



**College of Education and Human Development
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research**

Spring 2021

EDUC 870 DL2: Education Policy: Process, Context, and Politics

CRN: 25246 ,3 – Credits

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Nagro	Meeting Dates: 1/25/21 – 5/10/21
Phone: 716-572-4315 cell	Meeting Day(s): Wednesday
E-Mail: snagro@gmu.edu	Meeting Time(s): 4 pm – 6:40 pm
Office Hours: by request	Meeting Location: N/A; Online
Office Location: online	Other Phone:

Note: This syllabus may change according to class needs. Teacher Candidates/Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.

Prerequisite(s):

None

Co-requisite(s):

None

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 theories and methodological approaches, and resolution of competing policy arguments in political arena.

Advising Contact Information

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress in your program. Students in Special Education and Assistive Technology programs can contact the Special Education Advising Office at 703-993-3670 or speced@gmu.edu for assistance. All other students should refer to their assigned program advisor or the Mason Care Network (703-993-2470).

Course Delivery Method

Online

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using a synchronous format via the Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on 1/27/21 at 12:00 am.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

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

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: [Browser support \(https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers\)](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers)

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see: [Tested devices and operating systems \(https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems\)](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems)

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students will need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
 - The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download: [Adobe Acrobat Reader \(https://get.adobe.com/reader/\)](https://get.adobe.com/reader/)
 - [Windows Media Player \(https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player\)](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player)
 - [Apple Quick Time Player \(www.apple.com/quicktime/download/\)](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

Expectations

- **Log-in Frequency:**
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 2 times per week. In addition, students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings.
- **Participation:**
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- **Technical Competence:**
Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- **Technical Issues:**
Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- **Workload:**
Please be aware that this course is not self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the Class Schedule section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- **Instructor Support:**
Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- **Netiquette:**
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- **Accommodations:**
Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes

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

Fowler, F. C. (2004). *Policy studies for educational leaders: An introduction* (4th Ed.). Merrill. Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/Policy-Studies-Educational-Leaders-Introduction/dp/013267811X>

Recommended Texts

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Additional Readings

There will be additional readings each week. Please see Blackboard for more information about weekly reading assignments

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, VIA, hard copy).

Assignments and/or Examinations

Major Assignments include (first) a group background paper on an approved policy topic and (second) preparation and participation in mock congressional committee hearings that include written and verbal testimony as well as question and answer sessions. See the assignment chart and directions within this syllabus as well as additional information on Blackboard.

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Group Background Paper	3/17 (Proposal due 2/10)	20
Written Testimony	4/14	30
Verbal Testimony (written submission and oral presentation)	4/21 or 4/28	30
Participation in Hearings	4/21 and 4/28	10
Participation and Professionalism		10
Total		100

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance/Participation

For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom (see Professional Disposition Criteria), and complete all assignments with professional quality in a timely manner.

When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g., handouts, announcements, notes) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Be aware that points earned for participation activities during a time of absence will not be earned and typically cannot be reclaimed.

Late Work

Points will be deducted for work submitted late (up to 10% per day). This includes any items that are not submitted upon request due to class absence or tardiness. This includes items initiated or modified during class as well as those listed in the syllabus. All work must be turned in within 48 hours of the final class session to be reviewed for a grade.

Other Requirements

APA Style

The standard format for any written work in the College of Education and Human Development is APA. If you are unfamiliar with APA, it would benefit you to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.) or to access one of the internet sites that provides a summary of this information. All work produced outside of class must be typed in APA style unless otherwise noted.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course are expected to exhibit academic integrity at all times. Be aware that plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. Whether the act is

deliberate or unintentional is irrelevant. You must take great care to give credit to an author when you use either exact words or paraphrased ideas. Generally, if you use 4 or more words in a row you should use quotation marks and a proper citation. Evidence of plagiarism or any other form of cheating in this class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the registrar and Dean's office. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. The instructor reserves the right to submit your work to plagiarism detection services for an integrity assessment as needed.

Electronic Media.

The use of electronic devices that record class or photograph individuals or materials may not be used without instructor permission.

Workload Expectation.

For each in-class hour devoted to this course content, students are expected to spend at least 3 hours outside of class on course-related assignments, which is a typical in-class to out-of-class ratio for graduate level coursework. Exemplary work should be considered for presentation or publication opportunities.

Grading Scale

(Traditional rounding principles apply)

A	=	95 – 100 percent	A-	=	90 – 94 percent
B+	=	85 – 89 percent	B	=	80 – 84 percent
C	=	70 – 79 percent	F	=	Below 70

***Note:** The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. See [Academic Integrity Site](https://oai.gmu.edu/) (<https://oai.gmu.edu/>) and [Honor Code and System](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/) (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>). Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Code. “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” Work submitted must be your own new, original work for this course or with proper citations.

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

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

Date	Topics and Activities	Readings	Assignments Due
1/27/20	Introductions Syllabus Review: Focus on main assignments Warm-up Quiz Activity Civics 101 with video	Fowler Chapter 1: Policy What it is and Where it Comes from Fowler Chapter Four: The Political System and Political Culture	
2/3	Introducing the 4 P's Group exercise on JLARC recommendations using 4 P's Brainstorming Activity for Background Paper Topics (groups of 3 or 4 within university)	Fowler Chapter 6: The Major Education Policy Actors JLARC Report (see Blackboard) See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	
2/10	IDEA Guest Speaker 4 P's exercise	Fowler Chapter 7: Setting the Stage and Getting on It: Issue Definition and Agenda Setting Fowler Chapter 8: Getting the Words and the Money: Policy Formulation and Policy Adoption See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	One Paragraph Topic Proposal for Group Background Papers due (Email your group list and topic to Dr. West for approval; upload to Blackboard for Dr. Nagro – all group members upload the same thing under their name)
2/17	Early Childhood Guest Speaker	Fowler Chapter 10: Policy Implementation: Getting People to Carry Out a Policy See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	
2/24 (AACTE)	VCU/Mason Check-In Day Check-in with Dr. Thoma and Dr. Nagro about class activities by university PRISE scholars and interested folks, we will be participating in AACTE as a group all week		
3/3	K-12 Education, ESSA Guest Speaker	Fowler Chapter 12: Education Policy in the United States: Retrospective and Prospective	

		See Blackboard for additional assigned readings Listen to Legislative Hearing (See Blackboard for List)	
3/10 (CEC)	Outcomes of Policy Implementation Guest Speaker on Equity and Race in Education	Fowler Chapter 11: Policy Evaluation: Determining If the Policy Works See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	
3/17	Higher Education Guest Speaker	See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	Background Papers Due
3/24	VCU/Mason Check-In Day Check-in with Dr. Thoma and Dr. Nagro about class activities by university		
3/31	Disability Rights Guest Speaker	See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	
4/7	Working on Capitol Hill Guest Speaker Engaging in Political Advocacy	See Blackboard for additional assigned readings	
4/14	VCU/Mason Check-In Day Check-in with Dr. Thoma and Dr. Nagro about class activities by university		Written Testimony Due End of Week
4/21	Hearings (Presentations)		Verbal Testimony
4/28	Hearings (Presentations)		Verbal Testimony
5/5	VCU/Mason Writing Day		Submit Revisions as Needed End of Week

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: See [Core Values](http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/) (<http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>).

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code. See [Honor Code and System](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/) (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See [Responsible Use of Computing](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/) (<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 [Disability Services](https://ds.gmu.edu/) (<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 either Tk20 or VIA should be directed to <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments/>
- Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to [Blackboard Instructional Technology Support for Students](https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/) (<https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>).

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 the [Title IX Coordinator](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu) (titleix@gmu.edu).

- For information on student support resources on campus, see [Student Support Resources on Campus](https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus) (<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 [College of Education and Human Development](http://cehd.gmu.edu/) (<http://cehd.gmu.edu/>).

Appendix

Assessment Rubric(s)

Group Background Paper

(One paragraph topic proposal due 2/10; paper due 3/17)

Choose a federal education policy problem that concerns your group. Write a short (less than 15 pages) paper. Your group may choose the same policy topic for this paper that you will be using for the testimony assignment below. This paper could be background that will inform the development of your testimony and the arguments that you will present. The paper should include relevant sources and citations and should include the following:

- I. Description of the policy problem (5 points)
 - Scope of the problem
 - Historical precedents and cultural context
 - How was the problem defined? Who defined it?
 - How the problem got on the policy agenda for consideration
- II. Analysis of policy problem and solutions (10 points)
 - Reference the policy literature (Kingdon, Fowler, others) and consider how some of those concepts apply to your policy problem/solutions
 - Describe positions of key stakeholders (PEOPLE) including those who disagreed. Consider at least two national organizations (or coalitions), the Administration (White House, Department of Education) and at least two Members of Congress. What were the key disagreements?
 - Analyze the POLITICAL dimensions of the policy matter
 - Provide examples of how different POLICY solutions were considered during the policy making process
 - Reverence the policy PROCESSES that were involved various (e.g. hearings, legislative proposals, Committee markups, floor consideration, executive orders, regulatory proposals)
 - Is there evidence from implementation? Effective, ineffective, unintended consequences....why? Outcome data?
- III. Conclusion (5 points)
 - What does the future look like for this policy problem/solution

- Given the political climate/processes/timelines/views of stakeholders, what are the implications?

Possible Policy Topics:

Early Childhood Policy

- Universal Pre-K
- Academic standards for Pre-K
- Role of Headstart
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on programs, workforce

Elementary and Secondary Education

- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on learning loss, revealing disparities, teacher shortages, social/emotional trauma...
- Annual standardized testing of K-12 students and use of standardized tests
- School accountability
- Teacher and principal evaluation
- Lack of diversity of the workforce
- Shortage of math/science/special education teachers
- Vouchers/privatization
- Charter schools
- Inequitable funding formulas
- English Learners e.g impact of immigration policy, shortage of teachers
- Students with disabilities e.g. dyslexia, restraint and seclusion
- Equitable distribution of teachers
- State certification requirements for teachers

Teacher Education

- Alternative routes to becoming a teacher
- Alternative providers for teacher education
- Teacher education accountability
- Lack of diversity of candidates and faculty
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic, e.g. enrollment, budget cuts, program shrinkage and closures

Higher Education

- Affordability/cost of higher education
- Access to higher education for minority students
- Outcome measures of higher education
- Managing student debt
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on enrollment, budgets, faculty, learning
- Role of for-profits

Final Policy Hearings Assignment

Four components: 1) written testimony 2) written version of oral testimony 3) oral testimony presentation and answering questions 4) participation as a committee member

Your capstone assignment is to write testimony that you will present to a faux congressional committee (e.g. your peers in the class and guests) on your policy topic and position. There are four parts to this assignment:

- a) A cover page which includes the following:
 - Title of the Hearing
 - Name of the Committee holding the hearing, Chair and Ranking Members of the Committee
 - Date of the Hearing
 - Organization or perspective you are representing (e.g. National Association of Science Teachers; Professor in Special Education, Virginia Commonwealth University; Virginia State Teacher of the Year 2020)
- b) Written testimony: (30 points)
 - Can be up to 10 pages long and should include sources and citations
 - Must reflect what the Committee has asked you to address in your testimony (e.g. whether retaining annual assessment requirements in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is a good idea)
 - Must include data, evidence and/or research findings and at least one story, anecdote from experience
 - Must take a position and be persuasive about your point of view
 - Must provide rebuttal to at least one opposing argument
 - Must make recommendations for existing policy or new policy

Review Senate HELP Committee website and House Committee on Education and Labor website for both oral and written examples of testimony.
- c) Oral Presentation: (30 points)
 - Your written cover page and testimony
 - Your oral presentation should be a summary of your longer written presentation. The oral presentation should be submitted in writing also. It will be timed and can be up to 5 minutes, but no longer. You may read your five minute statement or summarize it.
 - You will be expected to answer questions from the faux “Members of Congress” on the panel before which you are testifying
- d) Hearing Participation (10 points)
 - Choose a committee member to emulate and engage in questioning through their vantagepoint