

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Education Policy Graduate Certificate

EDPO 603 001- Conflict and Consensus: Education, Interest groups and Advocacy

CEHD

03 credits/ Spring 2020

Monday, 7:20-10:00PM, Van Metre Hall 308, Arlington

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

University Catalog Course Description

Explores points of conflict and consensus across the education landscape. Examines the role of interest groups and advocacy in education reform and policy.

Course Overview

The nation's public schools exist within and are shaped by a complex nexus of political forces. In various ways, administrators, teachers, parents, and even students behave as political actors at the local, state, and federal levels in concert with elected officials. Public schools socialize the nation's youth, affirming and imparting lessons about citizenship and power. In today's political milieu, education debates surrounding school choice, curricula, teachers, standards, and equity assume center stage.

The course begins with an overview of the politics of schooling and education reform: in what ways are the schools political; how and where are various types of power exercised? Following this, the course explores the contest for control and students will explore the role of parents, teacher unions and associations, government, and private interests in education reform initiatives and debates. Next, the students will explore a range of contemporary issues including curricular standardization, charters and choice, and special education, in addition to several others. Within each set of readings, students will explore points of conflict and consensus and examine the role of interest groups and advocacy. Students will explore the intricacies of current debates and examine the political context in which the American public education system operates.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered through a mixture of lecture, seminar, and online formats.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

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

1. Gain an understanding of the political contexts of schooling.
2. Interrogate and examine points of conflict and consensus in education policy.
3. Gain an understanding of the role of interest groups and advocacy in education.
4. Hone critical thinking skills through class discussions and writing assignments.

Professional Standards

Not Applicable.

Required Texts

- Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education, 42*(3).
- Cibulka, J. (2001). The changing role of interest groups in education: Nationalization and the new politics of education productivity. *Educational Policy, 15*.
- Cowen, J. Strunk, K. (2014). How do teachers' unions influence education policy? *The Education Policy Center, Michigan State University*.
- Epstein, N. (Ed.). (2004). *Who's in charge here?: The tangled web of school governance and policy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute.
[available through GMU libraries on JStor.]
- Greene, J.P. (2005). *Education myths: What special interest groups want you to believe about schools – and why it isn't so*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Hartney, M., Flavin, P. (2011). From the Schoolhouse to the Statehouse: Teacher union political activism and U.S. state education reform policy. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly, 11*(3), 251–268.
- Opfer, D., Young, T.V., Fusarelli, L.D. (2008). Politics of interest: Interest groups and advocacy coalitions in American education. In *Handbook of education politics and policy*. Routledge.
- Ravitch, D. (2013). *Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Scott, J. Lubienski, C., DeBray-Pelot, E. (2009). The politics of advocacy in education. *Educational Policy, 23*.
- Mediratta, K. (2007). Outside in: Communities in action for education reform. *Theory Into Practice, 46* (3), 194-204.
- Nagro, S. (2017). Activating policy and advocacy skills: A strategy for tomorrow's special education leaders. *Journal of Special Education*.

Yell, M. L., Bateman, D. F. (2018). Free appropriate public education and Endrew F. v. Douglas county school system (2017): Implications for personnel preparation. *Teacher Education and Special Education*. *Teacher Education and Special Education*.

The Constitution of the United States, available on line (<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>)

The Constitution of Virginia, available on line (<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution/>)

United States Department of Education, available on line (<http://www.ed.gov>)

United States Supreme Court, available on line (<http://www.supremecourtus.gov>)

Virginia State Department of Education, available on line (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us>)

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time via the course Blackboard page.

- **Assignments**

1. **Individual/Partner Project: Making Sense of the Noise** (30pts)

In this presentation, students will profile various interest and advocacy groups and their stances on a particular topic. The goal of the presentation will be to highlight and explain points of conflict and consensus across the groups. Presentations will coincide with the course's thematic units. Groups and dates will be determined during the first sessions of the semester.

2. **Policy White Paper** (30pts)

In this white paper (8-10pp), students will identify an educational reform, policy, or debate and explore the various interest and advocacy groups who have a stake in the matter. Students will address their white paper to a local, state, or federal school leader of their choice. After defining the problem and exploring the competing perspectives, the author will use at least 8 peer-reviewed articles and books to discuss the core issue and the complexities that surround it. The author will close by offering at least 3 recommendations of how the school leader ought to attend to the issue and also discuss the potential response by various interest and advocacy groups. An evaluation rubric for this assignment is included in this syllabus.

3. **Individual Presentation** (20pts)

During the final class of the semester, students will deliver a 15-minute presentation based on the white paper.

4. **Event Attendance and Reflective Memo** (20pts)

Once over the course of the semester, students will attend an event sponsored by a local interest or advocacy group. Following the event, students will submit a 3-5page reflective memo considering the event and its relation to course discussions.

- **Other Requirements**

1. Students are expected to attend all classes. Please provide advance notice, when possible, if you must miss a class. On these occasions, please get notes and handouts from a colleague.
2. Students are expected to read all assignments prior to class and bring copies (either hard or electronic copy) to class.
3. Students are expected to actively participate in discussions and activities and to treat one another with respect, both in class and on-line.
4. All assignments must be submitted on time. Unless prior arrangements are made, late work will be penalized by 2pt/day.

- **Grading**

All papers must be typed and formatted according to the *APA Manual of Style, 6th Ed.*

Grading Scale:

A = 96-100	B = 80-88
A- = 92-95	C = 75-79
B+ = 89-91	F = 74 and below

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 <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> <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 <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 <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of

Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.

Class Schedule

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

Class Session	Topic	Assignment
January 27, 2020	Course Introduction	History of American Education Readings on Canvas
February 3, 2020	What’s up for Grabs?: The Politics of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, ch.1 • Greene, Introduction • Epstein, Ch. 1
February10, 2020	What are Interest and Advocacy Groups, and How Do They Exert Influence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cibulka, “The changing role of interest groups in education” • Scott, et.al., “The politics of advocacy in education” • Opfer et.al., “Politics of interest: Interest groups and advocacy coalitions in American education”
Wrestling for Control		
February 17, 2020	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epstein, Ch. 9 • Auerbach, “From moral supporters to struggling advocates” • Mediratta, “Outside in”
February 24, 2020	Teachers Unions & Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartney & Flavin, “From the schoolhouse to the statehouse” • Cowen & Strunk, “How do Teachers’ Unions Influence Education Policy?” • AFT & NEA websites, tbd.
March 2, 2020	Levels of Government/Private Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epstein, Ch. 8. • Ravitch Ch. 2-4, 32.
March 9, 2020	SPRING BREAK	
March 16, 2020	Grassroots in VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speakers
Key Issues		

March 23, 2020	Curricular Standardization and Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epstein, Ch. 6 • Greene, Ch. 11 • Ravitch, Ch. 28
March 30, 2020	Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yell, “Free appropriate public education” • Nagro, “Activating Policy and Advocacy Skills”
April 6, 2020	Expansion of Education: The Case of Pre-K and Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greene, Ch. 10 • Ravitch, Ch. 10, 22-23
April 13, 2020	Achievement and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greene, Ch. 3, 7, 10, 12. • Ravitch, Ch. 5-6.
April 20, 2020	School Closures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, 16, 26 • Ewing, tbd
April 27, 2020	Teacher Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epstein, 7. • Greene, 5-6. • Ravitch, 12-14, 29.
May 4, 2020	Student Presentations	Final

Rubric: White Paper Assignment

	Meets Standards for Full Credit
Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author identifies policy audience; • Author provides relevant background; • Author provides an overview of the white paper and its primary contribution.
Articulation of Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author clearly articulates and describes a current education policy or reform issue; • Authors examines the nature of the problem, exploring who is involved and where; • Author discusses the significance of the problem.
Discussion of the Various Interest and Advocacy Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author introduces and explores some of the competing interest and advocacy groups who have a stake in the matter; • Author explores points of consensus and conflict across the groups.
Perspectives on the Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using at least 8 peer-reviewed articles and books, the author explores various perspectives on the problem and various reform initiatives; • Author crafts a thesis-driven argument about the role of various groups in the core educational problem and the pathway to reform.

Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Author provides at least 3 clear recommendations to current policymakers;• Author considers competing perspectives of “improvement”.
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing is clear, logical, and error free;• Writing adheres to APA style guidelines;• White paper is 8-10pp long;• Author cites and draws from at least 8 peer-reviewed secondary books and articles.