EDLE 634.602: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Fall 2015, 3 credit hours

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Office Hours:	By appointment
Meeting Times:	Thurs, 4:30 – 7:10 p.m.
	Sept 3rd – Dec 10, 2015
Meeting Location:	Robinson Hall A109

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines current and emerging issues and trends impacting education to include: demographic shifts; globalization; technology; data-based decision-making; inclusion of diverse learners in American schools; and recent research on student achievement when influenced by race, gender, and poverty.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

Instruction will be delivered both synchronously (on ground meetings) and where appropriate, asynchronously (online videos, discussion boards, blogs, and learning resources) to include lectures, videos, small group work, peer-reviewed writing activities, case studies, and oral presentations.

REQUIRED TEXTS
- American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (*6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Additional required readings, to include journal articles and book chapters, among other materials, will be available through the course website. Suggested readings may be added and provided throughout the semester based on student needs and interests.

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY:

- **E-mail.** Your GMU e-mail account will serve as our primary mode of communication outside of class (i.e., announcements, breaking news, schedule changes, etc.); so make sure to check it daily. Per university policy, in compliance with federal law, the professor must only communicate with students via their GMU email, and will be unable to respond to emails sent from other accounts (i.e., gmail, yahoo, work email,   etc.).
- **Blackboard (Bb).** A Blackboard (Bb) site is available to all students enrolled in the course at http://mymason.gmu.edu. Selected course content will be delivered on GMU's Blackboard platform, so students must have access to Blackboard and their GMU username and password to log on.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze contemporary issues and major trends in education and their implications for society at large and schools and districts in particular.
2. Synthesize recent research relative to student achievement in diverse school settings with particular attention to relationships between student achievement, gender, race, poverty, and ability.
3. Identify various strategies to maximize the effective use of data to improve student achievement and effective ways to communicate results to diverse community stakeholders

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and articulate competing and contested views on a contemporary issue in education leadership using relevant education research and policy literature.
2. Access, analyze, and summarize publicly available data on a given education research topic in written form.
3. Present orally and visually a research-based synthesis of a contemporary issue in education leadership for diverse stakeholder audiences using relevant education research and policy literature.

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

This course is one of two culminating courses in the Masters in Education Leadership Program. In relationship to professional organization competencies, participants in this course will demonstrate proficiency in appropriate VA DOE competencies and ISLLC standards. VA DOE: 1-d, 1-e, 2-c, 2-d, 3-g, 4-a, 5-c, 6-e, 6-f. ISLLC: 1-K1, 1-K4, 1-K5, 2-K7, 2-K10, 2-P5, 2-P6, 2-P9, 2-P16, 2-P18, 3-K8, 3-P3, 3-P16, 3-P17, 4-K1, 4-K2, 4-P11, 5-K3, 5-P12, 6-K6, 6-K8, 6-P2, 6-P4, 6-P5. With regard to NCATE Curriculum Guidelines, candidates in this course will demonstrate an understanding of, and capabilities in, all four areas of education leadership; strategic leadership (1.3, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4); instructional leadership (3.3, 3.4); and organizational leadership (7.2, 7.4, and 9.3).

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

a) Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/].
b) Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/].
c) Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University 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.
d) The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].
e) Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].
f) Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
g) The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

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.

Written Assignments

All written assignments should be typed, formatted, and free from grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. They should also be clear, concise, and well organized; incorporating literature and research from and beyond the course to support discussion and debate. Students should use the APA Publication Manual, 6th edition as a guide. I maintain high standards and expectations for quality writing so make sure to consult APA guidelines, colleagues, and/or the GMU Writing Center [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/] to review and edit your work before turning it in to me. If you have any questions or concerns about your writing, please feel free to contact me before assignments are due.

Bias-Free Communications

In course discussions and in your writing, follow the recommendations outlined in the APA Publication Manual (6th edition) reference "Guide to Bias-Free Communications."

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Students can earn a total of 100 points in this course. Graded assignments account for 80 points while class participation (on-ground and on-line) account for 20 points as follows:

1.	Class Discussion and Participation	20 points
2.	Issue Brief	20 points
3.	Research Advocacy Paper	40 points
4.	Research Presentation	20 points
	Total Possible Points	**100 points**

Graded Assignments and Participation Expectations

This section briefly describes assignment and class participation expectations. Detailed instructions and grading rubrics are provided at the end of the syllabus. Please review these items carefully before you begin your work.

1. **Class Discussion and Participation.** Students are expected to actively participate in class by completing readings prior to class discussions. Weekly readings should be completed **prior** to the class meeting for which they are assigned. Students are also encouraged to share relevant materials and resources to stimulate discussion, learning, and improved practice in the field. **(20 points)**

2. **Issue Brief.** Students will select a contemporary issue (policy) in education policy that is of great interest to them and holds important implications for the study and practice of education leadership. This assignment secures the topic the student will investigate for assignments 3 & 4. Once selected, the student will write an issue brief that: (a) briefly explains the mechanisms of the issue; (b) clearly describes the underlying assumptions and arguments informing multiple perspectives on the policy; (c) integrates current research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue; (d) analyzes competing perspectives on the prevailing issue and their implications for education leaders. **(20 points) DUE: Oct 10, 2015 at 11:59 p.m.**

3. **Research Advocacy Paper.** In this culminating research paper, students will synthesize what they have learned about the education issue of their choice, highlighting related research, publicly available data, newly collected data (i.e., stakeholder interview responses) and ways in which their thinking has developed since the initial issue brief. In order to demonstrate the student's mastery of the course learning objectives, the paper should draw upon **relevant course materials and class discussions**, findings from at least **six research publications/data sources,** and **stakeholder interviews** that expand the student's knowledge of the issue. The paper should conclude with at least two or more policy recommendations and their rationale for implementation. **(40 points) DUE: Dec 12, 2015 at 11:59 p.m.**

4. **School Board Simulation.** Students will prepare a presentation on their chosen issue to deliver to a mock school/advisory board. The presentation should succinctly review the research advocacy paper, not to exceed 5 minutes, followed by 10-15 minutes of Q & A with the audience. The purpose is to demonstrate the ability to inform a policy debate, aptly presenting an informed explanation and argument to multiple stakeholders. **(20 points) DUE: Dec 5 & 12 class times.**

A Note on Submitting Assignments:

All papers must be typed (12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced in APA format - 6th edition) and submitted electronically to Blackboard. It is expected that student work will be submitted on time (before 11:59 p.m. on the due date).

If you miss class the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to ensure the assignment is turned in before the deadline to avoid a failing grade. If you anticipate needing an extension (except, of course, in the case of a true emergency), please make arrangements prior to the deadline.

Grading

The grading scale for the final course grade is as follows:

A+	=	100 points
A	=	95-99 points
A-	=	90-94 points
B+	=	87-89 points
B	=	83-86 points
B-	=	80-82 points
C	=	75-79 points
F	=	below 75 points

EDLE 634 CONTEMPORY ISSUES IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP
COURSE CALENDAR - Fall 2015*

Lesson	Topic	Work Due
1 - 9/3	Class Introduction & Design Thinking: What does "equitable opportunities to learn" mean?	Read Syllabus
2 - 9/10	Education Goals & Intentions	Ladson-Billings (2006)
3 - 9/17	Standards, Assessments, & Data	Minkel (2015) Burke & Marshall (2010)
4 - 9/24	Special Ed at a Glance	VA DoE (2010)
5 - 10/1	Online Lesson	**Issue Brief Due**
6 - 10/8	Segregation/ Re-segregation	Brooks et al (2013)
7 - 10/15	Equitable Instruction	Delisle (2015); Tomlinson (2015)
8 - 10/22	Brown Lecture – Teresa McCarty	Ronald Reagan Building or Online
9 - 10/29	Teacher Evaluation & Quality Control	Goldstein (2015)
10 - 11/5	Teacher Leadership	Barth (2013)
11 - 11/12	School Finance	Baker et al (2010)
12 - 11/19	Federal Government Initiatives	TBA
11/26	**Happy Thanksgiving**	**Eat**
13 – 12/3	Presentations	**Presentations Due**
14 – 12/10	Presentations / Course Wrap Up	**Presentations Due / Paper Due**

*Schedule of readings is subject to change as needed.

Baker, B.D., Sciarra, D.G., Farrie, D. (2010). *Is school funding fair: A national report*. Newark, N.J.: Education Law Center. Accessed from www.schoolfundingfairness.org.

Barth, R. (2013). The time is ripe (again). *Educational Leadership*. 71(2).

Burke, L.M. & Marshall, J.A. (2010, May 21). Why national standards won't fix American Education: misalignment of power and incentives. *Backgrounder*. Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation.

Delisle, J.R. (2015, January 7). Differentiation doesn't work. *Education Week*. 34(15).

Goldstein, D. (2015). Chapter 10: "Let me use what I know": Reforming education by empowering teachers. In *Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Harris, D.M. (2011). Curriculum differentiation and comprehensive school reform: Challenges in providing educational opportunity. *Educational Policy*. 25(5). 844-884.

Ladson-Billing, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. Educational Researcher. 35(7). 3-12.

Minkel, J. (2015, January 27). Too much of a good thing: Making data work for schools. *Education Week*. 34(18).

Tomlinson, C.A. (2015). Differentiation does, in fact, work. *Education Week*. 34(16).

Assessment Rubric: Class Participation

	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaching Expectations (2)	Below Expectations (1)
Attendance	Exemplary attendance, no tardies.	Near perfect attendance, few tardies.	Occasional (1-3) absences or tardies.	Frequent (>3) absences or tardies.
Quality of Questions, Interaction	Most queries are specific and on point. Deeply involved in class dialogue. Challenges ideas, seeks meaning.	Often has specific queries, stays involved in class dialogue, though sometimes tentative or off base.	Asks questions about deadlines, procedures, and directions or for help with little specificity. Little discussion of ideas.	Rarely asks questions of any quality.
Effort	Willingly participates when asked. Plays a leadership role in groups. Engages and brings out the best in others.	Willingly participates when asked. Takes on group tasks. Engages others.	Reluctantly participates when asked. Seeks easiest duties in groups. Tolerates others.	Actively avoids involvement when possible. Complains about others. Has large set of excuses.
Engagement	Enthusiastically initiates discussion. Personalizes and takes ownership of activities. Always knows where class or group is.	Sometimes initiates discussion and always works well with direction. Generally knows what's going on.	Seeks direction, but does not initiate discussion. May know where class or group is.	Waits for direction. Knows little of what is going on. Cannot describe where class or group is.

Assessment Rubric: Issue Brief

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Overview of Issue (25%)	The brief begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. The author calls attention to key players, divergent points of view and the issue's significance to education leadership.	The brief begins with an overview of an issue, but may wander. The author does at least two of the following: calls attention to key players, divergent points of view and the issue's significance to education leadership.	The brief offers an overview of the essay but misstates critical details. The author does at least one of the following: calls attention to key players, divergent points of view and the issue's significance to education leadership.	The brief does not offer an accurate overview of the issue. The author neglects to call attention to key players, divergent points of view and the issue's significance to education leadership.
Related Research (40%)	The author effectively integrates publicly accessible research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue to further illustrate multiple and diverse perspectives on the issue. Evidence clarifies dimensions of issue.	The author integrates some publicly accessible research/policy literature and popular media coverage of the issue to present multiple and diverse perspectives on the issue. Some points may appear isolated but overall, evidence clarifies issue.	The author does not present a sufficient discussion of the relevant research and popular media coverage or multiple perspectives on the issue.	The author does not include any research or popular media coverage of the issue.
Stakeholder Views (25%)	The author offers a clear, comprehensive, and specific analysis of competing views potentially impacting this issue. The analysis logically leads to implications for leadership.	The author offers a clear statement of multiple competing views potentially impacting this issue. The author includes an analysis of leadership implications.	The author offers a vague statement of viewpoints or author does not include an analysis of leadership implications.	The author does not offer a statement of multiple views on the issue.
Mechanics (10%)	The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading.	There are occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice.	Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread.	There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Assessment Rubric: Research Paper

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Overview of Issue; Statement of Position (10%)	The paper begins with an accurate overview of the issue that is clear and concise. The author provides a clear thesis statement that highlights the author's position on the issue. The author offers readers a roadmap of the paper.	The paper begins with a general overview of the issue but fails to do so succinctly and with specific details. The author provides a thesis statement, but does not offer readers a sense of what will come next in the paper.	The core issue is unclear. The thesis statement is vague or unclear. There is no roadmap.	The author does not offer an accurate and succinct overview of the issue. There is no thesis.
Synthesis of publicly available data, research findings, and stakeholder interviews (30%)	The author highlights key points derived from the interviews and research (at least six sources) and integrates these components into an organized and logical discussion. The author highlights salient points of continuity and divergence.	The author highlights key points from the interviews and research (at least six sources), but does not put these two components into conversation.	The author speaks generally about the research and interviews but is unable to derive larger lessons learned from these.	The author does not speak about both the interviews and the research.
Policy intervention (30%) (Leadership Action)	The author offers a logical and well-conceived policy intervention that specifically attends to the core issue and takes into consideration both the views expressed in the interviews and the research. The author's plan is specific and outlines what action ought to be taken, by whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other).	The author offers a general policy intervention with some details. The intervention seems to attend to the core issue, but the author considers only the interviews or the research. The author's plan generally outlines what action ought to be taken, by whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other).	The author offers a vague policy intervention. It is not clear how the intervention takes into consideration the perspectives gleaned from the interviews and research. The author's plan only vaguely mentions what action ought to be taken, by whom, and at what potential cost (either financial or other).	The author does not offer a clear policy intervention.
Reflection (20%)	The author reflects on the data collected over the term (interviews and research) and considers what is learned from this	The author offers a general reflection on the data collected and offers some broad ideas about the lessons learned. The author offers general	The author offers a vague reflection on the data collected. The larger lessons learned are unclear. The author makes vague comments	The author does not reflect on the body of data collected over the term and offers no statement of larger lessons learned.

	collective body. The author reflects on how his/her position has evolved or adapted since the first position paper in thoughtful and meaningful ways. These reflections on lessons learned directly correlate to the policy intervention.	comments regarding how his/her position has evolved over time, but links this only in broad terms to the intervention proposed.	about the ways in which his/her thinking on the topic has evolved over time, but does not link this to the proposed intervention.	
Mechanics (10%)	The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading.	There are occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice.	Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread.	There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Associated Rubric: School Board Simulation

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Content (25%)	The presentation highlights essential points of the issue, consistently balancing informative details, multiple viewpoints, and a clear argument or purpose.	The presentation highlights selective points of the issue, offering informative details and clearly stating speaker's argument.	The presentation offers some points, and at least one of the following: informative details, more than one viewpoint, a central argument.	The purpose or argument of the speech is not clear.
Professionalism (25%)	The presentation convincingly and consistently mimics the professional expectations of an education leader's communications to stakeholders by demonstrating respect for multiple views, connecting with audience, and conveying confidence.	The presentation demonstrates professional expectations of an education leader's communications to stakeholders by communicating respect for multiple views, connecting with audience, and conveying confidence.	The presentation demonstrates the speakers' attempt to do at least one of the following: Communicate respect for multiple views, connect with audience, and convey confidence.	The presentation does not mimic the professional expectations of an education leaders' communications to stakeholders because the speaker communicates disrespect or does not attempt to connect with the audience.
Presentation (25%)	The presentation demonstrates attention to high quality standards visually, technologically, and creatively. Engages audience in discussion of topic through a well-organized, well-prepared product.	The presentation demonstrates attention to high quality standards though a well-organized, well-prepared product.	The presentation is able to engage the audience in very limited ways because of organization or preparation.	The presentation does not engage classmates because of significant organization or preparation problems.
Question & Answer (25%)	The speaker is able to consistently and clearly offer answers that are coherently linked to the overall presentation and purpose/stance of message. Answering questions offers an opportunity to further promote policy/leadership advocacy.	The speaker is able to offer coherent answers that demonstrate deep knowledge of the issue.	The speaker offers answers to questions that inform stakeholders but may complicate overall leadership message.	The speaker is not able to answer questions posed by stakeholders so that overall presentation is undermined or damaged.