

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Education Policy

EDPO 303 (001) – Politics of American Education
3 Credits, Fall 2024
Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:15 p.m. Location TBD, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Office Hours: Fridays, 4:15-7:15 p.m., or by appointment
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Course Website: Canvas – details and links TBD

Prerequisites/Co-requisites

None.

University Catalog Course Description

Focus on the study of the American political system as it relates to education. Designed for students studying the American political system and students interested in careers in education. Explores how interactions between various levels and branches of governments affect education.

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to the historical, social, and cultural influences that have shaped political decision affecting education in the United States. It considers the key institutions (e.g., branches of government, state education agencies, school districts) and actors (e.g., elected and appointed officials, unions, philanthropists, businesses, parents, students, related education communities) that influence education systems. Course content covers historical conflicts over education governance and policies and examines the challenges facing present-day reform efforts.

This course draws on the professor’s experience working in public education and education research. The course will also strive to include students’ perspectives of various policymakers they will be exposed to throughout the semester. The course will emphasize critical thinking skills and concise writing skills as well as building content knowledge.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered face-to-face. Virtual options will be made available for students with special circumstances as approved by the university and the professor. Course content will be presented using a lecture and class discussion format with occasional online discussions and assignments, guest appearances from education leaders and elected officials involved in education

and in-class exercises, all drawing on the instructor's professional experiences in the politics of American education.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to:

- understand and explain the connections between education and the political process in the United States;
- understand and explain how authority for education is dispersed among local, state, and federal governments;
- understand and discuss key issues in education policy at all levels of government and the different and often competing philosophies that inform education policy decisions;
- acquire the background and ability to think critically about public education issues relevant to all students, parents, voters and taxpayers in America, and to discuss same respectfully with people with different perspectives;
- enhance their ability to write well in concise formats; and
- Gain exposure to potential careers in education.

Course Website

This class uses Canvas to share vital course information (e.g., syllabus, course calendar, grades, etc.). More information will be shared on Canvas prior to the start of the class. Note that the syllabus is subject to revision. The class assignments will be listed on a week-by-week basis in Canvas.

Professional Standards

Not Applicable.

Required Readings

Text and Resources

Tough, Paul (2016). *Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. **This text is available online for free, with supplemental materials, so no need to purchase unless you prefer hardcopy.** <http://www.paultough.com/helping/>

With Good Reason (WGR) Virginia Humanities Podcast Series: Degrees of Separation Parts I -VI, Aired March 24, 2017 through August 25, 2017
<https://www.withgoodreasonradio.org/degrees-of-separation/>

Articles:

As current events are an important part of this course and education policy is in constant motion, the articles below are presented as examples only and may be replaced by more current articles. All articles will be available from the GMU library. You are responsible for finding articles on your own if Canvas is inaccessible or if the linked files are not in your preferred format.

Baker, B. (2014). Evaluating the recession's impact on state school finance systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(91), 1-33.

Cross, C.T. (2015). *The shaping of federal education policy over time*. The Progress of Education Reform, 16(2), Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Davidson, E., Reback, R., Rockhoff, J., & Schwartz, H.L. (2015) Fifty ways to leave a child behind: Idiosyncrasies and discrepancies in states' implementation of NCLB. *Educational Researcher*, 44(6).

Gamberg, D. (2016), March 29). What defines a good school? *Education Week*, 35(26).

Hoff, D. J. (2008, August 27). Democrats air dueling ideas on education. *Education Week*. Retrieved from
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/08/27/01dems.h28.html?qs=NCLB+stalled>

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), *Low Performing Schools in Urban High Poverty Communities, Report to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia*, (June 2014) <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt454.pdf>

Klein, Alison (2016, March 31). The Every Student Succeeds Act: An ESSA overview. *Education Week*.

Lynch, A., Lerner, R., & Leventhal, T. (2013). Adolescent academic achievement and school engagement: An examination of the role of school-wide peer culture. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(1), 6-19.

Nicholes-Barrer, I., Gill, B.P., Gleason, P., Tuttle, C.C. (2014). Does student attrition explain KIPP's success? *Education Next*, 14(4), 62-70.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time using Canvas. Details will be shared in class. All due dates will be announced well in advance.

Assignments and/or Examinations

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>.

Class Schedule

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/>.

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 <https://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/>).

- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to 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/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, 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.

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