Prerequisite: None

Course Description and Relationship to Program Goals: A doctoral seminar in which students will research and analyze the gaps in student achievement related to race/ethnicity, limited English proficiency, gender, family background, poverty, and ableism, and the practices designed to close the gap.

Course Objectives
The learner will:

- Develop an understanding of the achievement gap in schools today including, its causes, its effects, its solutions, and the implications for policy formation;
- Deconstruct and explore in detail one aspect of the achievement gap, e.g. poverty, race, gender, teacher quality, student assessment practices, ableism, etc.;
- Explore “gap-generated” school reform models for their promise and for the barriers that need to be addressed;
- Prepare an in-depth analysis of one aspect of the gap in her/his local school using school-based data.

Required Readings


Suggested Readings


**Additional Online Resources**

The Center for Education Policy. [http://www.ctredpol.org/nclb/](http://www.ctredpol.org/nclb/); The Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center helps Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. It does not represent any special interest groups.


National Center for Education Statistics. [http://nces.ed.gov/edfin/search/search_intro.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/edfin/search/search_intro.asp). This website is the home of the nation’s report card. Most statistics on the condition of education can be found at NCES.

TQSource. [http://www.tqsourse.org](http://www.tqsourse.org); A new service on the Education Commission of the States (ECS) intended to track changes in state regulations concerning teacher quality.


Many others will be posted on blackboard as we proceed.

**Supplies**

Computer with Internet access and current GMU email account.

**CEHD Course Expectations**

The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) expects that all students abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See [http://gse.gmu.edu](http://gse.gmu.edu) for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See [http://mail.gmu.edu](http://mail.gmu.edu) and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.
**Course Delivery**

In addition to classroom attendance and participation, students are expected to complete readings, whole class and small group discussions, group, pair, and individual projects, internet research, analyses of case studies, and reflections on practice. I will use GMU’s web-accessible Blackboard course framework regularly throughout the course.

**Assignment**

There is only one assignment and that is to prepare a 15-20 page paper on one dimension of the achievement gap that is found in your own school and to explore:
1) the nature of that dimension e.g. LEP;
2) how it contributes to the gap with data to support your case, e.g. performance of LEP students;
3) the policy debate surrounding it (what policies and practices have tried to help close this gap?); and
4) a discussion of promising practices that might close this dimension of the gap with supporting evidence from research and evaluation. **Due date: May 15.**

By **March 20**, please provide me with a one-paragraph description of your topic and with an abbreviated reference list (no more than a page. This is just to I can find ways to assist you.)

**Evaluation and Grading**

3 = highly accomplished (letter grade = A). The paper clearly delineates the nature of the area that the literature suggests “causes” the achievement gap. The discussion includes research studies in which the data clearly indicate the gap. The student also presents a deep discussion of the policies enacted that are intended to alter practice to close the gap, and lastly, there is a solid presentation and critique of the promising practices designed to close the gap and a judgment of their strengths and weaknesses.

2 = adequate (letter grade = B). The paper describes the nature of the area as a “cause.” The student includes a general and abstract discussion of the research literature to date and identifies some policies enacted to close the gap, and lastly there is some discussion of the promising practices that is more perspective than critique.

1= needs rewriting (letter grade = C). The literature and reads more like a “thought” paper than an analysis of the research literature, the policies enacted, and the effects of those promising practices to date.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| Prior to first night: On Blackboard:  
Read “Documents”: 1, 2  
Peruse “External Links”: 1, 4 |
| January 23 | Introductions; Syllabus; What causes the gap?  
Read T&T pp. 1-23 (for next week)  
Read External Link 5 (for next week) |
| 30         | No Class: AACTE Annual meeting                                         |
| February 6 | The Problem: From Coleman to…  
Read T&T pp. 24-64 and RR pp. 85-94 (for next week)  
Read External Links 6, 7 (for next week)  
Read Documents 3-4 (for next week) |
| 13         | …Testing and Expectations  
Read T&T pp. 81-147 and RR pp. ix-60 (for next week)  
Read Documents 5-6 (for next week)  
Peruse External Link 8 (for next week) |
| 20         | Race, Ethnicity, Language and Culture  
Read T&T pp. 169-188 and (for next week)  
Peruse External Link 9 (for next week)  
Read External Link 10 (for next week)  
Read Document 7 (for next week) |
| 27         | Race, Ethnicity, Language, Culture, and Class  
Read T&T pp. 65-80 and RR 95-128 (for next week) |
| March 6    | Non-cognitive skills  
Read T&T pp. 189-210 (for next week)  
Read External Links 11-12, 47 (for next week)  
Peruse Document 9 (for next week) |
| 13         | Spring Break                                                          |
| 20         | Teacher quality  
Read T&T pp. 151-188 (for next week)  
Read Document 10 (for next week)  
Read External Link 13 (for next week) |
|            | **Final paper topic due**                                            |
27

Traditional Solutions
Read T&T pp. 213-269 (for next week)
Read Document 12

April

3

Serious efforts and limited results
Read RR pp. 61-83 (for next week)
Peruse Documents 14-15
Read Documents 16-17
Read External Link 14-16

10

Schools that beat the odds
Read External Link 17 (for next week)
More to be added

17

Ableism
Read External Link 18 (for next week)
More to be added

24

Gender
Read T&T pp. 270-274 and RR pp. 129-150 (for next week)
Read further about your area in both the Documents and External Links (21 and up) (for next week)

May

1

Promising reforms and needs
Read Document 18-19 (for next week)
Read External Link 19-20

8

A world of possibilities

15

Presentation of papers

**Paper due**