

## **II. Introduction to Policy Studies in Education**

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### **Course Description & Goals**

This course introduces students to the field of public policy with applications geared toward public education - broadly construed. In this course we will explore the theoretical foundations (economic, political and institutional) that help us to understand what influences, shapes and, maybe, explains the success or failures of public policies. We will, then, take those lenses and look at the world around us to observe what theory tells us and to observe the practical realities that confound the theories.

There are two overarching goals of this course. First, the course will provide educators, researchers and analysts with an understanding of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks within which public policies arise, are implemented and are evaluated. Second, this course will give students a deeper understanding of the roles of federal, state and local governments and the courts in education policy. This course is a foundational or core course for many students and, in that respect, provides grounding for analyzing public policies.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester, students will have built a...

#### **General Knowledge of the Policy Landscape**

- Identify and summarize the role of federal, state, and local governments and the courts as it relates to public education
- Understand that there is a global perspective

#### **Theoretical Orientation to Your Thinking**

- Theoretical perspectives on why and how the public sector, broadly construed, becomes involved in providing, regulating and/or funding any good or service, but clearly most intently - education
- Identify the strengths and limits of the nature of trying to achieve something beneficial and sustain it and expand it in the public realm
- Understand how the individual realm is difficult to resolve at the collective level
- Reflect on the challenges of making decisions collectively through voting and other means
- Understand rational, organizational and political modes of decision-making

### **Applied Perspectives**

- Apply your understanding of the theoretical perspectives on the extant policy world
- Critically examine your assumptions - if they hold up, then they are strengthened
- Observe the world around you and be thoughtful and mindful.

### **Developmental Base as a Graduate Student**

- Question underlying assumptions embedded in theories, policies and one's own values
- Develop critical thinking skills by exploring policies from multiple perspectives and critically examining the evidence that supports the respective viewpoints
- Effectively communicate ideas and knowledge in a comprehensive – yet, succinct manner
- Invest your time and energies in seeing the nuggets of understanding in what can be somewhat difficult reading material

### **Required Text & Readings**

Wolf, Jr., Charles. (1993). *Markets or Governments: Choosing Between Imperfect Alternatives. Second Edition.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ravitch, Diane. (2010). *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education.* New York, NY: Basic Books

### **Expectations/Attendance**

#### **Communication and electronic access.**

I am always available through email (and check it regularly). If you would like to arrange a telephone conversation or a face-to-face meeting, a mutually agreeable time can be arranged by email. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email if you have any questions about the course, the assignments, or the syllabus. I expect students to check their email daily as I will use this for individual and course correspondence.

#### **Late Assignments.**

If extenuating circumstances cause you to be late in submitting an assignment, it is your responsibility to contact me in advance to make arrangements for an extension of the due date. Should you turn in an assignment late without making such arrangements, I will deduct a grade for each day that it is late (so from an A to an A-).

### **Attendance**

Your punctual attendance is expected at every class session. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to active military duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. Accommodations for these excused absences will be made and will do so in a way that does not penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. *Each unexcused absence will result in a lowering of your class participation grade by 3 points.*

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

### **Course Grading**

Course Grades will be based on the following:

Class Participation:	10 Points
Online Participation Activities:	20 Points
Policy Memo #1:	15 Points
Policy Memo #2:	15 Points
Ravitch Group Project/Presentation	10 Points
<u>Final Policy Paper (30 points) and presentation (5 points):</u>	<u>30 Points</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

Each assignment has a point value and the points add up to 100. Final grades will be determined according to the following scale:

A	94-100 points
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
F	<70

### **Class Participation (10 Pts)** Participation points will be earned!

The expectation is set at a graduate level, meaning that you come to class prepared. Prepared meaning – you have read the materials, thought about the concepts, spent time observing the world with different lenses. I expect you to be an active and thoughtful participant in class and group discussions and activities – all while being mindful of others in your group – find a way to bridge

communication gaps and provide a space for your colleagues to participate. Some may emerge as natural leaders, rather than discourage this I would suggest we let it emerge and ask them to be responsible facilitators of group efforts.

Class attendance – it is expected that you will attend every class session (one unexcused absence is allowed, but remember you won't be earning participation points). You must inform me of any absences – foreseen or unforeseen, ideally before class via email.

### **Online Activities: (20 Pts total)**

Not included in the class participation above that covers general participation, formal and ad hoc group work. These activities will be done online and are intended to have you engage each other on timely topics in education policy and your own work.

**Online Activity 1:** (10 points): Respond to 2 other students' Policy Memo #1. (How well did they identify the above questions? Do you agree with their analysis or do you see it differently?) Rubric to follow.

**Online Activity 2:** (10 points): Respond to 2 other students' Policy Memo #2. (How well did they identify the above questions? Do you agree with their analysis or do you see it differently?) Rubric to follow.

### **Policy Memo #1 (15 points)**

This paper will be 5-6 pages double spaced not including references. Choose a education related policy. Use Alison's (1969) guiding questions to evaluate your policy. Pick one or a combination of his three conceptual lens to analyze your chosen policy. Does this conceptual lens work for your policy analysis? What does not fit under this framework?

Rubric: Briefly describe context of policy (i.e. stakeholder, description of policy or decision), then use Alison's framework to analyze (10 points). How does the framework aid your analysis and what is missing? (5points)

### **Policy Memo #2 (15 points)**

This paper will be 5-6 double spaced pages not including references. Choose an education policy of interest that is the result of a nonmarket or market failure. Describe the policy and how you came to the decision to categorize it. Evaluate the policy according to the market and nonmarket conditions discussed in the readings so far. (Was the policy a market response or a nonmarket response? A combination? Does the policy address equity, efficiency, accountability, and/or authority? How does it do this? Is there evidence of macro or micro decoupling?) Does your chosen policy fit within this conceptual framework? Why or why not? (15 points)

### **Ravitch Group Project/Presentation (10 points)**

Students will work in groups to present points and counterpoints to Ravitch's stance on selected issues. Each group will be assigned an issue. Then they must provide her points, arguments and rationale for her statements with a corresponding counterpoint, argument, rationale from other educators/researchers. In your poster you should be thinking of the following questions to guide your presentation:

- What is the policy cycle for the particular issue you have?
  - o In your policy cycle description feel free to use concepts from class, such as market/nonmarket failures, equity/efficiency/accountability/authority issues, etc.
- Has Ravitch's policy been used before? If so has been successful? If not, what are your predictions for its success based on the counterpoints and policy cycle?

(Rubric to follow)

### **Policy Paper (30 Points)**

The final project for the course will be a 10-12 page policy paper (not including references). Choose an educational policy of interest (it can be the same as one that you have used in your previous memos). Provide the context for the policy (i.e. historical, cultural, social, political, economic). Describe the stakeholders. Then choose one of the conceptual frameworks that we have discussed to analyze the policy. In your analysis you should include:

How the context affected the policy environment?

What was the demand that brought the policy about?

Who was involved in the policy decision?

What problem did the policy address?

How did the resulting policy address the original problem? Or did it?

What were the unintended consequences?

What lessons can be learned (implications) for future policies related to your choice?

What conclusions can you make based on the conceptual framework chosen and the results of the policy that you chose?

### **Internet Resources**

#### **Journals, Other Online Publications & Resources**

The following list of websites is by no means exhaustive. You should explore the internet for other education and policy related sites that may be of interest to you.

**EdWeek:** <http://www.edweek.com/>

Educator's Reference Desk & ERIC: <http://www.eduref.org/Eric/>

Brookings Papers on Education Policy: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pep/>  
 Economics of Education Review: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/02727757>  
 Education Policy Analysis Archives: <http://olam.ed.asu.edu/epaa/>  
 Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis: [http://www.lib.fsu.edu/\\_\\_ejournals.html](http://www.lib.fsu.edu/__ejournals.html)  
 Journal of Education Finance: [http://www.lib.fsu.edu/\\_\\_ejournals.html](http://www.lib.fsu.edu/__ejournals.html)  
 Journal of Policy Analysis & Management: [http://www.lib.fsu.edu/\\_\\_ejournals.html](http://www.lib.fsu.edu/__ejournals.html)  
 National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/>  
 Education Commission of the States: <http://www.ecs.org>  
 e-connection newsletter subscription: <http://www.ecs.org/ecs/e-connection>  
 RAND: <http://www.rand.org/>  
 Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI): <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/>  
 Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA): <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/> --- Florida Monitor weekly email

### Professional Associations

American Education Finance Association: <http://www.ed.sc.edu/aefa/>  
 American Educational Research Association: <http://www.aera.net/>  
 Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management: <http://www.appam.org/index.shtml>

### Course Calendar

*Instructor retains the right to make changes, additions, or deletions to the syllabus during the course of the semester. **ADDITIONAL READINGS WILL BE ASSIGNED***

	Topic	Assignment/Note
Week 1	Introduction to course/Conceptual Lens	
Week 2	Conceptual Frameworks DeLeon (2006) Allison (2006) Allison (1969)	Think about: What is policy? Who are these authors? What are their conceptual lens?
Week 3	What is Policy Analysis? Weimer 2005 Weimer Ch 14 McDonnell	

Week 4	Economic Choice and Market Failures WOLF Preface, Acknowledgments, Ch 1 & 2 Rosen - Ch 6 Externalities Carnoy	
Week 5	No Class	Policy Memo #1
Week 6	Library presentation Nonmarket Supply/Demand WOLF Ch 3 Wilson Ch 17	Respond to two other students memos.
Week 7	Critical Reflections on the Choice between Market and Non-Market WOLF Ch 7 & 8 Wilson Ch 19	
Week 8	Voting Rosen – Ch 7 Public Choice Lauen & Tyson	
Week 9	No Class	Policy Memo #2
Week 10	Spring Break-No Class	Respond to two other students memos.
Week 11	Individual/Collective Behavior Ariely, Intro & Ch 1 Thaler & Sunstein, Intro & Ch 1 Dixon et al.	
Week 12	Reform Friedman – The Role of Government in Education Ravitch – Acknw, Chap 1-5	
Week 13	Reform Budde – Education by Charter	

	Ravitch – Ch 6-11 Groups Assigned for Ravitch Presentations	
Week 14	No class, you should be working with your group on your rough draft of your presentation	
Week 15	Rough drafts of Presentation posters for mini-poster session with class	Rough drafts of posters due in class.
Week 16	Final posters and Final thoughts	Final paper due.