whether students met course expectations.

IX. **GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

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

- **Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:** As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@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/**.**

Plagiarism:

- Plagiarism Statement: Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; **a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient.** Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting. Student writers are often confused as to what should be cited. Some think that only direct quotations need to be credited. While direct quotations do need citations, so do paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information formerly unknown to the writers or which the writers did not discover themselves. Exceptions for this include factual information which can be obtained from a variety of sources, the writers' own insights or findings from their own field research, and what has been termed common knowledge. What constitutes common knowledge can sometimes be precarious; what is common knowledge for one audience may not be so for another. In such situations, it is helpful, to keep the reader in mind and to think of citations as being "reader friendly." In other words, writers provide a citation for any piece of information that they think their readers might want to investigate further. Not only is this attitude considerate of readers, it will almost certainly ensure that writers will never be guilty of plagiarism. (Statement of English Department at George Mason University)

- Plagiarism and the Honor Code: George Mason University operates under an honor system, which is published in the University Catalog and deals specifically with cheating, attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Please familiarize yourself with the honor code, especially the statement on plagiarism (https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/). If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor or utilize the GMU writing center.

- Plagiarism and the Internet: Copyright rules also apply to users of the Internet who cite from Internet sources. Information and graphics accessed electronically must also be cited, giving credit to the sources. This material includes but is not limited to e-mail

(don't cite or forward someone else's e-mail without permission), newsgroup material, information from Web sites, including graphics.

- If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor utilize the GMU Writing Center.

Academic Integrity & Inclusivity: This course embodies the perspective that we all have differing perspectives and ideas and we each deserve the opportunity to share our thoughts. Therefore, we will conduct our discussions with respect for those differences. That means, we each have the freedom to express our ideas, but we should also do so keeping in mind that our colleagues deserve to hear differing thoughts in a respectful manner, i.e. we may disagree without being disagreeable. https://oai.gmu.edu/

Diversity, Religious Holiday: Please refer to George Mason University's calendar of religious holidays and observations (http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/). It is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments.

Student Privacy Policy: George Mason University strives to fully comply with FERPA by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. Please see George Mason University's student privacy policy https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/privacy/ .

Professional Dispositions: Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See http://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/.

Core Values Commitment: 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/.

Other Concerns: If you have concerns or issues relating to the content or conduct of the class, please talk with me directly. Although the specifics of these conversations are entirely confidential, they may provide me with useful suggestions that may be shared indirectly with the class to improve the learning experience for all students. As a matter of policy, I do not respond to anonymous e-mails.