

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
PhD in Education, Education Policy Specialization

EDUC 896 (004) – Critical Issues and Trends in Federal Education Policy
3 Credits, Fall 2017
Wednesday/16:30, Robinson Hall B122, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

None.

University Catalog Course Description

Explores selected topics in education across all doctoral specializations. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May be repeated within the term for a maximum 6 credits.

Course Overview

This course examines the development of education policy at the federal level, with a focus on competing theories of the policy process, the political and policy dynamics of education reform, the role of institutions and interest groups, and the use of evidence in policymaking, to provide an in-depth understanding of how and why decisions are made, as well as their implementation and impact. Specifically, this course will:

- Provide historical context on the changing role of the federal government in education and the persistent and dynamic tension between federal and state authority.
- Review major federal laws and reforms, from early childhood through higher education, with a focus on current debates, critical issues, and key challenges.
- Identify the main policy actors in the federal education arena, both inside and outside of government, and examine their respective roles, authority, resources, strategies, and impact.
- Explore how different theories of the policy process can guide and facilitate the study of federal education developments and assess their comparative strengths and limitations.
- Compare the education policy positions of major political parties, track their evolution, and analyze how they have been shaped by evidence and ideology.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered using a lecture and seminar format.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Understand the historical development and changing federal role in education policy, including major federal education laws and reforms.
2. Examine critical issues and trends in federal education policy, as well as the various actors and perspectives involved in education debates and decision-making.
3. Explore policy process theories and apply them to the analysis of federal education events.
4. Study in depth a federal education policy issue by examining its progress through the various stages of the policy process.

Professional Standards

Not Applicable.

Required Texts

Sabatier, P. & Weible, C. (Eds.) (2014). *Theories of the policy process*. (3rd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

(Available Online through Mason Libraries (ML) and for purchase through major retailers.)

Additional required reading assignments are listed under the *Class Schedule*.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor.

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

Assignment	Points	Topic Due Date	Assignment Due Date
Congressional Hearing	10	N/A	Sept. 20
Policy Presentation	15	Sept. 13	Oct. 4
Policy Memo	25	Oct. 4	Oct. 25
Policy Paper	50	Nov. 1	Dec. 6

- **Congressional Hearing:** Watch and/or read the official transcript (available online through Mason Libraries) of a recent congressional hearing on any federal education issue and prepare a brief 2-page summary that describes the topic, the witnesses' testimony and perspectives, the lawmakers' statements, questions and discussion with their colleagues and the witnesses, and your commentary. *(10 points)*
- **Policy Presentation:** Prepare a short, 15-minute class presentation (including visuals, such as a PowerPoint or print handouts) on a major federal education policy development since 2000, such as a law, regulation or executive action. Discuss its history, significance, political context and policy impact, drawing on official records and media coverage, and answer any questions. *(15 points)*
- **Policy Memo:** Assume that you are preparing a policy memo for a federal policymaker (legislative or executive) on a federal education issue of your choice. The memo should include a) the purpose of the memo, b) issue background, context and recent developments, c) description of the policy problem and pending decision, d) discussion of options, including pros/cons and support/opposition, and e) your recommendation, along with a rationale. The memo should be 4-5 pages. *(25 points)*
- **Policy Paper:** Choose a federal education issue and analyze it through the lens of a policy process theory. The paper should a) discuss the federal policy issue and background, b) describe its progress through the stages of the policy process, and c) apply a policy process theory and assess its strengths and weaknesses in understanding the developments around this issue area. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate a student's understanding of both the chosen issue and policy process theory. The paper should be at least 10 pages. *(50 points)*
- **Resources for course assignments:**

U.S. Congress:	https://www.congress.gov/
U.S. Department of Education:	https://www.ed.gov/
U.S. Senate Committee:	https://www.help.senate.gov/
U.S. House Committee:	https://edworkforce.house.gov/
U.S. Government Accountability Office:	https://www.gao.gov/

- **Other Requirements**

Students are expected to arrive on time, actively participate in discussions, and read assignments prior to class, and meet deadlines. Please notify the instructor in advance if you are unable to meet any of these requirements. Phone/tablet use is not allowed during class.

- **Grading**

This course uses the university-wide system for grading graduate courses. See <http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/grading/> Cumulative points corresponding to each grade are as follows:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C	70-79
A	93-96	B	83-86	F	≤ 69
A-	90-92	B-	80-82		

Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>

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 <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- 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 <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.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/students/>

Class Schedule

- Aug. 30: Introduction
 - Student & Instructor Introductions
 - Review of Syllabus
 - Introduction to Federal Education Policy Institutions & Processes
 - Discussion

- Sept. 6: The Evolving Federal Role in Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Center for Education Policy. (1999). *A brief history of the federal role in education: Why it began and why it's still needed*. Available at: goo.gl/e6rZ9S
 - Cross, C. (2005). *The evolving role of the federal government in education*. Available at: goo.gl/aXh73s
 - Harris, D., Ladd, H., Smith, M., & West, M. (2016). *A principled federal role in PreK-12 education*. The Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/btc74y (ML)
 - Kaestle, C. (2016). Federalism and inequality in education: What can history tell us? In I. Kirsch & H. Braun (Eds.), *The dynamics of opportunity in America: Evidence and perspectives*. Available at: goo.gl/ZqyQJs
 - Marshall, J. (2011). *Effects of the federal role and intervention in education*. Heritage Foundation. Available at: goo.gl/v6wWYS (ML)
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Loss, C. (2012). Why the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Act still matters, *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Available at: goo.gl/97mbkD
 - National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). Chapter 4: Federal Funds for Education and Related Activities. In *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015* (51st ed.). Available at: goo.gl/KFDQXx
 - New York State Education Department. (2009). *Federal education policy and the States, 1945-2009: A brief synopsis*. Available at: goo.gl/MsmKxs
 - Zelizer, J. (2015). How education policy went astray, *The Atlantic*. Available at: goo.gl/6wdfBA

- September 13: Theories of the Policy Process
 - **Policy Presentation Topic Due**
 - **Required readings:**
 - Chapters 1 and 10 in *Theories of the policy process*.

- September 20: Elementary and Secondary Education
 - **Congressional Hearing Due**
 - **Required readings:**
 - Chapters 2 and 3 in *Theories of the policy process*.
 - Boyle, A. & Lee, K. (2015). *Title I at 50: A Retrospective*. American Institutes for Research. Available at: goo.gl/uLKTSM
 - Gamson, D., McDermott, K., & Reed, S. (2015). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act at Fifty: Aspirations, effects, and limitations. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 1(3):1-29. Available at: goo.gl/Ko4kEk

- Klein, A. (2015). K-12 law's legacy a blend of idealism, policy tensions. *Education Week*, 34(26): 1, 18-20. Available at: goo.gl/fu6Ecn (ML)
- Reed, D. (2016). ESEA at fifty: Education as state-building. *History of Education Quarterly*, 56 (02): 368-374. (ML)
- **Optional readings:**
- McGuinn, P. (2015). Schooling the state: ESEA and the evolution of the U.S. Department of Education. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 1(3):77-94 Available at: goo.gl/Eu2VR6 (ML)
- Skinner, R. (2013). *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act: A primer*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/s253jq (ML)

- September 27: Elementary and Secondary Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Chapters 2 and 3 in *Theories of the policy process*.
 - Education Trust. (2016). *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What's in it? What does it mean for equity?* Available at: goo.gl/4oPvZs
 - McCluskey, N. (2017). K-12 education. In *Cato handbook for policymakers* (8th ed.). Cato Institute. Available at: goo.gl/EPi22P
 - National Conference of State Legislatures. (2016). *Summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Available at: goo.gl/vXqJwJ
 - Skinner, R. & Kuenzi, J. (2015). *Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Highlights of the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/ae6cQ (ML)
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Brown, C., Boser, U., Sargrad, S., & Marchitello, M. (2016). *Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act: Toward a coherent, aligned assessment system*. Center for American Progress. Available at: goo.gl/oPoRvE
 - Cohen, R. (2016). New education law sparks civil rights concerns, *The American Prospect*. Available at: goo.gl/kkQ78V
 - Education Commission of the States. (2016). *ESSA: Quick guides on top issues*. Available at: goo.gl/vY9ue4
 - Hess, F., & English, E. (2015). The nation's new education law is a major conservative triumph, *National Review*. Available at: goo.gl/4Jp23m
 - Wong, A. (2015). The bloated rhetoric of No Child Left Behind's demise, *The Atlantic*. Available at: goo.gl/3sJgpE

- October 4: Policy Presentations
 - **Policy Memo Topic Due**

- October 11: Special Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Chapters 4 and 5 in *Theories of the policy process*.
 - Alvarez, B. (2016). Promising changes for special education under ESSA, *NEA Today*. Available at: goo.gl/bmXghJ

- Dragoo, K. (2017). *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B: Key statutory and regulatory Provisions*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/atGAHC (ML)
 - Dray, B. (2008). History of special education. In E. Provenzo & J.P. Renaud (Eds.), *Encyclopedia for Social and Cultural Foundations of Education: 744-747*. Available at: goo.gl/Ahbk39
 - U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA*. Available at: goo.gl/E7kfya
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Dragoo, K. (2016). *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Funding: A primer*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/WiycEx
 - U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *38th annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2016*. Available at: goo.gl/mMMncD
 - Ujifusa, A. (2017). Full funding for special education? Lawmakers try for fifth straight Congress, *Education Week*. Available at: goo.gl/SYuF2Y
- October 18: Early Childhood Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Chapters 6 and 7 in *Theories of the policy process*.
 - Bassok, D., Magnuson, K., & Weiland, C. (2016). Building a cohesive, high-quality early childhood system. In M. Hansen & J. Valant (Eds.), *Memos to the President on the Future of U.S. Education Policy*. Available at: goo.gl/LQgVWb (ML)
 - Lynch, M. & McCallion, G. (2016). *Early childhood care and education programs: Background and funding*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/7iHapp (ML)
 - Stevens, K. (2017). *Federal early childhood care and education programs: Advancing opportunity through early learning*. American Enterprise Institute. Available at: goo.gl/jUwAo8
 - Chapters 6 and 9: Phillips, D., Lipsey, M., Dodge, K, Haskins, R., Bassok, D., Burchinal, M., & Weiland, C. (2017). *Puzzling it out: The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. The Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/S1mv3r (ML)
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Dragoo, K. (2016). *Preschool Development Grants (FY2014-FY2016) and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants (FY2011-FY2013)*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/fpZ6JT
 - Muhlhausen, D. (2014). Why are we expanding the federal role in early-childhood education? *The Atlantic*. Available at: goo.gl/hPaJrm
 - U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Expanding opportunities to support our youngest learners*. Available at: goo.gl/uGuaTk
 - U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2017). *Early learning and child care: Agencies have helped address fragmentation and overlap through improved coordination*. Available at: goo.gl/GKZJLi (ML)

- U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). *Joint interdepartmental review of all early learning programs for children less than 6 years of age*. Available at: goo.gl/FxXa1j
- October 25: Teacher Preparation
 - **Policy Memo Due**
 - **Required readings:**
 - Chapters 8 and 9 in *Theories of the policy process*.
 - Adelman, C. (2017). The teacher evaluation revamp, in hindsight, *Education Next*, 17(2): 60-68. Available at: goo.gl/EZMJLS (ML)
 - Grossman, P., & Loeb, S. (2016). Improving the teacher workforce. In M. Hansen & J. Valant (Eds.), *Memos to the President on the Future of U.S. Education Policy*. Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/pLCJKr
 - Kuenzi, J. (2014). *Elementary and secondary school teachers: Policy context, federal programs, and ESEA reauthorization issues*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/rNP5KQ (ML)
 - Pianta, R. (2017). Shaping Teacher Preparation for the Future, *Huffington Post*. Available at: goo.gl/kH4xP5
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Connally, K. (2016). *How Will ESSA influence states' teacher quality efforts?* New America Foundation. Available at: goo.gl/YLY8e8
 - Duncan, A. (2016). *An open letter to America's college presidents and education school deans*. The Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/qFxvoX
 - Heller, D. (2014). Easy A's' gets an F, *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Available at: goo.gl/Q3bGkU (ML)
 - Kreighbaum, A. (2016). New accountability for teacher prep, *Inside Higher Ed*. Available at: goo.gl/Tf3sKg
 - Strauss, V. (2016). The big problems with the Obama administration's new teacher-education regulations, *Washington Post*. Available at: goo.gl/FgTv49
- November 1: Higher Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Burke, L. (2014). *Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act - toward policies that increase access and lower costs*. The Heritage Foundation. Available at: goo.gl/U7MX1W
 - Duncan, A. (2015). *Toward a New Focus on Outcomes in Higher Education*. U.S. Department of Education. Available at: goo.gl/WqHGnB
 - Hegji, A. (2017). *The Higher Education Act (HEA): A primer*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/BRwnqz
 - Scott-Clayton, J. (2015) The role of financial aid in promoting college access and success: Research evidence and proposals for reform, *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 45(3). Available at: goo.gl/btiBkW
 - Smith, M. S., & Parmley, K. (2016). *Improving and equalizing high school and college graduation rates for all students*. In M. Hansen & J. Valant (Eds.), *Memos to the President on the Future of U.S. Education Policy*. Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/BPxTqA (ML)

- **Optional readings:**
 - Columbus, R. (2016). A crisis of value, *US News & World Report*. Available at: goo.gl/E2n93j
 - Cowley, S., & Cohen, P. (2017). U.S. halts new rules aimed at abuses by for-profit colleges, *New York Times*. Available at: goo.gl/n8XRSw
 - Hefling, K. (2016). GI Bill funds still flow to troubled for-profit colleges, *Politico*. Available at: goo.gl/PwSNry
 - Lederman, D., & Fain, P. (2017). The higher education president, *Inside Higher Ed*. Available at: goo.gl/xM2eKT
 - Mulhere, K. (2017). Congress just made huge changes to the GI Bill: Here's what matters most for veterans, *Money*. Available at: goo.gl/tVF1vT
 - Protopsaltis, S., & Parrott, S. (2017). Pell Grants - a key tool for expanding college access and economic opportunity - need strengthening, not cuts. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Available at: goo.gl/h9Y1jW
 - The Institute for College Access and Success. (2016). *National Policy Agenda to Reduce the Burden of Student Debt*. Available at: goo.gl/NDquFQ
 - Whitman, D. (2017). The closing of the Republican mind on for-profit colleges, *The Atlantic*. Available at: goo.gl/4a1sHA
 - **Policy Paper Topic/Theory Due**
- November 8: Higher Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Camera, R. (2016). Democrats look to increase federal role in college accreditation, *US News & World Report*. Available at: goo.gl/p58HV8
 - Flores, A. (2015). *Hooked on accreditation: A historical perspective*. Center for American Progress. <https://goo.gl/M8qN74>
 - Hall, J., & Amselem, M. (2017). *Time to reform higher education financing and accreditation*. Heritage Foundation. Available at: goo.gl/ei88Ha
 - Kreighbaum, A. (2017). What's next on Title IX, *Inside Higher Ed*. Available at: goo.gl/Ki1EDK
 - Yee, V. (2017). Affirmative action policies evolve, achieving their own diversity, *New York Times*. Available at: goo.gl/hpqEVS
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Gonzalez, H., & Feder, J. (2016). *Sexual violence at institutions of higher education*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/GkNzoB (ML)
 - Hegji, K. (2017). *An overview of accreditation of higher education in the United States*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/vVKY9m (ML)
 - Riley, R., & Merisotis, J. (2016). Crafting a vision for accreditation reform, *Roll Call*. Available at: goo.gl/KzPBZE
- November 15: Career and Technical Education
 - **Required readings:**
 - Brand, B., Valent, A., and Browning, A. (2013). *How career and technical education can help students be college and career ready: A primer*. American Institutes for Research. Available at: goo.gl/KKXjuE

- Dortch, C. (2014). *Career and technical education (CTE): A primer*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/xJaAEs (ML)
 - Kantrov, I. (2014). *Opportunities and challenges in secondary career and technical education*. Education Development Center, Inc. Available at: goo.gl/rfnmQL
 - Schwartz, R. (2016). Career and technical education. In M. Hansen & J. Valant (Eds.), *Memos to the President on the Future of U.S. Education Policy*. Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/9dL1GJ (ML)
 - Smarick, A. (2017). *Career and technical education and federal policy*. American Enterprise Institute. Available at: goo.gl/AX68aV
 - **Optional readings:**
 - Carnevale, A., Jayasundera, T., and Hanson, A. (2012). *Career and technical education: Five ways that pay on the way to the B.A.* Available at: goo.gl/nji1MS
 - Granovskiy, B. (2017). *Reauthorization of the Perkins Act in the 115th Congress: Comparison of Current Law and H.R. 2353*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/CUJgo3 (ML)
- November 29: Research & Privacy
 - **Required readings:**
 - Aspen Institute. (2013). *Leveraging learning: The evolving role of federal policy in education research*. Available at: goo.gl/aWyXrf
 - Feder, J. (2013). *The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A Legal overview*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/fpiA5X (ML)
 - Goldhaber, D., & Rogstad Guidera, A. (2016). *Powering education improvement and innovation while protecting student privacy*. In M. Hansen & J. Valant (Eds.), *Memos to the President on the Future of U.S. Education Policy*. Brookings Institution. Available at: goo.gl/UGTGxG
 - Harris, D. N. (2016). *Improving the federal role in education research*. In M. Hansen & J. Valant (Eds.), *Memos to the President on the Future of U.S. Education Policy*. Available at: goo.gl/Sbxnw6
 - Kuenzi, J., & Stoll, A. (2014). *The Education Sciences Reform Act*. Congressional Research Service. Available at: goo.gl/Ad8ZKM (ML)
- December 6: Looking to the Future
 - **Policy Paper Due**

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.