Instructor: Dr. Penelope M. Earley  
Class Date & Time: Tuesday 4:30 – 7:10  
Class Location: 2054 David King Hall  
Contact Information:  
Penelope Earley  
Room 441A, Robinson B  
E-mail: pearley@gmu.edu  
P: (703) 993-3361  
F: (703) 993-2013  
Office Hours: By Appointment: M-F 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines public policy decision making in education at the local, state, and national levels and its impact on education institutions, students, and the public. Particular attention is given to which government entities have authority over education decision making and the resolution of competing policy arguments within the political arena. Prerequisite: Admission to the Ph.D. program or permission of instructor.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand and explain the responsibilities of various levels of government for pre-K – 16 education.
2. Analyze and describe the impact of social, legal, and political forces on the functioning of education in the United States.
3. Analyze and articulate differing policy arguments and perspectives regarding education.
4. Identify and assess the role/s of non-government entities, such as interest groups and the media, in education policy making.
5. Analyze and describe the impact of one or more major judicial decisions on public education, including the social and political factors underlying those decisions.

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course is taught using lectures and discussions.

TEXTS AND READINGS


Education Policy Analysis Archives, available on line (http://epaa.asu.edu)


State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, available on line (http://www.schev.edu)


The Constitution of Virginia, available on line (http://www.legis.state.va.us/laws/Constitution.html)

United States Department of Education, available on line (http://www.ed.gov)

United States Supreme Court, available on line (http://www.supremecourtus.gov)

Virginia State Department of Education, available on line (http://www.pen.k12.va.us)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. **Analyses**: Two written analysis papers based on assigned readings. The emphasis will be on determining which level or levels of government have authority to address particular policy problems. (25 points each)

B. **Class Presentation**: Present a summary of authority for education of SCHEV, VA Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of education. Include appropriate handouts. (10 points)

C. **“In The News”** Each Week students will do an in-class analysis of the policy implication/s of articles on education published that week in a variety of media outlets (print, television, radio, on-line). (10 points)

D. **School Board Meeting Analysis**. Each student must attend a meeting of a local school board and turn in a write-up of what happened at the meeting. What items were on the agenda (please include an original copy of the agenda for the meeting)? Who controlled the meeting? Who were the key players (formal and informal). (10 points)
E. **Candidate Positions on Education.** Prepare a one to two page comparison of the Republican and Democratic candidates (please include the major candidates only) positions on education. This may be done in bullet form, chart, or narrative. (10 points)

F. **Bowen Lecture.** Attend the Bowen Lecture on Public Policy on the GMU campus and prepare a one-page summary of the policy implications of the speaker’s presentation. (10 points)

**EVALUATION**

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached. All written work must be completed on a typewriter or a word processor and must be within the page limits established by the instructor. If a paper is to be between five and seven pages, papers fewer than five pages will be returned to the student to be completed. If it is more than seven pages the instructor will stop reading the paper at the end of the seventh page.

**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>85-88</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>79-75</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>74 and below</td>
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Point assignments for work:

- Two analysis papers (25% each) 50%
- Class Presentation (10%) 10%
- News Clips & analysis (10%) 10%
- School Board Write up (10%) 10%
- Campaign Analysis (10%) 10%
- Bowen Lecture Write Up 10%
- Total 100%

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**January 20 -- Introduction to public policy and education.**
- Review of syllabus & class schedule
- “In the news”
- Introduction to policy studies
- Consideration of the purpose of education in the United States
  *Assignment for January 27: Read U.S. Constitution and identify sources of authority for education*

**January 27 -- Discussion of Constitutional authority for education in the U.S.**
- “In the news”
- Where is federal Constitutional authority for education?
  *Assignment:*
February 3  Constitutional authority for education in the U.S.
- “In the news”
- Where is federal Constitutional authority for education?

Assignment: Research and explore legal authority for education in Virginia: (1) focus on K-12 education; (2) focus on postsecondary education governance, including two-year and four-year institutions. (3) focus on the U.S. Department of Education and the offices that oversee K-12 and higher education (see handout). For each find the name of the agency, its mission, and the key individuals in the agency. All information is available on-line.
Assignment: Read Savage Inequalities.

February 10  Consideration of state and local authority for education
- Higher Education Governance: Speaker: Dr. Peter Stearns, Provost and Executive Vice President, George Mason University
- State and Local Authority for Education
- “In the News”

Assignment (Due Feb. 17): Prepare a 3-6 page memo to Jonathan Kozol offering a solution to one of the problems he identifies. Be sure to identify the level of government that will be responsible for operationalizing your proposal. Keep in mind and take into account what you know about federal and state authority for education and current laws (NCLB, IDEA, HEA and the like).

February 17  Policy Issue: Funding Inequality
- Video on finance equalization. Discuss the policy choices made by school districts featured in the video.
- Presentation of student papers

Assignment: Read What Johnny Shouldn’t Read. Very briefly summarize one of the situations presented by Joan DelFattore. Assume you are in a school, school district, state agency, etc. where a similar situation has come up. Prepare a briefing memorandum to your immediate supervisor outlining what policy steps need to be taken to avoid the problems DelFattore documents. The paper should be 3-5 pages (Due March 2).

February 24  No Class (in lieu of attending school board meeting)
School Board Assignment: During the semester each student must attend a local school board meeting (at the jurisdiction of your choice). Prepare a 3-5 page paper summarizing events at the meeting. Who controlled the agenda? Please include an original copy of the agenda for the meeting. (Note: Although many jurisdictions televise school board meetings, it is necessary to actually attend. Information on dates and times can be found by calling the school board office or on the board’s web site.) The write up must be turned in by April 20.)
March 2  Who Controls the K-12 Curriculum?
- Who (individual/s or levels of government) controls the K-12 school curriculum? What is DelFattore’s opinion on this?
- How do curricular decisions in higher education differ from those in the K-12 sector? What are implications of K-12 curricular decisions for higher education?
- Presentation of student papers
- “In the News”
  Assignment: Go to the web site for the U.S. Supreme Court. Be prepared to discuss the function of the Supreme Court, the federal court system, and the background of the Justices.

March 16  Role of the Courts: Review and Discuss Federal Court Decisions Related to Education.
- What is the background of the nine Justices?
- How is the federal court system organized?
- Discussion of key legal decisions in education.
- “In the News”

March 23  Discussion of Brown v. Board
- What issues did the case resolve?
- What issues were not resolved?
- What policy options remain?
  Assignment: Read handouts on Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. New York.

March 30  Discussion of the Purpose of Education in the United States
- How is consensus built?
- Looking solely at federal and state education policy, what would consider the purpose of public education?
  Assignment: Prepare a 1-2 page summary of the campaign promises of the major Republican and Democratic candidates for president.

April 6  Promises, Promises…it’s an election year!
- What the candidates say…do they have the answers?
  Assignment: Bowen Lecture paper and school board meeting paper due April 20.

April 20  The Role of Interest Groups in Policy Making
- How do interest groups influence education policy?
- Who are these groups?

April 27  Role of the Media in Policy Making
- Do members of the press just report policy or do they influence it? How?
HONOR CODE

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University, have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarizing, or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the event that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. For further information, please refer to the University Catalog or Website at: http://www.gmu.edu.

This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class and/or weather interruptions. The American with Disabilities act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs, or activities of all State and local Governments. Under ADA a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as: learning, working, walking, speaking, hearing, breathing, and/or taking care of oneself. If a student has a disability and needs course adaptations or accommodations because of that disability, it must be established with the faculty, in writing, at the beginning of the semester so arrangements can be made. Please call the Disability Resource Center for required documentation (703) 993-2474.
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<th>Grade/Points</th>
<th>Quality of Work</th>
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<th>Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>A 96 – 100</td>
<td>Exceptional quality and insight; a rare &amp; valuable contribution to the field.</td>
<td>100% complete and error free</td>
<td>100% on time</td>
<td>Outstanding; facilitates and promotes conversation focused on the topic; questions &amp; comments reveal thoughtful reaction. Good team participant</td>
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<td>A- 92 – 95</td>
<td>Convincingly on target; demonstrates evidence of understanding and application; clear and concise writing; the reader is not distracted by grammar and/or spelling and citation errors.</td>
<td>Accurate &amp; seamless writing; virtually a complete product</td>
<td>Almost always on time; rare but forgivable tardiness (such as serious personal or family illness). Instructor is notified in advance that a paper may be late.</td>
<td>Well above average doctoral student; actively helps move group toward goal.</td>
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<td>B+ 89 –91</td>
<td>Competent; provides credible evidence of understanding and application; some lapses in organization, citations and/or writing clarity.</td>
<td>Moderate shortcomings; minor elements missing that distract the instructor's ability to see the product as a whole.</td>
<td>Assignments late more than once or without prior conversation with instructor; not necessarily chronic.</td>
<td>Reliable and steady worker; questions and comments reveal some thought and reflection.</td>
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<td>B 85 – 88</td>
<td>Evidence of understanding presented but incomplete; writing indicates gaps in logic; grammar and/or spelling errors distract the reader. Weak or insufficient citations.</td>
<td>Evidence of effort but one or more significant and important points are missed or not addressed.</td>
<td>More than half the assignments are late, but none are excessively late.</td>
<td>Doesn't contribute often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection. Follows rather than leads group activities.</td>
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<td>B- 80 – 84</td>
<td>Barely passable for graduate credit; only enough to get by; little evidence of understanding; assignments lack clarity and organization; little evidence of proof reading. Citations absent or inaccurate.</td>
<td>Barely sufficient; work is the least that could be done to justify graduate credit.</td>
<td>Excessively or repeatedly late.</td>
<td>Few meaningful contributions to class discussions. Little evidence of participation.</td>
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<td>C 75 - 79</td>
<td>Undergraduate level and quality; unsophisticated; assignments show little or not connection to course content or concepts.</td>
<td>Insufficient evidence of understanding and application; important elements missing or difficult to find.</td>
<td>Excessively or repeatedly late.</td>
<td>Weak or minimal participation; passive; often sidetracks group.</td>
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<td>F below 74</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Difficult to recognize as the assigned task.</td>
<td>Missed or not submitted. Incompletes not made up.</td>
<td>No constructive participation; destructive; demeaning toward other points of view.</td>
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