GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Education

Course Title: Advanced Policy Issues in Education
EDUC 871 Sec: 001
Spring, 2006

Instructor: Dr. Penelope M. Earley
Class Date & Time: Wednesday 4:30 – 7:10 p.m.
Class Location: Robinson A, 308
Contact Information:
    Room 441 Robinson A
    E-mail: pearley@gmu.edu
    P: (703) 993-3361
    F: (703) 993-2013
Office Hours: By Appointment: MTWF 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on in-depth analysis and study of selected education policy issues. Review of various points of view on the issues is considered. Particular attention will be given to interactions and connections between selected education issues, and the similarities and differences in policy approaches at the K-12 and higher education levels.
Prerequisite: Admission to the Ph.D. program and completion of EDUC 870 or equivalent doctoral-level policy coursework.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a detailed and sophisticated understanding of major policy issues.
2. Analyze and describe the legal and political forces that influence decision making on these issues.
3. Understand and explain the intersections of various policy issues (for example, teacher recruitment for general and special education classrooms).
4. Understand and explain how and why different levels of education may approach these policy issues in a different manner.
5. Demonstrate ability to describe and analyze the research bases for major policy issues.

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

There are no specialized standards specific to education policy studies. The conceptual framework for this course is linked to the mission of the Center for Education Policy as outlined in its Charter: (1) Translate education research into policy options and recommendations for a variety of audiences (decision makers, practitioners, and the public); (2) Conduct timely, sound, evidence-based analysis; and (3) Develop interdisciplinary and cross-sector policy networks. The student outcomes (in particular 3, 4, and 5) are linked to this mission as are the analytic assignments.
NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course is taught using lectures and discussions supplemented with outside speakers.

TEXTS AND READINGS


Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA), available on-line: http://www.epaa.asu.edu


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Paper 1: Identify and analyze policy implications of a research article in any peer-reviewed education journal on a topic related to this course. See the accompanying grading guidelines for expectations of written work. (5 – 8 pages double spaced) 25 points. *Due: Feb. 15*

Paper 2: Discuss and analyze conceptual and policy connections between any two issues that are the focus of this course. See the accompanying grading guidelines for expectations of written work. (5 – 8 pages double spaced) 25 points. *Due March 01*

Paper 3: Discuss and analyze policy issues related to one of the topics that are the focus of this course as they show themselves at different levels of education (PreK through 16). Include consideration of different or similar ways policy decisions are made at these levels. See the accompanying grading guidelines for expectations of written work. (6 – 10 pages) 25 points. *Due April 19*

Team Activities: Develop bibliography of on-line research (3 points); Prepare policy talking points (3 points); identify reading provisions in NCLB (3 points); design policy advocacy power point (5 points); find position statements (3 points) develop and present policy PSA ( 8 points). = 25 points total.

Assignment Submissions: If you want your paper graded electronically (for ease in including it in your electronic portfolio) please send it to me by email prior to class. I will also accept hard copies of papers at the class when they are due. If any team assignments will require PowerPoint, please email that to me no later than the evening before it is due. I will have it loaded on a laptop and available for presentation in class.
EVALUATION

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached. All written work must be completed on a typewriter or a word processor and must be within the page limits established by the instructor.

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-95</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-91</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85-88</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>74 and below</td>
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Point assignments for work:

Paper 1  25 points
Paper 2  25 points
Paper 3  25 points
Team Presentations 25 points

COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>High Stakes Testing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Defining the terms in K-12 and higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Does Testing Drive Student Achievement?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Consideration of Debate Over High States Testing: What are the central arguments on each side of this issue?</td>
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<td><strong>Team assignment for February 01:</strong> Develop on-line bibliography of policy research on K-16 testing issues (begin with EPAA – <a href="http://www.epaa.asu.edu">www.epaa.asu.edu</a> and AERA’s Educational Researcher – <a href="http://www.aera.net">www.aera.net</a>). Please email to me by 2/31/06.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Reading Assignment for February 01:</strong> <em>Scrooge Meets Dick and Jane, Spring</em> pp. 34-39, and <em>Taking Sides, Issue #9</em>.</td>
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| February 01 | Interactions Between Testing Policy in PreK-16 Settings and Across Disciplines |
|            | ▪ Discuss *Scrooge Meets Dick and Jane*                                |
|            | ▪ Discuss bibliography                                                 |
|            | ▪ Group discussion question: Should colleges and universities be ranked according to how students perform on a standardized test? Why and Why not? |
|            | **Team assignment for February 09:** Go to the U.S. Department of Education’s Web site and find the testing requirements for special education and limited English proficient students in NCLB. What does NCLB say about programs to help students learn English (hint: NCLB, Title III). Why should colleges and universities care about this issue? Prepare and be prepared to present talking points for a superintendent to brief a school board. (continued next page) |
Reading Assignment for February 08: Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum, Introduction and Part I

February 09 – Literacy and Reading Policy
- Presentation of “talking points”
- Discuss Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum
- What Are the Issues? What are policy connections to testing, special populations and scientifically-based research provisions in NCLB?
- What are implications for higher education faculty and their research agendas?
- What are implications for students with disabilities and pre-K reading instruction?

**Team assignment: Find reading programs authorized through NCLB. Be prepared to discuss these provisions in the law and how they are implemented.**

Reading Assignment: Paper 1 due on February 15; read Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum, Part II and Conclusion, and Spring P. 53-70.

February 15 – Literacy Policy and Undergirding Research
- Discussion of Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum
- Discussion of student papers
- Discussion of NCLB and reading provisions
- Why has reading become an ideological battle ground?

**Team Assignment due February 22: Prepare two power point presentations (maximum of six slides each). One should support the Bush Administration’s position on reading instruction and one should be a presentation that reflect’s Allington’s point of view. Please email power points by the evening of February 21.**

February 22– Impact of Literacy Policy on the Higher Education Curriculum
- Presentation of power points
- What Reading Methods Should Education Schools Teach and Who Decides? Why is this a controversial matter?

**Reading Assignment: For March 01, read Conflict of Interest, Chapters 1, 2, & 9 and Taking Sides Issue 7 and Issue 16; Paper 2 Due March 01.**

March 01 – Children With Special Needs: English Language Instruction for non-English Proficient Children
- Discussion of student papers
- Consideration of Federal Policy (NCLB) and Instruction for non-English Proficient Children
- Team Assignment: Identify eight organizations that you expect would have a position statement on either instruction for limited English proficient children or some aspect of IDEA. What are their positions on these issues? Do not limit yourself to the traditional K-12 organizations.

**Reading Assignment: For March 08, read Taking Sides, Issue 14 and Issue 17.**

March 08 – Special Education
- Presentation of advocacy organizations related to LEP students
- Discussion of special education policy history and funding
- How is special education policy implemented for individuals at different age levels, PreK-16?
March 15 – Policy Interactions Related to the Identification of, and Services for Children with Special Needs

- What Are Implications of Data Regarding Over Identification of Certain Children for Special Education Services?
- Does NCLB help or aggravate this situation?
- What Are Policy Options


March 22– Evidence and Educational Research

- What is the Role of Decision Makers in Deciding Research Issues and Methodologies?

**Assignment:** Paper 3 Due March 29

March 29—Using and Generating Research: Policy Actions in the PreK-12 and Higher Education Institutions

- Discussion of student papers
- What is the Role of Educational Research in PreK-12 and Higher Education Settings?
- What are strategies for getting research findings into the policy world?
- What are Implications For Setting Policy?

**Reading Assignment:** *Taking Sides, Issues 1 and 2: Conflict of Interest*, Chapter 11

April 19– Connecting the Dots

- Using a PSA for policy advocacy

**Team Assignment:** Identify a policy issue and develop a PSA for it (presentation on May 04)

April 26– Impediments to Cross Discipline and Cross Level Policy

- If there are conceptual and policy connections across education disciplines and levels, why is education policy fragmented? What are possible solutions?

May 04 – Wrap Up

- Presentation of PSA

**Important Information for all students**

The College of Education and Human Development expects all students to abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See [www.gse.gmu.edu](http://www.gse.gmu.edu) for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must know and follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) for the full Honor Code.
- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See [http://mail.gmu.edu](http://mail.gmu.edu) and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
Students with disabilities to seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/students/drc or call 703-003-2474 to access the DRC.
Grading Guidelines: Advanced Policy Issues in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade/Points</th>
<th>Quality of Written Work</th>
<th>Completeness of Work</th>
<th>Timeliness</th>
<th>Team Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 96 – 100</td>
<td>Exceptional quality and insight; a rare &amp; valuable contribution to the field.</td>
<td>100% complete</td>
<td>100% on time</td>
<td>Outstanding; facilitates and promotes conversation focused on the topic; questions &amp; comments reveal thoughtful reaction. Good team participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- 92 – 95</td>
<td>Convincingly on target; demonstrates evidence of understanding and application; clear and concise writing; the reader is not distracted by grammar and/or spelling and citation errors.</td>
<td>Accurate &amp; seamless writing; virtually a complete product</td>
<td>Almost always on time; rare but forgivable tardiness (such as serious personal or family illness). Instructor is notified in advance that a paper may be late.</td>
<td>Well above average doctoral student; actively helps move group toward goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ 89 – 91</td>
<td>Competent; provides credible evidence of understanding and application; some lapses in organization, citations and/or writing clarity.</td>
<td>Moderate shortcomings; minor elements missing that distract the instructor's ability to see the product as a whole.</td>
<td>Assignments late more than once or without prior conversation with instructor; not necessarily chronic.</td>
<td>Reliable and steady worker; questions and comments reveal some thought and reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 85 – 88</td>
<td>Evidence of understanding presented but incomplete; writing indicates gaps in logic; grammar and/or spelling errors distract the reader. Weak or insufficient citations.</td>
<td>Evidence of effort but one or more significant and important points are missed or not addressed.</td>
<td>More than half the assignments are late, but none are excessively late.</td>
<td>Doesn't contribute often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection. Follows rather than leads group activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- 80 – 84</td>
<td>Barely passable for graduate credit; only enough to get by; little evidence of understanding; assignments lack clarity and organization; little evidence of proof reading. Citations absent or inaccurate.</td>
<td>Barely sufficient; work is the least that could be done to justify graduate credit.</td>
<td>Excessively or repeatedly late.</td>
<td>Few meaningful contributions to class discussions. Little evidence of participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 79 and below</td>
<td>Undergraduate level and quality; unsophisticated; assignments show little or not connection to course content or concepts.</td>
<td>Insufficient evidence of understanding and application; important elements missing or difficult to find.</td>
<td>Excessively or repeatedly late.</td>
<td>Weak or minimal participation; passive; often sidetracks group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Difficult to recognize as the assigned task.</td>
<td>Missed or not submitted. Incompletes not made up.</td>
<td>No constructive participation; destructive; demeaning toward other points of view.</td>
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