

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
ARLINGTON CAMPUS
Schar School of Policy and Government, and
College of Education and Human Development
POGO-750-021— P-12 Policy Challenges
EDPO-601 --- P-12 Policy Challenges

FALL 2020

Anne Holton

**POVERTY AND OTHER CHALLENGES FACING
PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS
SYLLABUS DRAFT 7.31.2020**

Credit Hours: 3
CRN
Date/Time: Tuesday 7:20-10 p.m.
Classroom: Arlington Campus, Van Metre Hall Rm. 111
Website: Blackboard
Instructor: Anne Holton
Office: Arlington Campus, Founders Hall 649
e-mail: aholton2@gmu.edu
Office Hours: available virtually Tuesdays 4- 6 p.m.
or in-person/virtually by appointment

University Catalog Course Description

Explores current public education policymaking from real-world perspective of federal, state and local executive and legislative branch leaders. Equips students with practical skills in understanding and shaping education policy.

Course Overview

This course is one of the offerings in the education policy emphasis area in the MPP program at Schar.

Policymakers today struggle with major challenges in seeking to ensure all young people have a pathway to success as adults. Public school funding is typically a third of every state and local budget, but in many communities, revenues have shrunk while expectations and needs have increased. Education reform efforts have had intended and unintended consequences. Policymaking and practice are often not well grounded in research. Schools in high poverty communities continue to struggle despite years of scrutiny. Schools face teacher shortages especially in high-demand fields and in the neediest communities. Colleges and businesses express frustration that graduates are not prepared for life after high school.

This course will supply students background to explore crucial choices in public education policy from the perspective of policymakers facing these challenges today. The course will include concrete examples of education policy making from the perspective of legislators; federal, state and local executives; and their staffs. It will include content, assignments and exercises designed to simulate real world policymaking and to prepare students to work in education in federal, state and/or local government and/or in related private and non-profit sector employment. The course will include one or more guest presentation(s) from current education policymakers. The course topics will include the following:

- 1) the science on what works in helping children succeed in school;
- 2) the roles of the various levels and branches of government in shaping education policy;
- 3) school finance; and
- 4) current policy challenges in P-12 education including poverty, teacher shortages, standards/testing/accountability, discipline, school segregation, the role of schools in preparing students for the 21st economy, and the role of technology in public education.

Learning Outcomes

Students will develop an understanding of how public education policy is made in contemporary federal, state and local settings.

Students will gain a basic fluency in P-12 public education policy challenges confronting policymakers today.

Students will learn the rudiments of how to use research in effecting public education policy.

Students will develop practical skills for work in public education policy including the ability to research a problem, develop a specific policy proposal to address it, and advocate for it effectively in writing and orally.

Students will develop an appreciation of the role of, and develop skills to facilitate, collaboration across sectors in improving public education outcomes.

Class Website

This class uses Blackboard in order to enhance the online learning experience of students. The blackboard website contains the class syllabus and the class assignments. Note that the syllabus is subject to revision. The class assignments will be kept current on Blackboard -- if the Blackboard listings differ from the syllabus, follow the Blackboard listing.

Course Prerequisite

Enrollment is limited to Graduate or Non-Degree level students.

Students in a Non-Degree Undergraduate degree may not enroll.
Open to master's and doctoral students in CEHD and Schar and to Education Policy Certificate students at CEHD, with additional requirements for doctoral students.

Course Type/Delivery Method

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

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Tough, Paul (2016). *Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why* (2016). New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Noguera, Pedro and Jill Pierce and Roey Ahram, Editors (2016). *Race, Equity, and Education: Sixty Years from Brown*. New York: Springer.

These texts are available in the campus bookstore and in bookstores everywhere as well as in the GMU library. *Helping Children Succeed* is also available free online at <http://www.paultough.com/helping/>. The Noguera book is also available to rent electronically on Kindle for a reduced price. If you rent it, be sure to rent it for the entire semester.

Other Readings and Materials Will be Available on the Course Blackboard Page and Will Be Drawn Primarily From the Following:

Badheka, Gijubhai, *Divasvapna: An Educator's Reverie*. In English, National Book Trust 2004.

Baker, B. (Dec. 2017). How Money Matters for Schools, *Learning Policy Institute*.

Future Ed Reports: *How DC Schools are Revolutionizing Teaching*, May 30, 2017, By Thomas Toch, Future Ed Director, Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy, June 2017

Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven Trends: The Transformation Of The Teaching Force*, updated April 2014. CPRE Report (#RR-80). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Jerald, Craig and Neil Campbell, and Erin Roth, *High Schools of the Future: How States Can Accelerate High School Redesign*, Center for American Progress, December 4, 2017.

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), *Low Performing Schools in Urban High Poverty Communities, Report to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia*, (June 2014) <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt454.pdf>

Learning Policy Institute Research Brief: *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (September 2016).

Partelow, Lisette and Sarah Shapiro, Abel McDaniels, and Catherine Brown, *Fixing Chronic Disinvestment in K-12 Schools*, Center for American Progress, September 20, 2018.

Shores, K., & Steinberg, M. (In Press). The Great Recession, fiscal federalism and the consequences for cross-district spending inequality. *Journal of Education Finance*.

Steinberg, M., Quinn, R., & Anglum, C. (In Press). Education finance reform and the Great Recession: Did state policy and fiscal federalism improve education spending, school resources and student achievement in Pennsylvania? *Journal of Education Finance*.

Travers, Jonathan (March 2018). What is Resource Equity? *Working Paper, Education Resource Strategies*.

Weiss, Joanne and McGuinn, Patrick. (2017). *The Evolving Role of the State Education Agency in the Era of ESSA and Trump: Past, Present, and Uncertain Future*. CPRE Working Papers.

With Good Reason (WGR) Virginia Humanities Podcast Series: Degrees of Separation
Part I Aired March 24, 2017

Course Requirement

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time using Blackboard. Details will be shared in class. All due dates will be announced well in advance.

Assignments and Expectations

Each student will be expected to do independent reading on one of the specified course topics, including research on evidence-based solutions. Students will identify a policy problem from within those topics and submit a **1-2 page initial problem statement** (single-spaced, memo format). Students will submit a **3-5 page policy brief** (single-spaced, memo format) to a hypothetical policymaker on the identified problem. The policy brief should identify the hypothetical recipient and sender, describe the problem, provide brief background to enable the policymaker to understand the problem, recommend one or more solutions, and provide support for the recommended solution(s). The policy brief will be submitted and graded in an **initial version** and a **final version**. The final version will be graded in part on the incorporation of feedback from the initial version.

Doctoral students will additionally prepare a literature review on a topic related to the student's policy proposal.

Students will each give a **15 minute presentation** including appropriate slides based on their policy briefs and will lead a discussion on same. Students will be assigned to a group of 4-5 students to with whom to workshop/edit their presentations and will submit an initial version to be workshopped with the group in advance of their final presentation. Each student will receive will receive a grade based on participation with the group.

All written materials are to be submitted via the class blackboard site no later than the time on the assigned day unless otherwise specified. Further written detailed instructions on all assignments will be provided. Late submissions will be penalized 5 points (out of 100) for every 24 hours late, unless prior arrangements are made with the professor, which will be allowed only for good cause.

Occasional **micro-assignments** including discussion board reflections will be used to allow students to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the course material throughout the semester.

Each week one student will make a **Current Education Events presentation**, on a news item related to P-12 Education Policy from a mainstream or education-specific news site such as the Washington Post, Education Week Magazine, the Chronicle of Higher Education, Harvard Edcast, or a comparable publication. Students will have approximately 10 minutes to outline the main points of the article, suggest any policy implications, and lead a brief discussion on educational implications of the news story. Presenting students will be expected to address the impact and importance of the article on education policy and topics covered in class. Students will sign up for dates at the initial class. Students are required to submit a copy or a link for the article being reviewed to the professor before class.

Class Participation

Active engagement with classmates and the instructor during class session is critical to your and your classmates' understanding and comprehension of the material in this course. Students will be assessed on attendance and participation. Since the course meets just once per week, and since each class typically will involve active exercises by students, a single absence means significant missed content that cannot easily be made up. Students will be granted one "free" absence each regardless of reason, so long as work is completed, but are encouraged to reserve this for true emergencies, recognizing unforeseen circumstances may arise anytime during the semester. **Except as described below during the COVID pandemic**, a second absence, regardless of reason, will impact the final grade by 1/3 letter grade (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). Each additional absence, regardless of reason, will impact the final grade by an additional 2/3 letter grade per additional missed class.

COVID-RELATED ATTENDANCE POLICY ADJUSTMENT: One of the best ways to protect everyone from the current virus risks is to **STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK. Accordingly, I will not penalize anyone for failing to attend class in-person this fall. However:** if you need to miss class because you are feeling unwell, or because you have to quarantine due to exposure to a potentially infected person, I expect you to make every effort to participate and make up work as fully as possible. Anyone who anticipates missing class must send me advance notice via email; we can then make a matke-up plan together. If you are unable to attend class in person but well enough to participate remotely, it is my hope that we can facilitate that via technology in the classroom.

Please plan to bring a laptop or tablet to class regularly if possible. In-class activities will use them on occasion.

Preparation and Positive Relationships: It is critical that every student comes to class well prepared, ready to interact with classmates, and prepared to ask relevant questions and share perspectives. In this course we assume positive intentions no matter what experiences students might be coming from. In any course associated with public policy there is likely to be a wide range of perspectives. This is good! It allows for rich discussion and opportunities to explore a broad range of opinions. Open mindedness, listening, and a willingness to understand each other are vital to positive outcomes.

Grading Scale:

- A+ = 99-100
- A = 96-98
- A- = 92-95
- B+ = 89-91
- B = 83-88
- B- = 80-82

C = 75-79
F = 74 and below

Specific rubrics will be provided for each major assignment as needed.
Grades will be weighted based on the following:

Masters' Students:

Class Participation	15%
Discussion Board/Micro-Assignments	15%
Current Education Events	10%
Initial Problem Statement	10%
Policy Brief Initial Version	20%
Policy Brief Final Version	10%
Student's Presentation	15%
Presentation Group Participation	5%
Class Attendance:	See Above

Doctoral Students:

Class Participation	15%
Discussion Board/Micro-Assignments	15%
Current Education Events	5%
Initial Problem Statement	5%
Literature Review	15%
Policy Brief Initial Version	20%
Policy Brief Final Version	10%
Student's Presentation	10%
Presentation Group Participation	5%
Class Attendance:	See Above

Academic Accommodation for a Disability

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Services. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services (<http://ds.gmu.edu/>).

GMU/Schar Policy on Plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For international students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. <http://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/masters-advising/academic-policies-forms/>

Resources:

GMU Writing Center <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

GMU Libraries <http://library.gmu.edu/>

GMU Counseling and Psychological Services <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

GMU Emergency Preparedness Guides

<https://ehs.gmu.edu/emergencymanagement/plans-guides/>

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/CEHD 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 <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>

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>.

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

Course Outline

Note assignments listed for each date are to be completed in advance of the class session on that date – the class week effectively runs from Wednesday a.m. through Tuesday evening, with most major assignments (except as wise specified) due on Monday evening before class. Assignments are subject to change at the Professor’s discretion with reasonable notice to the class.

August 25 Course and Class Introduction; Roles and Philosophies of Public Education; Intro to Education Policymaking; Assignments Overview

Assignments:

Review Syllabus and be prepared with questions

Access and Explore Class BlackBoard Site

Listen to:

With Good Reason Podcast Series Degrees of Separation

Part I: Origins March 24, 2017 52 min.

<http://withgoodreasonradio.org/episode/degrees-of-separation-origins/>

SECTION I: The Challenges of Public Education in High-Poverty Communities

Sept. 1 What Works in Public Education? Challenges and Opportunities

Assignment:

Read Tough, Paul, *Helping Children Succeed*

Participate in Online Discussion Boards –

- Student Directory, Tough Reading

Sept. 8 What Works? (cont.) with Emphasis on High-Poverty Schools; Assignments Overview Including Initial Problem Statement and Policy Brief

Assignment:

Evidence-Based Education Databases listed on Blackboard

What Works Clearinghouse

Washington State Institute for Public Policy

Other

Low Performing Schools in Urban High Poverty Communities, Report to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia, by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (June 2014)

<http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt454.pdf>

Future Ed Reports: *How DC Schools are Revolutionizing Teaching*, May 30, 2017, By Thomas Toch, Future Ed Director, Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy

Online Discussion Board On What Works Clearinghouses

In-Class Exercises: What to do about Paulsberg

Sept. 15 What Works? (cont.) and intro to the Many Facets of Racial Injustice in Education - Segregation, Resources, Teachers, Discipline, Testing

Special Guest Interview: Dr. Alvin Crawley, former Superintendent, Alexandria Public Schools

Assignment: Noguera, Ed. Part 1 Intro: Race, Education and the Pursuit of Equity in the 21st Century; Part II School Policy is Housing Policy (Rothstein); Part II Perpetuation Separate and Unequal Worlds...(Ayscue and Orfield); Part IV: Incoherent Demands (Pierce); Part IV: “There’s Nothing for us Here” (Winn and Winn)

Discussion Board: Questions for Dr. Crawley

INITIAL PROBLEM STATEMENTS DUE BY 8 P.M. Mon. Sept. 21

SECTION II: Stakeholder Roles

Sept. 22 Federal, State and Local Roles in Setting Education Policy

Assignment: Weiss, Joanne and McGuinn, Patrick. (2017). *The Evolving Role of the State Education Agency in the Era of ESSA and Trump: Past, Present, and Uncertain Future*. CPRE Working Papers.

Other Assignments TBD

In-Class Exercise: Board of Ed Standards Setting

Sept. 29 Legislative Branch: State and Federal Legislative Process And Education Policy Making

Assignments: TBD

In-Class Special Guests: Senator Tim Kaine and Senior Education Advisor Karishma Merchant

**Oct. 6 Levers of Policymaking/Role of Policymakers/
Policy Brief Assignment Deep Dive
assignment: Readings TBD; read and critique sample policy briefs
In-Class Exercise: Tracking Legislation**

DOCTORAL STUDENTS: LIT REVIEW DUE 8 P.M. Sat. Oct. 10

SECTION III: FOLLOW THE MONEY

Oct. 13 NOTE THIS IS NOT REGULARLY SCHEDULED CLASS DUE TO FALL BREAK BUT WE WILL MEET IN LIEU OF NOV 3

Education Finance: Cost/Benefit Analyses of Education Reforms

Assignments: TBD

In-Class Exercise: Budget Hold ‘Em Game

Travers, Jonathan (March 2018). What is Resource Equity? *Working Paper, Education Resource Strategies.*

Baker, B. (Dec. 2017). How Money Matters for Schools, *Learning Policy Institute.*

Oct. 20 Education Finance: Overview and Equity Implications

Assignment:

Partelow, Lisette and Sarah Shapiro, Abel McDaniels, and Catherine Brown, *Fixing Chronic Disinvestment in K-12 Schools*, Center for American Progress, September 20, 2018

Steinberg, M., Quinn, R., & Anglum, C. (In Press). Education finance reform and the Great Recession: Did state policy and fiscal federalism improve education spending, school resources and student achievement in Pennsylvania? *Journal of Education Finance.*

Shores, K., & Steinberg, M. (In Press). The Great Recession, fiscal federalism and the consequences for cross-district spending inequality. *Journal of Education Finance.*

POLICY BRIEF INITIAL VERSION DUE BY 8 PM Mon. OCT. 26

Oct. 27 Education Finance (cont.): Racial Impact of Disparate Resources

Assignments TBD

Nov. 3 ELECTION DAY – NO CLASS

SECTION IV: Special Topics

Nov. 10 Teacher Preparation, Licensure, Shortages

Assignment:

Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven Trends: The Transformation Of The Teaching Force*, updated April 2014. CPRE Report (#RR-80). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Learning Policy Institute Research Brief: *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (September 2016).

INITIAL VERSION PRESENTATIONS DUE BY 8 pm. Mon. Nov. 16

Nov. 17 COVID, Remote Learning and the Impact on Equity

Assignments: TBD

Nov. 24 Project-Based Learning and Career Exploration

Assignments:

Documentary Excerpt: *Most Likely to Succeed*, Produced by Greg Whiteley and Ted Dinstersmith, 2015
Center for American Progress Policy Brief on High School Re-design

Badheka, Gijubhai, *Divasvapna: An Educator's Reverie*. In English, National Book Trust 2004.

Jerald, Craig and Neil Campbell, and Erin Roth, *High Schools of the Future: How States Can Accelerate High School Redesign*, Center for American Progress, December 4, 2017.

FINAL VERSIONS PRESENTATIONS DUE BY 8 P.M. Mon. Nov. 30

Dec. 1 Student Presentations

POLICY BRIEF FINAL VERSION DUE BY 8 p.m. Sat. Dec. 5

