HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY
SYLLABUS - FINAL
Spring 2021

Credit Hours: 3
CRN
Date/Time: Monday 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: aholt2@gmu.edu
Cell Phone: 804-306-6341
Office Hours: available virtually Mondays 4-6 p.m.
or in-person/virtually by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Jessica Fontaine
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850-803-0615
Available by appointment

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

University Catalog Course Description
EDPO 602 examines higher education policy issues, developments, trends and debates at the federal and state level. Discusses current debates and proposals for reform in the areas of postsecondary affordability, access, equity, quality, and accountability, with a focus on underserved populations, including low-income and minority students. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

POGO 750 Topics in Policy and Government: Focuses on selected topics in policy and government not covered in fixed-content Schar school courses.

Course Overview
This course examines current higher education policy issues, developments, trends and debates at the federal and state level, with a focus on enabling students to understand policymaking structures and processes and think critically about the challenges and opportunities facing the field today. In particular, we will examine higher education indicators and outcomes, review policies and proposals for reform to improve postsecondary affordability, access, equity, quality, and accountability, and consider the role of advocacy groups and research in shaping and advancing policy agendas. The course also explores connections between
K-12 and higher education and discusses their impact. While a brief historical overview of higher education provides necessary context, the course primarily emphasizes recent trends and contemporary concerns, including federal and state policy deliberations and responses.

**Course Delivery Method**
This course will be delivered through a mixture of lecture and seminar.

**Learning Outcomes/Objectives**
This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Students will develop an understanding of how higher education policy is made in contemporary federal, state, and other settings, including landmark legislation, and the distinct roles and responsibilities of federal and state government and various other stakeholders.
2. Students will gain a basic fluency in higher education policy challenges confronting policymakers today, including emerging policy approaches and proposals to improve the higher education system’s performance.
3. Students will develop practical skills for work in higher education policy including familiarity with higher education policy resources and the ability to research a problem, develop a specific policy proposal to address it, and advocate for it effectively in writing and orally.

**Required Texts**
The only book students are required to obtain for the course is as follows:

All other assignments will be from open-access resources and/or available from the GMU library and posted to the class Blackboard site.

Required assignments will be posted on a weekly basis typically two weeks in advance on the class blackboard site with links as needed. Illustrative assignments are listed under the [Class Schedule](#) below and/or will be selected from the lists below and/or comparable works identified by the professor. The professor reserves the right to supplement or otherwise change the assignments with reasonable notice. Where there are differences between the blackboard site and the syllabus, the blackboard site is controlling.

**Course Performance Evaluation**
Students are expected to submit all assignments on time using Blackboard. Details will be shared in class and assignment materials will be linked in Blackboard. All due dates will be announced well in advance.

**Assignments and Expectations**
All written materials are to be submitted via the class blackboard site no later than the assigned time and day unless otherwise specified. Further written detailed instructions on all assignments will be provided under the Major Assignments page on Blackboard. 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.

**Policy Briefs and Presentation**
Each student will be expected to do independent reading on a current policy issue in higher education, including research on evidence-based solutions. Students will identify a policy problem and develop a policy proposal to address it. 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 make a 15 minute oral presentation including appropriate slides based on the policy brief and will lead a discussion on same. Students will be assigned to a group of 4-5 students with whom to workshop/edit the presentations and will submit an initial version of the slides to be workshoped with the group in advance of the final presentations. Each student will be graded on the student’s individual presentation and separately on participation with the group.

Additional Assignments and Expectations
Each week, 2-3 students will present a State/Issue Presentation, on a policy issue related to Higher Education Policy through a state-specific lens. Students will have approximately 5 minutes to describe briefly the structure of higher education policy-making in their selected state and to describe a policy issue in the state, followed by time for questions. Presenting students will be expected to connect the policy issue to topics covered in class and are welcome but not required to use 1 – 2 slides as a visual aid. Students will sign up for presentation dates on blackboard.

Students will watch online and/or read the official transcript of a recent (within the past five years) federal or state legislative hearing on any higher education policy issue and prepare a 1-2 page Legislative Hearing Summary (single-spaced, memo format) that describes a) the topic and its significance, b) legislator statements and witness testimonies and perspectives, c) the discussion among legislators and the witnesses, and d) your thoughts and commentary.

Occasional micro-assigments including discussion board reflections will be used to allow students to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the course material throughout the semester. 9 assignments will be offered, each worth 2 points – student may skip one during the semester unless otherwise mandated.

Class Participation
Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions.

Active engagement with classmates and the instructor during class sessions 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 up to 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 make-up plan together. If you are unable to attend class in person but well enough to participate remotely, you can participate remotely via zoom (details will be discussed at the first class).
Full class participation also requires 1-1 interaction with the professor. Each student must schedule at least one meeting with the professor during office hours or at another mutually convenient time during the semester. Feel free to schedule this around a particular class assignment such as the policy brief or more generally to discuss career plans, topics of particular interest, etc. This will count toward your class participation grade.

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

**Preparation, Positive Relationships, and Appreciation of Diverse Viewpoints**

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.

**Anti-Racism Statement**

As a member of the George Mason University community, I will work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. I affirm that in this class, faculty and students will work together to interrupt cycles of racism against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just learning environment for all participants, regardless of racial background. In the class we also seek particularly to welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. This is particularly important in a topic such as ours where racial injustice has played such a large role over many decades and in many ways. Our discussions will often touch on the influence of race in education in America, and we can all best learn together by being kind, listening well, and valuing each other’s perspectives.

**Basic Course Technology Requirements**

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at https://mymason.gmu.edu. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher. You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this website.) Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate / Zoom). 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.

**Course Materials and Student Privacy**

In-person and virtual synchronous class sessions may be recorded for the benefit of the instructor and enrolled students. These materials will be stored on Blackboard or another secured, private site, accessible only to the students enrolled in the course. Video recordings of class meetings that are shared only with the instructors and students officially enrolled in a class do not violate FERPA or any other privacy expectation. To protect the privacy rights of everyone in the class, they must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

**Grading Scale:**

- A+ = 99-100
- A  = 96-98
- A-  = 92-95
Specific rubrics will be provided for each major assignment as needed.
Grades will be weighted based on the following:

**Masters’ Students:**
- Class Participation/Attendance: 15%
  (includes 1-1 meeting with professor)
- Discussion Board/Micro-Assignments: 15%
- State/Issue Presentation: 10%
- Legislative Hearing Memo: 10%
- Policy Brief Initial Version: 15%
- Policy Brief Final Version: 15%
- Policy Presentation: 15%
- Presentation Group Participation: 5%

**Doctoral Students:**
- Class Participation/Attendance: 15%
  (includes 1-1 meeting with professor)
- Discussion Board/Micro-Assignments: 15%
- State/Issue Presentation: 5%
- Legislative Hearing Memo: 10%
- Literature Review: 15%
- Policy Brief Initial Version: 10%
- Policy Brief Final Version: 10%
- Policy Presentation: 15%
- Presentation Group Participation: 5%

**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://coursessupport.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/](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/](https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/).

Weekly Schedule

(Full Citations below; See Blackboard for Definitive Assignments and Links)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Tentative Readings/Assignments Due</th>
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</table>
| 1/25 | Week 1: Intro/Historical Overview/Snapshot of Higher Education and Major Current Policy Issues | Review Course Syllabus and class blackboard site  
Kiener (2013) pp. 55-74  
Iglesias Podcast (2020)  
Murakami (2021)  
Altschuler (2020) |
| 2/1  | Week 2: Value proposition to students – worth of a college education, student debt | Ma et al. (2019)  
McMillan Cottom (2017) Ch. 1 (pp. 1-26) and Ch. 3 (pp. 69-111)  
Baum et al. (2013) pp. 6-54  
Chakrabarti (2017) |
Cahalan (2020) excerpts tbd  
Delisle (2017)  
Lumina (2019)  
Huelsman (2018)  
Poutre (2017) |
Caplan (2018) |
### Section II: Federal, State and Other roles in Higher Ed Policy and Oversight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>State Roles in Higher Education Policy (SCHEEOs, state structures, funding)&lt;br&gt;-Tuition setting and oversight</td>
<td>AASCU (2020)&lt;br&gt;Chingos &amp; Baum (2017)&lt;br&gt;McGuinness (2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>Higher Education outcome measures and their uses&lt;br&gt;- graduation rates, debt/default, employment</td>
<td>DOCTORAL STUDENTS: LIT REVIEW DUE Midnight Sun. 3/7&lt;br&gt;Deming &amp; Figlio (2016)&lt;br&gt;Nichols (2017)&lt;br&gt;Other readings TBD</td>
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<td>3/22</td>
<td>Flex/review week&lt;br&gt;--COVID Impact</td>
<td>POLICY BRIEF, INITIAL VERSION DUE Midnight Sun. 3/21&lt;br&gt;Readings TBD</td>
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### Section III:
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Racial Justice, Culture and Diversity issues on Campus&lt;br&gt;--Title IX</td>
<td>LCEF (2019) excerpts&lt;br&gt;Special Guest: Dr. Kayla Elliott, Ass’t Dr. for Policy, Higher Ed Team, EdTrust&lt;br&gt;Other readings TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>University Governance Issues&lt;br&gt;--faculty role/unions&lt;br&gt;--transparency/donor influence&lt;br&gt;--conflicts of interest</td>
<td>PRESENTATION SLIDES, INITIAL VERSION DUE Midnight Wed. 4/14&lt;br&gt;Readings TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>alternative approaches to funding: income sharing agreements, tuition-free college</td>
<td>Marcus (2017)&lt;br&gt;Other Readings TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/26</td>
<td>Flex/review week&lt;br&gt;Final Presentations To be Scheduled 4/26-29 By Assigned Group</td>
<td>PRESENTATION SLIDES, FINAL VERSION DUE Midnight Sun. 4/25&lt;br&gt;Readings TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/30</td>
<td></td>
<td>POLICY BRIEF, FINAL VERSION DUE Midnight Fri. 4/30&lt;br&gt;(FYI COURSE GRADES ARE DUE TO REGISTRAR FOR THIS COURSE 5/5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Citations**


Cahalan, Margaret W., Perna, Laura W., Addison, Marisha, Murray, Chelsea, Patel, Pooja R., & Jiang,


Purpose, 2-9.

**Potential Additional Readings/Resources**

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2016). *Higher education learning outcomes assessment movement moves away from standardized tests, according to new national survey*.


Carnevale, A., Jayasundera, T., & Gulish, A. (2016). *America’s divided recovery: College haves and have-nots*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.


