

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Graduate School of Education, PhD Program

EDUC 874-001: The Achievement Gap
3 Credits, Fall 2018
Wednesday 16:30-19:10, Robinson Hall B204, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

Enrollment limited to students in a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

University Catalog Course Description

Focuses on achievement gap in schools. Students research and analyze gaps in student achievement related to race and ethnicity, limited English proficiency, family background, gender, poverty, and ableism, and practices designed to close the gap. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

Course Overview

This course will examine the persistent academic achievement gap among different groups of students, with a particular focus on the outcomes of students from different racial and economic backgrounds in K-12 education. In particular, students will explore, through different disciplinary perspectives and theoretical frameworks, the origins and historical context of the gap; its scope and trends, both current and historical; the various in-school and out-of-school factors identified as its causes; as well as strategies, policies, and practices for addressing inequality in educational opportunities and outcomes, improving academic achievement for historically disadvantaged student groups, and thus closing the gap.

Course Delivery Method

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

Learning Outcomes/Objectives

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

1. Develop an understanding of the historical origins, development, context and trends of the achievement gap, including landmark events, reports and legislation.
2. Describe and analyze the scope of the achievement gap, including its causes and implications, both for individuals and for society.
3. Examine in-depth an existing achievement gap, including its scope and causes, and recommend an evidence-based strategy for addressing it.
4. Discuss and critique different perspectives and approaches for explaining and addressing the achievement gap.
5. Think critically and communicate effectively about the achievement gap.

Required Texts

Required reading assignments are listed under the *Class Schedule*. Most readings are accessible via provided hyperlinks, while the remaining are posted in Blackboard.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time and in the manner outlined by the instructor. *All assignments are due by 4:30 p.m. on the date indicated below and must be uploaded on Blackboard.* Format for written assignments: Times New Roman size 12 font, 1" page margins and 1.5 line spacing. Citations/references should adhere to the APA style guide manual.

- **Class Participation:** Students are expected to actively participate in discussions. (10 points)
- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

Assignment	Points	Due Date
Documentary Review	20	Sept. 26
Paper Proposal	20	Oct. 24
Paper Presentation	10	Nov. 28 or Dec. 5
Final Paper	40	Dec. 5

- **Documentary Review (Sept. 26):** Watch the following two documentaries (access via hyperlinks) and prepare a 4-page review that a) provides a brief summary of each, b) describes the main issues examined, questions raised and perspectives represented, and c) discusses your reaction, thoughts and commentary. (20 points)
 - [Waiting for Superman](#) or [Dropout Nation](#) and
 - [Separate and Unequal](#)

- **Paper Proposal (Oct. 24):** Prepare a 4-page proposal for your final paper that a) describes an existing achievement gap at any level of education and any geographic unit level within the US (school/university, district, state, national), b) discusses its historical trends and current scope, c) explains its significance, impact, potential causes, and related policy debate, d) identifies the relevant research literature you intend to review, and e) lists key research and policy questions that will guide your analysis. *(20 points)*

- **Paper Presentation (Nov. 28 or Dec. 5):** Present your achievement gap study and analysis to the class and describe what you researched and learned in preparing your final paper. The purpose is to share the knowledge and understanding you gained about your chosen topic during the semester. The presentation should be no longer than 10 minutes followed by 5 minutes of Q&A and class discussion. Use of presentation software, such as PowerPoint, and handouts are required. Presentations should be emailed to the instructor by 5 p.m. the day prior to your presentation. Students will be assigned to either the Nov. 28 or Dec. 5 presentation days by the instructor. *(10 points)*

- **Final Paper (Dec. 5):** Building on your proposal, write a 15-page paper on an existing achievement gap at any level of education and any geographic unit level within the US (school/university, district, state, national). The paper should include a) a clear description of the gap, b) data on historical trends and current scope, c) a discussion of its significance and impact, d) a literature review of its causes and strategies for addressing the gap, e) a summary of the policy debate surrounding the gap, and f) and an evidence-based analysis and recommendation for closing the gap. *(40 points)*

- **Other Requirements**

Students are expected to arrive on time, actively participate in discussions, 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 is graded on the Graduate Regular scale.

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		

CEHD – Professional Dispositions

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

CEHD – 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 <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 <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 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://coursessupport.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/> .

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

CLASS SCHEDULE

Aug. 29: Introduction

No readings. Introductions and syllabus review.

Sept. 5: Historical Perspective and Context

Hill, H. (2015). "[50 years ago, one report introduced Americans to the black-white achievement gap. Here's what we've learned since.](#)" *Chalkbeat* (July 13).

Love, B.J. (2004). "[Brown plus 50 counter-storytelling: A Critical Race Theory analysis of the 'majoritarian achievement gap' story.](#)" *Equity & Excellence in Education*, Vol. 37(3), pp. 227-246.

McKinsey & Company Social Sector Office. (2009). [The economic impact of the achievement gap in America's schools: Summary of findings](#). Washington, DC: Author.

Mehta, J. (2015). "[Escaping the shadow: A Nation at Risk and its far-reaching influence.](#)" *American Educator*. Summer.

Noltemeyer, A.L., Mujic, J., & McLoughlin, C.S. (2012). [The history of inequality in education](#). In A.L. Noltemeyer & C.S. McLoughlin (Eds.), *Disproportionality in Education and Special Education* (pp. 3-16). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd.

Sugimoto, A.T., & Carter, K. (2015). "The story of schools, schooling, and students from the 1960s to the present." In K. Bosworth (Ed.), *Prevention science in school settings: Complex relationships and processes* (pp. 1-32). New York, NY: Springer.

Sept. 12: Examining the Achievement Gap #1

Barton, P. E., & Coley, R. J. (2010). [The Black and White achievement gap: When progress stopped](#). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Bohrnstedt, G., Kitmitto, S., Ogut, B., Sherman, D., and Chan, D. (2015). [School composition and the Black-White achievement gap](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Miller, C.C., & Quealy, K. (2018). "[Where boys outperform girls in math: Rich, white and suburban districts.](#)" *New York Times* (June 13).

Motoko, R., Cox, A., & Bloch, M. (2016). "[Money, race and success: How your school district compares.](#)" *New York Times* (April 29).

Musu-Gillette, L., de Brey, C., McFarland, J., Hussar, W., Sonnenberg, W., and Wilkinson-Flicker, S. (2017). [Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2017](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Hansen, M., Levesque, E.M., Quintero, D., & Valant, J. (2018). [*Have we made progress on achievement gaps? Looking at evidence from the new NAEP results.*](#) Washington, DC: Brookings.

Sept. 19: Examining the Achievement Gap #2

Cahalan, M., Perna, L. W., Yamashita, M., Wright, J. & Santillan, S. (2018). [*2018 Indicators of higher education equity in the United States: Historical trend report.*](#) Washington, DC: The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), and Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy of the University of Pennsylvania (PennAHEAD).

Carnoy, M., & Garcia, E. (2017). [*Five key trends in U.S. student performance.*](#) Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

DePeoli, J.L., Balfanz, R., Atwell, M.N., & Bridgeland, J. (2018). [*Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in raising high school graduation rates.*](#) Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University.

National Education Association. (2016). [*Understanding the gaps: Who are we leaving behind – and how far.*](#) Washington, DC: Author.

Reardon, S.F. (2011). [*The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations.*](#) In R. Murnane & G. Duncan (Eds.), *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

Reardon, S.F., & Portilla, X.A. (2016). [*Recent trends in income, racial, and ethnic school readiness gaps at kindergarten entry.*](#) *AERA Open*, Vol. (2)3, pp. 1–18.

Sept. 26: Out-of-School Factors #1

Documentary Review Due

Barton, P.E., & Coley, R.J. (2009). [*Parsing the achievement gap II.*](#) Washington, DC: Educational Testing Service. [Only pages 18-31]

Berliner, D.C. (2009). [*Poverty and potential: Out-of-school factors and school success.*](#) Boulder, CO and Tempe, AZ: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit.

Hanson, M.J.; Miller, A.D., Diamond, K., Odom, S., Lieber, J., Butera, G., Horn, E., Palmer, S., & Fleming, K. (2011). "Neighborhood community risk influences on preschool children's development and school readiness." *Infants & Young Children*, Vol. 24(1), pp. 87–100.

Milner, H.R. (2013). "Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a Critical Race Theory lens." *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 37(1), pp. 1-53 [Only pages 1-26]

Reeves, R.V., & Howard, K. (2016). [*The parenting gap*](#). Washington, DC: Brookings.

Schneider, D., Hastings, O.P., & LaBriola, J. (2018). "Income inequality and class divides in parental investments." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 83(3), pp. 475–507.

Oct. 3: Out-of-School Factors #2

Anderson, M. (2016). "[How the stress of racism affects learning](#)." *The Atlantic* (Oct. 11).

Crowder, K., & South, S.J. (2003). "[Neighborhood distress and school dropout: the variable significance of community context](#)." *Social Science Research*, Vol. 32(4), pp. 659–698.

Egalite, A.J. (2016). "[How family background influences student achievement](#)." *Education Next*, Vol. 1(2), pp. 70-78.

Lareau, A. (2002). "Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in Black families and White families." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 67(5), pp. 747-776.

Morsy, L., & Rothstein, R. (2015). [Parents' non-standard work schedules make adequate childrearing difficult](#). Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Van Voorhis, F.L., Maier, M.F., Epstein, J.L., & Lloyd, C.M. (2013). [The impact of family involvement on the education of children ages 3 to 8](#). New York: MDRC.

Oct. 10: In-School Factors #1

Barton, P.E., & Coley, R.J. (2009). [Parsing the achievement gap II](#). Washington, DC: Educational Testing Service. [Only pages 9-17]

Goldhaber, D. (2016). "[In schools, teacher quality matters most](#)." *Education Next*, Vol. 16(2), pp. 56-62.

Max, J., & Glazerman, S. (2014). [Do disadvantaged students get less effective teaching? Key findings from recent Institute of Education Sciences studies](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

Milner, H.R. (2013). "Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a Critical Race Theory lens." *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 37(1), pp. 1-53 [Only pages 26-37]

Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L.V. (2004). "[How large are teacher effects?](#)" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 26(3), pp. 237–57.

Valentino, R. (2018). "Will public pre-K really close achievement gaps? Gaps in prekindergarten quality between students and across states." *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 55(1), pp. 79–116.

Will, M. (2017). "Teachers' low expectations for students of color found to affect students' success." *Education Week* (May 18).

Oct. 17: In-School Factors #2

Baker, B.D., Farrie, D., & Sciarra, D.G. (2016). [*Mind the gap: 20 Years of progress and retrenchment in school funding and achievement gaps*](#). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R.A., & Benbenishty, R. (2016). "[A research synthesis of the associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement](#)." *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 87(2), pp. 425-469.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R.J., & Noguera, P.A. (2010). "[The achievement gap and the discipline gap two sides of the same coin?](#)" *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 39(1), pp. 59-68.

Reardon, S.F. (2016). "School segregation and racial academic achievement gaps." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 2(5), pp. 34-57.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2018). [*Public education funding inequity in an era of increasing concentration of poverty and resegregation*](#). Washington, DC: Author.

Vaught, S.E., & Castagno, A.E. (2008) "[I don't think I'm a racist: Critical Race Theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism](#)." *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. (11)2, pp. 95-113.

Oct. 24: Strategies for Closing the Gap #1

Paper Proposal Due

Chetty, R., Hendren, N., & Katz, L.F. (2015). [*The Effects of exposure to better neighborhoods on children: New evidence from the Moving to Opportunity experiment*](#) (NBER Working Paper No. 21156). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Friedman-Krauss, A., Barnett, W.S., and Nores, M. (2016). [*How much can high-quality universal Pre-K reduce achievement gaps?*](#) Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Heckman, J. J. (2011). "[The Economics of Inequality: The value of early childhood education](#)." *American Educator*, Vol. 35(1), pp. 31-47.

Milner, H.R. (2013). "Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a Critical Race Theory lens." *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 37(1), pp. 1-53 **[Only pages 37-45]**

Kahlenberg, R.D. (2016). [*Stories of School Integration*](#). New York: Century Foundation.

Zins, J.E., Bloodworth, M.R., Weissberg, R.P., & Walberg, H.J. (2007). "The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success." *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, Vol. 17(2), pp. 191-210.

Oct. 31: Strategies for Closing the Gap #2

Cohodes, S. (2018). "[Charter schools and the achievement gap.](#)" *The Future of Children*, Vol. 28(1), pp. 1-16.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). "[Closing the achievement gap: A systemic view.](#)" In J.V. Clark (Ed.), *Closing the achievement gap from an international perspective*. New York: Springer.

Fryer, R.G. (2013). [Injecting successful charter school strategies into traditional public schools: A field experiment in Houston](#) (NBER Working Paper No. 17494). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Golan, J.W. (2016). "*The paradox of success at a no-excuses school.*" *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 88(2), pp. 103–119.

Hanover Research. (2014). [Improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap.](#) Washington, DC: Author.

Leithwood, K. (2010). "[Characteristics of school districts that are exceptionally effective in closing the achievement gap.](#)" *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, Vol. 9(3), pp. 245-291.

West, M. (2016). "[Schools of choice.](#)" *Education Next*, Vol. 16(2), pp. 46-54.

Nov. 7: Strategies for Closing the Gap #3

Aldeman, C. (2017). "[The teacher evaluation revamp, in hindsight.](#)" *Education Next*, Vol. 17(2), pp. 60-68.

Benner, M., Roth, E., Johnson, S., & and Bahn, K. (2018). [How to give teachers a \\$10,000 raise.](#) Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). [Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color.](#) Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Kraft, M.A., & Gilmour, A.F. (2017). "[Revisiting the Widget Effect: Teacher evaluation reforms and the distribution of teacher effectiveness.](#)" *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 46 (5), pp. 234–249.

Partelow, L., Spong, A., Brown, C., & Johnson, S. (2017). [America needs more teachers of color and a more selective teaching profession.](#) Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Putman, H., Hansen, M., Walsh, K., & Quintero, D. (2016). [High hopes and harsh realities: The real challenges to building a diverse workforce.](#) Washington, DC: Brookings.

Will, M. (2017). "Study: Black students more likely to graduate if they have one black teacher." *Education Week* (April 6).

Nov. 14: Looking Forward

Coley, R.J., & Baker, B. (2013). [*Poverty and education: Finding the way forward*](#). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. [Only pages 30-46]

Garland, S. (2016). "[The end of 'no excuses' education reform?](#)" *Hechinger Report* (March 27).

Hanushek, E. (2016). "[What matters for student achievement](#)." *Education Next*, Vol. 16(2), pp. 18-26.

Howard, T.C., & Navarro, O. (2016). "Critical Race Theory 20 years later: Where do we go from here?" *Urban Education*, Vol. 51(3), pp. 253-273.

Kane, T.J. (2016). "[Connecting to practice](#)." *Education Next*, Vol. 16(2), pp. 80-87.

McGuinn, P. (2016). "[From No Child Left behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act: Federalism and the education legacy of the Obama Administration](#)." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, Vol. 46(3), pp. 392–415.

Nov. 28: Research Paper Presentations #1

No readings.

Dec. 5: Research Paper Presentations #2

Final Paper Due

No readings.

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