

**George Mason University
Education Policy**

EDPO 601: P-12 Policy Challenges
EDPO 870: Education Policy: Process, Context, and Politics
POGO 750 DL6: Education Policy: Process, Context, and Politics
3 Credits, Fall 2024

Day of the Week 4:30pm – 7:10pm
Online – Synchronous
[url]

Faculty

Name: Prof. David Houston
Office Hours: By Appointment
Office Location: Van Metre 663
Email: dhouston@gmu.edu

Note About Cross-listing

This course is cross-listed as EDPO 601, EDPO 870, and POGO 750 to facilitate various students' course requirements. Doctoral, Masters, and Graduate Certificate students are all welcome to enroll in this class. Masters and Graduate Certificate students in the College of Education and Human Development will typically enroll in EDPO 601. Doctoral students in CEHD will typically enroll in EDPO 870. Masters and Doctoral students in the Schar School of Policy and Government will typically enroll in POGO 750. Please email the instructor if you have any questions.

Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

University Catalog Course Description

EDPO 601: 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.

EDPO 870: 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.

Course Overview

This seminar will provide an introduction to the study of education policy in the US. We will

examine education policy decision-making at the local, state, and national levels and its impact on schools, students, and the public. This class will also introduce students to some of the methodological tools that education policy researchers use to analyze and evaluate education policies and programs. 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, or econometrics is required.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered using a seminar format. Readings and syllabus are available on Blackboard.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

EDPO 601: This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Develop an understanding of how public education policy is made in contemporary federal, state and local settings.
2. Gain a basic fluency in P-12 public education policy challenges confronting policymakers today.
3. Learn the rudiments of how to use research to affect public education policy.
4. 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.
5. Develop an appreciation of the role of, and develop skills to facilitate, collaboration across sectors in improving public education outcomes.

EDPO 870: 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

Not applicable

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.

Required Texts

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

Dahill-Brown, S. E. (2019). *Education, equity, and the states: How variations in state governance make or break reform*. Harvard Education Press.

Polikoff, M. (2021). *Beyond standards: The fragmentation of education governance and the promise of curricular reform*. Harvard Education Press

Additional Reading (Available on Blackboard)

Briffault, R. (2005). The local school district in American law. In W. G. Howell (Ed.), *Beseiged: School boards and the future of education politics*. Brookings Institution Press.

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

Henig, J. R. (2008). *Spin cycle: How research is used in policy debates: The case of charter schools*. Russell Sage Foundation and The Century Foundation.

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., & Meeks, O. (2011). School boards circa 2010: Governance in the accountability era. American Enterprise Institute.

Jacobsen, R., Henig, J., & Reckhow, S. (2016). Are wealthy donors influencing the public school agenda? *The Conversation*.

Kirst, M. W., & Wirt, F. M. (2009). *The political dynamics of American education* (4th ed.). McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

Mehta, J., & Teles, S. (2011). 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. Harvard Education Press.

Miron, G. (2017). Description and brief history of charter schools: What are the main issues? What do the data say about their effectiveness? In N. K. Buchanan & R. A. Fox (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of School Choice*. John Wiley & Sons.

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

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

Portz, J., & Schwartz, R. (2009). Governing the Boston Public Schools: Lessons in mayoral control. In J. P. Viteritti (Ed.), *When mayors take charge: School governance in the city*. Brookings Institution Press.

Rhodes, J. H. (2012). *An education in politics: The origins and evolution of No Child Left Behind*. Cornell University Press.

Ryan, J. E. (2009). The real lessons of school desegregation. In J. M. Dunn & M. R. West (Eds.), *From schoolhouse to courthouse: The judiciary's role in American education*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute and Brookings Institution Press.

Saultz, A., Fusarelli, L. D., & McEachin, A. (2017). The Every Student Succeeds Act, the decline of the federal role in education policy, and the curbing of executive authority. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 47(3), 426-444.

Schueler, B. E. (2019). A third way: The politics of school district takeover and turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 55(1), 116-153.

Shippo, D. (2009). Updating tradition: The institutional underpinnings of modern mayoral control in Chicago's public schools. In J. P. Viteritti (Ed.), *When mayors take charge: School governance in the city*. Brookings Institution Press.

Superfine, B. M. (2013). *Equality in education law and policy, 1954-2010*. Cambridge University Press.

Course Performance Evaluation

Except when explicitly stated otherwise, students are expected to submit all assignments via Blackboard by end-of-day (11:59pm) on the Tuesday prior to class. This allows the instructor to review students' submissions before class begins on Wednesday afternoon.

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 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

Grades

Professional Dispositions

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

Class Schedule

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

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/> <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://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/>.