

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Education Policy

EDUC 886: School Reform in the US: Politics and Policies
EDPO 603: Conflict and Consensus: Education, Interest Groups, and Advocacy
Fall 2021
3 Credits

Tuesdays 4:30pm – 7:10pm
Online (Zoom)
Room: Zoom Meeting ID 966 6019 4733
Password: politics

Faculty

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

Note About Cross-listing

This course is cross-listed as both EDUC 886 and EDPO 603. Doctoral, Masters, and Graduate Certificate students are all welcome to enroll in this class. Doctoral students will typically enroll in EDUC 886. Masters and Graduate Certificate students will typically enroll in EDPO 603. Please email the instructor if you have any questions.

University Catalog Course Description

EDUC 886: Explores a broad range of reform initiatives shaping public education and examines the ways politics infuses education policy. Investigates the disciplinary and methodological frameworks scholars have used to study school reform.

EDPO 603: Explores points of conflict and consensus across the education landscape. Examines the role of interest groups and advocacy in education reform and policy.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

EDUC 886: This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Demonstrate a detailed and sophisticated understanding of major reform issues in U.S. education.
2. Analyze and describe the political and social forces that influence decision making on these issues.
3. Understand and explain the intersection of school reform and educational policy at

various levels (local, state, federal).

4. Analyze existing scholarship around school reform initiatives and develop a new research agenda.

EDPO 603: 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.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online in a seminar/lecture format via Zoom. Readings and syllabus are available on Blackboard.

Class Structure

This class will be structured as a colloquium. This structure will offer different benefits to students with different academic backgrounds. Doctoral students will have the opportunity to present scholarship in front of an audience and guide a class discussion. Certificate and Masters students will have the opportunity to get a taste of doctoral training in the social sciences. They will engage in all of the same activities as doctoral students—although the assignment and grading expectations will be slightly reduced.

A colloquium is a rotating lecture series in which each session is led by a different lecturer. The instructor and the students will take turns presenting the readings for the class and guiding the following discussions.

A typical class session will consist of the following:

- 4:30 – 4:40: Welcome, updates, and attendance
- 4:40 – 5:20: Presentation of reading #1 and discussion
- 5:20 – 6:00: Presentation of reading #2 and discussion
- 6:00 – 6:10: 10-minute break
- 6:10 – 6:50: Presentation of reading #3 and discussion
- 6:50 – 7:10: Prepare for next week

Course Performance Evaluation

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

Assignments

Colloquium presentation(s): Over the course of the semester, each student will give 1-2

presentations on a reading designated with an asterisk (*) in the syllabus and lead the following class discussion. Presentations should be about 20 minutes long and organized around slides (PowerPoint or equivalent). The goal of the presentation is to summarize the main ideas of the reading so that all students – even those that may have hastily read the material – can engage fully in the following conversation. The presentation should conclude with 5 open-ended questions meant to guide a 20-minute class discussion. The presenter will facilitate the class discussion with the instructor’s support. **The presenter must email their completed slides to the instructor by midnight on the Sunday prior to class.**

Final paper: Each student will write a 10-12 page paper (double-spaced, APA format) that addresses the following prompt:

Apply one or more of the major theoretical concepts introduced in this class (e.g., education as a public/private good, democratic education, Campbell’s law, exit & voice, Tiebout sorting, the city limits, the principal-agent problem, the free-rider problem, street-level bureaucracy, policy responsiveness, etc.) to help make sense of a contemporary development in education politics or policy (e.g., the emergence of charter schools, teacher strikes in 2018-2019, public education’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, etc.).

Your final paper should contain the following sections:

- A. An executive summary that offers a brief, simplified version of your argument (1-2 pages)
- B. A detailed description of the theoretical concept(s) that you will use in your argument (2-4 pages)
- C. A detailed description of the contemporary development in education politics or policy that you seek to explain (2-4 pages)
- D. An argument about how the theoretical concept(s) described in Section A help explain the current/recent events described in Section B (4-6 pages)
- E. *Doctoral students only:* Describe 1-2 possible research projects that could offer an empirical test of the argument you make in section D
- F. A brief conclusion that summarizes the main points of your argument (1-2 pages)

Final paper presentation: On the last full day of class, each student will give a brief presentation and lead a brief discussion of their final paper. The length of the presentation and discussion period will depend on the number of students enrolled in the class. Presentations should be organized around slides (PowerPoint or equivalent). Keep it simple: I recommend using one slide to summarize each section of your final paper (but skip an “executive summary” slide, which would be redundant with your conclusion slide). **If there are more than 10 students enrolled, we may split final paper presentations over two weeks.**

Participation

This is a participation-intensive class. 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

- Colloquium presentation(s): 30%
- Final paper: 30%
- Final paper presentation: 20%
- Participation: 20%

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

Required Texts

Harris, D. N. (2020). *Charter school city: What the end of traditional public schools in New Orleans means for American education*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Johnson, R. C., & Nazaryan, A. (2019). *Children of the dream: Why school integration works*. New York, NY: Basic Books and the Russell Sage Foundation.

Additional Readings (Available on Blackboard)

Anzia, S. F. (2014). *Timing and turnout: How off-cycle elections favor organized groups*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Berkman, M. B., & Plutzer, E. (2005). *Ten thousand democracies: Politics and public opinion in America's school districts*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Berkman, M. B., & Plutzer, E. (2011). Local autonomy versus state constraints: Balancing evolution and creationism in U.S. high schools. *Publius*, 41(4), 610-635.

Chubb, J. E., & Moe, T. M. (1990). *Politics, markets, and America's schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

- Collins, J. E. (2021). Does the meeting style matter? The effects of exposure to participatory and deliberative school board meetings. *American Political Science Review*.
- Delli Carpini, M. X. (2005). An overview of the state of citizens' knowledge about politics. In M. S. McKinney, L. L. Kaid, D. G. Bystrom, & D. B. Carlin (Eds.), *Communicating politics: Engaging the public in democratic life*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Edwards, D. S. (2021). Just out of reach? Unrestrained supply, constrained demand, and access to effective schools in and around Detroit. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 21(1), 1-28.
- Finger, L. K., & Hartney, M. T. (2021). Financial solidarity: The future of unions in the post-Janus era. *Perspectives on Politics*, 19(1), 19-35.
- Gutmann, A. (1987). *Democratic education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hochschild, J., & Scovronick, N. (2003). *The American dream and the public schools*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Houston, D. M. (2019). Schoolhouse democracy: Public opinion and education spending in the states. *Educational Researcher*, 48(7), 438-451.
- Houston, D. M., Henderson, M. B., Peterson, P. E., & West, M. R. (2021). Status, growth, and perceptions of school quality. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.
- Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, 585 U.S. ___ (2018).
- Kogan, V., Lavertu, S., & Peskowitz, Z. (2021). The democratic deficit in U.S. education governance. *American Political Science Review*.
- Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Education Research Journal*, 34(1), 39-81.
- Lipsky, M. (1971). Street-level bureaucracy and the analysis of urban reform. *Urban Affairs Review*, 6(4), 391-409.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (1976). Implementation as mutual adaptation: Change in classroom organization. *Teachers College Record*, 77(3), 339-351.
- Mehta, J. (2013). *The allure of order: High hopes, dashed expectations, and the troubled quest to remake American schooling*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Moe, T. M. (2006). Political control and the power of the agent. *Journal of Law, Economics, and*

Organization, 22(1), 1-29.

Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Page, B. I., & Shapiro, R. Y. (1983). Effects of public opinion on policy. *American Political Science Review*, 77(1), 175-190.

Peterson, P. E. (1981). *City limits*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Peterson, P. E., Henderson, M. B., & West, M. R. (2014). *Teachers versus the public: What Americans think about schools and how to fix them*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Rothstein, R., Jacobsen, R., & Wilder, T. (2008). *Grading education: Getting accountability right*. Washington, DC and New York, NY: Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press.

Schanzenbach, D. W., Bauer, L., & Mumford, M. (2016). Lessons for broadening school accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Brookings Institution.

Schneider, J. (2019). *Beyond test scores: A better way to measure school quality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schneider, J., & Berkshire, J. (2020). *A wolf at the schoolhouse door*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Tiebout, C. M. (1956). A pure theory of local expenditures. *Journal of Political Economy*, 64(5), 416-424.

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

* student-led discussion

Aug. 24	Class 1: Reading 1:	Introductions and the multiple goals of education Labaree, 1997, "Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals"
Aug. 31	Class 2: Reading 1: Reading 2:	American democracy and the politics of education Gutmann, 1987, <i>Democratic education</i> , p. 3-47 *Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003, <i>The American dream and the public schools</i> , p. 1-27

- Reading 3: *Rothstein et al., 2008, *Grading education: Getting accountability right*, p. 13-34
 Assignment: Presentation preferences (due Sunday 8/29)
- Sept. 7 **Class 3: Measuring school quality**
 Reading 1: Campbell, 1979, “Assessing the impact of planned social change”
 Reading 2: *Schanzenbach et al., 2016, “Lessons for broadening school accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act”
 Reading 2: *Schneider, 2017, *Beyond test scores: A better way to measure school quality*, p. 1-51
- Sept. 14 **Class 4: School choice, part 1**
 Reading 1: Hirschman, 1970, *Exit, voice, and loyalty*, p. 21-43
 Reading 2: *Chubb & Moe, 1990, *Politics, markets, and America’s schools*, p. 26-68
 Reading 3: *Schneider & Berkshire, 2020, *A wolf at the schoolhouse door*, p. 14-26
- Sept. 21 **Class 5: School choice, part 2 (New Orleans)**
 Reading 1: *Harris, 2020, *Charter school city*, p. 1-75
 Reading 2: *Harris, 2020, *Charter school city*, p. 77-194
 Reading 3: *Harris, 2020, *Charter school city*, p. 195-249
- Sept. 28 **Class 6: The city, the suburbs, and education**
 Reading 1: Tiebout, 1956, “A pure theory of local expenditures”
 Reading 2: Peterson, 1981, *City limits*, p. 93-106
 Reading 3: *Edwards, 2021, “Just out of reach? Unrestrained supply, constrained demand, and access to effective schools in and around Detroit”
- Oct. 5 **Class 7: Segregation, desegregation, and resegregation**
 Reading 1: Johnson & Nazaryan, 2019, *Children of the dream*, p. 1-66
 Reading 2: *Johnson & Nazaryan, 2019, *Children of the dream*, p. 67-139
 Reading 3: *Johnson & Nazaryan, 2019, *Children of the dream*, p. 143-252
 – No presentation for the conclusion, but read it anyways
- Oct. 12 No Class (Monday classes meet today)
- Oct. 19 **Class 8: Teachers and teachers unions**
 Reading 1: Moe, 2006, “Political control and the power of the agent”
 Reading 2: *Peterson et al., 2014, *Teachers versus the public: What Americans think about schools and how to fix them*, p. 1-30
 Reading 3: *Mehta, 2013, *The allure of order: High hopes, dashed expectations, and the troubled quest to remake American schooling*, p. 118-155
 Assignment: 1-2 paragraph final paper proposal

Oct. 26	Class 9:	<i>Janus and the logic of collective action</i>
	Reading 1:	Olson, 1965, <i>The logic of collective action</i> , p. 5-52 (OK to skip Section D)
	Reading 2:	* <i>Janus v. AFSCME</i> , p. 1-49 (skip to Alito’s opinion)
	Reading 3:	*Finger & Hartney, 2021, “Financial solidarity: The future of unions in the post- <i>Janus</i> era”
Nov. 2	Class 10:	School board politics
	Reading 1:	*Anzia, S. F., 2014, <i>Timing and turnout: How off-cycle elections favor organized groups</i> , p. 1-4, 16-36.
	Reading 2:	Kogan et al., 2021, “The democratic deficit in U.S. education governance”
	Reading 3:	*Collins, 2021, “Does the meeting style matter? The effects of exposure to participatory and deliberative school board meetings”
Nov. 9	Class 11:	The politics of policy implementation <i>(drop if two classes for final paper presentations are needed)</i>
	Reading 1:	*Lipsky, 1971, “Street-level bureaucracy and the analysis of urban reform”
	Reading 2:	*McLaughlin, 1976, “Implementation as mutual adaptation: Change in classroom organization”
	Reading 3:	Berkman & Plutzer, 2011, “Local Autonomy versus State Constraints: Balancing Evolution and Creationism in U.S. High Schools”
Nov. 16	Class 12:	Political knowledge & public opinion
	Reading 1:	*Delli Carpini, 2005, “An overview of the state of citizens’ knowledge about politics”
	Reading 2:	*Peterson et al., 2014, <i>Teachers versus the public: What Americans think about schools and how to fix them</i> , p. 57-92
	Reading 3:	Houston et al., 2021, “Status, growth, and perceptions of school quality”
Nov. 23	Class 13:	Policy responsiveness
	Reading 1:	*Page & Shapiro, 1983, “Effects of public opinion on policy”
	Reading 2:	*Berkman & Plutzer, 2005, <i>Ten thousand democracies: Politics and public opinion in America’s school districts</i> , p. 1-62
	Reading 3:	Houston, 2019, “Schoolhouse democracy: Public opinion and education spending in the states”
Nov. 30	Class 14:	Final Paper Presentations
	Assignment:	Final paper presentations
Dec. 7	Assignment:	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/>.

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

Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>. 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/>.