George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Education Policy

EDUC 870 – Education Policy: Process, Context, and Politics
3 Credits, Fall 2020
Tuesdays, 7:20pm-10:00pm, Online (Zoom)
Room: 981 8068 6817
Password: educ870

Fall 2020 Note

Fall 2020 is a strange semester. Many of us have gotten sick, know someone who has gotten sick, and/or know someone who has died from Covid-19. Many of us are working extra jobs. Many of us have lost our jobs or are working fewer hours. Many of us have new responsibilities caring for younger and/or older members of our families. In dozens of ways, our lives have gotten much more complicated.

This syllabus describes the official policies and expectations for our class. In difficult times, it's important to retain some semblance of normalcy. We will do our best to adhere to the plan set out here. But let's agree in advance to give each other a little extra grace and flexibility this semester. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you need to miss a class or if you need a little extra time on an assignment. We'll figure something out together and make it work.

Faculty

Name:	Prof. David Houston
Office Hours:	By Appointment
Office Location:	Thompson 1802 or video conference
Email:	dhousto@gmu.edu

Prerequisites/Corequisites

Admission to PhD in Education program or permission of instructor

University Catalog Course Description

Examines public policy decision-making in education at local, state, and national levels, and its impact on education institutions, students, and public. Focuses on government entities' authority over education decision-making, and resolution of competing policy arguments in political arena.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online in a seminar/lecture format via Zoom. Our meeting room number is 981 8068 6817. The password is educ870. Readings and syllabus are available on Blackboard.

Technical Requirements

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software. In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

1. High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers
2. Reliable access to GMU email and Blackboard
3. The following software (available for free for both PCs and Macs):
    a. Zoom (https://zoom.us/)
    b. Adobe Acrobat Reader (https://get.adobe.com/reader/) or similar PDF reader
    c. R (http://cran.wustl.edu/)
    d. RStudio (https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/)
4. Headphones with microphone (optional but nice)

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

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

1. Understand and explain the responsibilities of various levels of government for preK-16 education.
2. Analyze and describe the impact of social, legal, and political forces on the functions of education in the United States.
3. Analyze and articulate differing policy arguments and perspectives regarding education.
4. Understand the various research frames and methodologies used to study education policy.

Professional Standards

There are no specialized standards specific to education policy studies. However, most if not all standards for educators expect professionals to be aware of the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of public education in the United States. This course provides students with that background and understanding.

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards: Not Applicable

Required Texts

McGuinn, P. J. (2006). *No Child Left Behind and the transformation of federal education policy, 1965-2005*. Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas.

Loss, C. P. (2012). *Between citizens and the state: The politics of American higher education in the 20th century*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Additional Resources and References

Alderman, C. (2017). The case against ESSA: A very limited law. In F. M. Hess & M. Eden (Eds.), *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What it means for schools, systems, and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Barone, C. (2017). What ESSA says: Continuities and departures. In F. M. Hess & M. Eden (Eds.), *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What it means for schools, systems, and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (Brown I). (1954). 347 U.S. 483.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (Brown II). (1955). 349 U.S. 294.

Clotfelter, C. T. (2004). *After Brown: The rise and retreat of school desegregation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cross, C. (2014). *Political education: Setting the course for state and federal policy*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Henig, J. R. (2009). Mayors, governors, and presidents: The new education executives and the end of educational exceptionalism. *Peabody Journal of Education, 84*(3), 283-299.

Hess, F. M. (2008). Looking for leadership: Assessing the case for mayoral control of urban school systems. *American Journal of Education, 114*(3), 219-245.

Hess, F. M., & Leal, D. L. (2005). School house politics: Expenditures, interests, and competition in school board elections. In W. G. Howell (Ed.), *Besieged: School boards and the future of education politics*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Howell, W. G. (2005). Introduction. In W. G. Howell (Ed.), *Besieged: School boards and the future of education politics*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Jochim, A., & McGuinn, P. J. (2016). The politics of the Common Core assessments: Why states are quitting the PARCC and Smarter Balanced testing consortia. *Education Next*.

McGuinn, P. J. (2012). Stimulating reform: Race to the Top, competitive grants, and the Obama education agenda. *Educational Policy, 26*(1), 136-159.

McPherson, M., & Baum, S. (2017). The federal-state higher education partnership: Rethinking the relationship. Urban Institute.

Mehta, J., & Teles, S. (2012). Jurisdictional politics: A new federal role in education. In F. M.

Hess & A. P. Kelly (Eds.), *Carrots, sticks, and the bully pulpit: Lessons from a half-century of federal efforts to improve America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Mitra, D. L. (2018). *Educational change and the political process*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Morel, D. (2018). *Takeover: Race, education, and American democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Orfield, G., & Eaton, S. E. (1996). *Dismantling desegregation: The quiet reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. New York, NY: New Press.

Reckhow, S., Henig, J. R., Jacobsen, R., & Litt, J. A. (2017). 'Outsiders with deep pockets': The nationalization of local school board elections. *Urban Affairs Review, 53*(5), 783-811.

Schueler, B. E. (2018). A third way: The politics of school district takeover and turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 55*(1), 116-153.

West, M. (2017). The case for ESSA: A proper balance. In F. M. Hess & M. Eden (Eds.), *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What it means for schools, systems, and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whitman, D. (2015). The surprising roots of the Common Core: How conservatives gave rise to 'Obamacore.' Brookings Institution, Brown Center on Education Policy.

Wong, K. K., Shen, F. X., Anagnostopoulos, D., & Rutledge, S. (2007). *The education mayor: Improving America's schools*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all written assignments via email prior to the beginning of the class session when the assignment is due.

Assignments and/or Examinations

Supplementary Content Presentation: Each class session will contain 1-2 student presentations of material that supplement the primary reading. Presentations of about 10-15 minutes should be organized using slides (PowerPoint or equivalent). Afterwards, the presenting student will lead 10-15 minutes of Q&A.

Take-Home Midterm Exam: About half-way through the semester, students will receive a take-home midterm exam. Students will have one week to complete the exam, and they can use their course materials and notes.

Final Paper: Students will choose a specific education policy debate to analyze. They will compose a 10-15 page (double-spaced) paper in APA format with 6 sections:

1. Introduction: Your introduction should contain an explicit argument A) for or against a specific education policy in a specific location, B) the actions that various stakeholders should take to advance/reject/revise this policy, and C) the level(s) of government where this activity should take place.
2. Policy: Describe the policy in detail.
3. Stakeholders: Who are the primary stakeholders with respect to this policy? What role(s) do these individuals/groups play? What role(s) could/should they play?
4. Level(s) of Government: What level(s) of government—local, state, and/or federal—are involved in the passage/revocation/revision and implementation/dismantling/ modification of this policy? What role(s) does each level of government play? What role(s) could/should they play?
5. Debate: What are the strongest arguments that scholars and political actors have made in favor of your position? What are the strongest arguments that scholars and political actors have made against your position? Why are the opposing arguments insufficient?
6. Conclusion: Summarize your argument.

Final Paper Presentation: On the last day of class, students will present the content of their final papers. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes long and organized around slides (PowerPoint or equivalent). If time allows, each student will lead a short Q&A session after their presentation.

Participation

Students are expected to:

1. Attend all classes and provide advance notice, if possible, if you must miss a class.
2. Read all assignments prior to class and bring copies (either electronic or hard copy) to class.
3. Actively participate in discussions of the readings and treat one another with respect.
4. Submit all assignments on time. Late work will be penalized by 2pts/day, unless prior arrangements are made.

Course Grades

- Supplementary content presentations: 15%
- Take-home midterm: 20%
- Final paper: 30%
- Final paper presentation: 20%
- In-class participation: 15%

Grading Scale

A+	97-100
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89

B	83-86
B-	80-82
C	70-79
F	69 and below

In-Class Data Analyses

Most class sessions will include an in-class data analysis exercise in which we explore a contemporary education policy issue, helping students to develop and refine a skill set for future coursework and careers. No prior experience in data analysis, statistics, econometrics, or computer programming is required.

We will use the R programming language and the RStudio graphical user interface. R and RStudio are available for free online for both Windows and Mac operating systems. I expect that this class will be some students' first experience with quantitative education policy analysis. We will start with the basics (including downloading the software) and move slowly. These in-class exercises are not a substitute for formal research methods classes, and this class will not count towards any research methods requirements.

Organization of a Typical Class Session

- 7:20-8:10pm: professor lecture (questions, comments, and discussion encouraged)
- 8:10-8:45pm: supplementary content presentation
- 8:45-9:00pm: 15 minute break
- 9:00-10:00pm: in-class data analysis

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

August 25   *1) Course Introduction*

September 1   *2) The Structure of the U.S. Education System*
                   Reading: Mitra, 2018 (p. 1-65); McPherson & Baum, 2017
                   SCP 1: The history of school district consolidation
                   SCP 2: The two major teachers unions (NEA and AFT)
                   In-class data analysis: Intro to R, RStudio, loading data

September 8   *3) Education and the Policy Process*
                   Reading: Mitra, 2018 (p. 67-140); Cross, 2014 (p. 3-5)
                   SCP 1: Policy windows: Sputnik and the National Defense Education Act
                   SCP 2: Problem framing: A Nation at Risk report (1983)
                   In-class data analysis: variable types, measures of central tendency

September 15	*4) The Politics of No Child Left Behind, Part I* Reading: McGuinn, 2006 (p. 1-104) SCP 1: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (What is it? What were the politics of its passage?) SCP 2: Opportunity to Learn Standards In-class data analysis: t-tests
September 22	*5) The Politics of No Child Left Behind, Part II* Reading: McGuinn, 2006 (p. 105-210) SCP 1: State academic standards (pre-Common Core) SCP 2: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) In-class data analysis: chi-squares
September 29	*6) After NCLB: Race to the Top & Common Core* Reading: McGuinn, 2012; Whitman, 2015; Jochim & McGuinn, 2016; Mehta & Teles, 2012 SCP 1: NCLB waivers SCP 2: The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) In-class data analysis: data manipulation and variable creation
October 6	*7) The Every Student Succeeds Act* Reading: Barone, 2017; West, 2017; Alderman, 2017 SCP 1: TBD SCP 2: TBD In-class data analysis: correlation
October 13	*8) The Supreme Court and School Desegregation* Reading: Clotfelter, 2004 (p. 13-39); Orfield & Eaton, 1996 (p. xxi-22); Brown I; Brown II SCP 1: Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District SCP 2: Fisher v. University of Texas In-class data analysis: bivariate regression **Assignment due: take-home midterm**
October 20	*9) State Takeovers of Local Districts* Reading: Morel, 2018 (ch. 1-3); Schueler, 2019 SCP 1: San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez SCP 2: Abbott v. Burke In-class data analysis: multivariate regression, part 1
October 27	*10) Mayoral Control* Reading: Wong et al., 2007 (p. 1-27); Hess, 2008; Henig, 2009 SCP 1: New York City – Michael Bloomberg and Joel Klein SCP 2: Washington, D.C. – Adrian Fenty and Michelle Rhee

In-class data analysis: multivariate regression, part 2

November 3   *No Class – Election Day. Vote!*

November 10   *11) School Board Politics*
Reading: Howell, 2005; Hess & Leal, 2005, Reckhow et al., 2017
SCP 1: TBD
SCP 2: TBD
In-class data analysis: multivariate regression, part 3

November 17   *12) The Politics of Higher Education, Part I*
Reading: Loss, 2012 (ch. 1-4)
SCP 1: TBD
SCP 2: TBD
In-class data analysis: multivariate regression, part 4

November 24   *13) The Politics of Higher Education, Part II (asynchronous class session)*
Reading: Loss, 2012 (ch. 5-7)

December 1   *14) Final Paper Presentations*
Assignment due: final paper presentations

December 8   *No Class*
Assignment due: final paper

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/.

Safe Return to Campus Statement

All students taking courses in person must take Safe Return to Campus Training before coming to campus. Training is available in Blackboard.

Students must follow the university's public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage.

All students taking in-person and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week.

The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system, and students will receive either a Green, Yellow, or Red email response. Only students who receive a "Green" response are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get testing. Faculty are allowed to ask you

to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.

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

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.

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/.