

**George Mason University  
College of Education and Human Development  
School of Education**

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**EDPO 880 / POGO 750  
Economics of Education**

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**Fall 2023, 3 credit hours**

**Instructor:** Samantha Viano, PhD  
**Office Location:**  
**Phone:**  
**E-mail:** sviano@gmu.edu

**Mailing address:** George Mason University  
4400 University Drive, MSN 4C2  
Fairfax, VA 22030-4444

**Office Hours:** Online or in person by appointment

**Course Meetings:** **Time:** Mondays 4:30-7:10 pm  
**Term:** August 21 – December 13, 2023  
**Location:** Synchronous

## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

### ***University Catalog Course Description***

**Economics of Education (3:3:0)** Provides an overview of selected theoretical, conceptual and empirical perspectives on topics in the economics of education. Applies economic principles to analyze a wide range of educational issues, including education finance, educator labor markets, school accountability and educational choice. Offered by School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

## II. COURSE OVERVIEW

This course explores the confluence of economics and education policy. The curriculum encompasses a wide array of topics in the economics of education including teacher labor markets, school choice, and school finance. While engaging with this content, students will examine how economic theories are embedded into educational policies and educational research.

This course seeks to build an understanding of economic frameworks for policy analysis. The course's objective is not to persuade students that economic frameworks are the sole or even the superior approach to education policy. Instead, the course aims to equip each student with the ability to grasp an economist's mindset, employ economic perspectives alongside other disciplinary angles, and engage in thoughtful analysis of the merits, drawbacks, and boundaries of these methodologies.

## III. COURSE DELIVERY METHOD

This course will be delivered 100% fully online using a synchronous format facilitated through the instructor's GMU Zoom account.

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 Text***

Lovenheim, M., & Turner, S.E. (2018). *Economics of education*. Worth Publishers.

### ***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 topics related to the economics of education. 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

This course seeks to build the following competencies and skills through course activities and assignments:

- ✓ Articulate economic concepts, theories, and logic that guide the approaches used by economists to analyze key education policy issues.
- ✓ Critically analyze how fundamental themes and concepts in the economics of education inform education policy debates and issues.
- ✓ Understand the strengths and limits of economics, relative to other disciplines in education policy research.
- ✓ Understand the core policy debates that economists address.

## VII. TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

This course will be partially delivered on Mason'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/Original/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Original/Getting_Started/Browser_Support)  
To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: [https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting\\_Started/Browser\\_Support/Browser\\_Support\\_Policy](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support/Browser_Support_Policy)
- 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/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)
- You will use **Google Docs** to complete select assignments and to participate in various learning activities throughout the semester.
- **A headset microphone** for use with Zoom for synchronous lessons to engage with the instructor. These can also be useful when recording videos for the course.

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 two business days 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 graduate-level course, students will complete several major written assignments. The goal of these assignments is less about assessing learning and more about developing students' writing skills and ability to craft a compelling arguments and frameworks related to the course content. 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

Submitting papers: All papers must be submitted **on time, electronically via Blackboard.**

Late work: Students' work is expected to be on time, meaning no later than midnight of the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted except in an emergency situation that have been discussed and approved by the instructor in advance of the due date. Please take advantage of instructor availability to get assistance prior to assignment deadlines.

Grade Appeals: Grade appeals will only be granted when the number of points awarded for the assignment is less than 80 percent of the possible points available. Grade appeals will be allowed for all written assignments except for the final policy memo portfolio. Students must resubmit the assignment within two weeks of receiving their original grade in order to receive a new grade.

### Grading Scale:

A+ = 100 points

A = 95 - 99

A- = 90 - 94

B+ = 86 - 89  
 B = 83 - 85  
 B- = 80 - 82  
 C = 75 - 79  
 F = 74 or below

## 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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to [VIAhelp@gmu.edu](mailto:VIAhelp@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments/>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/article-categories/teaching-learning/>.

**Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:** As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, 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 or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto: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/full-honor-code-document/>). 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.