

GOVT 150W-02 Freshman Seminar: The Policy and Politics of No Child Left Behind

CRN 25350, Spring 2009

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Course Meetings: MW, 3-4:20pm, Morton 139

1. Course description

Hello everyone, and welcome! This writing-intensive freshman seminar examines the policy and politics of the nation's primary law for elementary and secondary education, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The law is already overdue for its next reauthorization, and now is a great time to assess its track record and potential future. In so doing, we will read several sources that consider NCLB's origins, its primary assumptions and mechanisms, and debates over its effects and possible reforms. Through course assignments and discussions, you will become experts on NCLB's approach to educational accountability while simultaneously you sharpen your writing and communication skills.

2. Readings

These required books are available at the College bookstore.

- Frederick M. Hess and Michael J. Petrilli. 2006. *No Child Left Behind: A Primer*. New York: Peter Lang. ISBN 9780820478449
- Richard Rothstein. 2008. *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*. Washington, DC and New York: Economic Policy Institute and Teacher's College Press. ISBN 9780807749395
- Richard Kahlenberg. 2008. *Improving on No Child Left Behind: Getting Education Reform Back on Track*. Washington, DC: Century Foundation. ISBN 9780870785122
- Deborah Meier and George Wood (eds.). 2004. *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools*. Boston: Beacon Press. ISBN 9780807004593

Other required readings are in a course pack at the Swem Library Copy Center.

We will use these free on-line resources for conversations and brief assignments about writing.

- *The Chicago Manual of Style* (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html>)
- *The Elements of Style* (<http://www.crockford.com/wrrrld/style.html>)
- Grammar Girl (<http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/EpisodeList.aspx>)

3. Grading and assignments

I will base final course grades on the following scale, with partial-percents typically rounded to the nearest full percent: A 93-100, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77, C- 70-72, D+ 68-69, D 63-67, D- 60-62, F <60.

Here is how I will evaluate your work this semester.

Due	Item	Grade weight (%)
Everyday	Class attendance and participation	20
F, 1/23 by 5pm	Writing self-assessment	2.5
F, 2/6 by 5pm	Reaction paper #1	5
F, 2/20 by 5pm	Reaction paper #2	5
W, 3/4 in class	Essay #1 (bring two copies of it to class)	5
M, 3/16 in class	Peer review of classmate's essay #1	2.5
M, 3/23 in class	Revised essay #1 (hand in the revised essay, comments from your peer reviewer, and Manna's comments)	10
Th, 4/2 by 5pm	Reaction paper #3	5
F, 4/17 by 5pm	Essay #2	20
W, 5/6 by 5pm	Essay #3 (hand in the essay and source note)	25

In general, three sorts of activities will comprise the bulk of your grade. Well before each due date, I will make my expectations for each assignment clear. Here is a quick summary for now.

- Class attendance and participation are crucial for the success of this class. That means you should arrive on time everyday and be well-prepared to discuss the readings. If usually you are shy in classes, with my help, here is where you will start overcoming those fears of speaking out. Please see me ASAP and we can identify some strategies to help you become more involved.
- Reaction papers will be short writing “wind sprints” that ask you to consider a particular reading or argument.
- Essays will require you to develop an argument by synthesizing information from several sources.

Late work will incur a score penalty of at least 1/3 of a letter grade per day, including weekend days, that it is late (e.g., a B+ paper becomes a B paper after one day). The only legitimate excuses for completing an assignment late are documented medical or family emergencies, or religious observances. Computer problems, athletic contests, visits from friends or relatives, and demands from other courses, and the like can be anticipated and worked around.

Finally, please practice smart computing by saving your work regularly and planning ahead for possible mechanical failures. A computer or printer crash is no excuse for handing in a late paper. If you save your work to your space on the College's H:\ drive, for example, you never have to worry about losing a paper due to computer failure.

4. Other notes

4.1 Academic misconduct

I begin by assuming academic misconduct will not become an issue in this class. If it does, for any questions about policies regarding cheating, plagiarism, or other types of academic dishonesty, please see William and Mary Honor Council's web site and the discussion of the Honor Code in the Student Handbook. If I discover a student violating the honor code, I will initiate an Honor Council proceeding and, at a bare minimum, recommend that the student receive an “F” for the course. I take this issue extremely seriously, and hope you do too.

4.2 What you can expect from me

You can expect several things from me this semester. First, I will not ask you to do things that waste your time. I am convinced that students respond best when professors encourage them to think hard about interesting ideas and questions. I will work all semester to create that kind of environment. Second, I will give you lots of honest feedback in class discussions, office hours, email exchanges, and on your written work. Finally, I promise to treat you with respect. I anticipate that we will sometimes disagree about government and politics this semester. In fact, I hope we do because that will make the course more interesting. I will not penalize you if you do not embrace my political beliefs, nor will I reward you if we happen to agree on political matters.

5. Schedule of topics, readings, and assignments

We will adjust this schedule as needed to incorporate minor changes to the readings or to allow for in-class activities and assignments.

W 1/21	Course introduction
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Due Friday, 1/23 by 5pm – Writing self-assessment

5.1. Contexts

M 1/26	Governance: Who's in charge? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael W. Kirst. 2004. Ch. 2. Turning points: A history of American school governance. In Noel Epstein (ed.) <i>Who's in Charge Here? The Tangled Web of School Governance and Policy</i>. pp. 14-41. CP• William G. Howell. 2005. Ch. 1. Introduction. In William G. Howell (ed.) <i>Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics</i>. pp. 1-23. CP
W 1/28	Governance (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No new reading
M 2/2	Achievement gaps and economic performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• US Department of Education. 2007. Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Minorities. Ch. 3 Achievement. pp. 45-74. CP• New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. 2006. Tough Choices or Tough Times (executive summary). pp. 5-22. CP
W 2/4	Achievement gaps and economic performance (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No new reading

Due Friday, 2/6 by 5pm – Reaction paper #1

M 2/9	Standards and accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diane Ravitch. 1995. Ch. 1. The idea of standards. <i>National Standards in Education: A Citizen's Guide</i>. pp. 7-32. CP
W 2/11	Standards and accountability (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rothstein, Ch. 1-2

5.2. NCLB's logic and levers

M 2/16	NCLB's background and passage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul Manna. 2006. Ch. 4. Patterns of federal involvement in education (pp. 68-85), and Ch. 6. Leaving no child behind in the American federal system (pp. 117-137). School's In: Federalism and the National Education Agenda. CP
W 2/18	NCLB's logic and primary levers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hess and Petrilli, Ch. 1-2 and Appendix

Due Friday, 2/20 by 5pm – Reaction paper #2

M 2/23	Researching education policy and politics with Swem resources
W 2/25	Adequate Yearly Progress and remedies for improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary Jean LeTendre. 2001. Defining Adequate Yearly Progress: Strengthening Responsibility for Results Without Toppling State Accountability Systems. pp. 1-15. CP Kati Haycock and Ross Wiener. 2003. Adequate yearly progress under NCLB. pp. 27-31. CP
M 3/2	Program funding mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul Manna. 2008. Federal Aid to Elementary and Secondary Education: Premises, Effects, and Major Lessons Learned (excerpt). pp. 5-9. CP Thomas W. Fagan and Nancy L. Kober. 2004. Title I Funds: Who's Gaining, Who's Losing and Why. pp. 1-12. CP
W 3/4	*Due in class – 2 copies of essay #1* Early critics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meier Ch. 4 in Meier and Wood Kohn Ch. 5 in Meier and Wood
M 3/9	No class – Spring break
W 3/11	No class – Spring break

5.3. NCLB implementation

M 3/16	*Due in class – Marked-up essay that you reviewed* Writing with education data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new reading
W 3/18	Writing with education data (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new reading

M 3/23	<p>*Due in class – Revised essay #1*</p> <p>Hand in three things: (1) Revised essay; (2) Original essay with Manna’s comments; (3) Original essay with student reviewer comments.</p> <p>Federal perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul Manna. 2006. Control, persuasion, and educational accountability: Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. <i>Educational Policy</i> 20(3): 471-494. CP
W 3/25	<p>Federal perspective (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duncomb and Yinger, Ch. 2 in Kahlenberg
M 3/30	<p>State perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Accountability Office. 2004. NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT: Improvements Needed in Education’s Process for Tracking States’ Implementation of Key Provisions (excerpt). pp. 1-38. CP
W 4/1	<p>State perspective (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul Manna. 2007. NCLB in the states: Fragmented governance, uneven implementation. In Frederick M. Hess and Chester E. Finn, Jr. (eds.) <i>No Remedy Left Behind: Lessons from a Half-Decade of NCLB</i>. pp. 17-42. CP

Due Thursday, 4/2 by 5pm – Reaction paper #3

M 4/6	<p>School perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karp, Ch. 3 in Meier and Wood Thomas J. Kane, Douglas O. Staiger, and Jeffrey Geppert. 2002. Randomly accountable. <i>Education Next</i>. Spring. pp. 57-61. CP
W 4/8	<p>Classroom perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rothstein, Ch. 3 Wood, Ch. 2 in Meier and Wood
M 4/13	<p>Student perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wells and Holme, Ch. 4 in Kahlenberg
W 4/15	<p>Student perspective (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rothstein, Ch. 4 Thomas B. Fordham Institute. 2008. High-achieving students in the era of NCLB (pp. 13-37, 49-71). Report distributed in class.

Due Friday, 4/17 by 5pm – Essay #2

5.4. Reforming NCLB

M 4/20	<p>Reform 1: Expand resources and measures of success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hess and Petrilli, Ch. 5 Darling-Hammond, Ch. 1 in Meier and Wood Neil, Ch. 6 in Meier and Wood
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W 4/22	Reform 2: National standards and high expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resnick, Stein, and Coon, Ch. 3 in Kahlenberg • Frederick M. Hess and Chester E. Finn, Jr. 2007. Conclusion: Can this law be fixed? A hard look at the NCLB remedies. In Frederick M. Hess and Chester E. Finn, Jr. (eds.) <i>No Remedy Left Behind: Lessons from a Half-Decade of NCLB</i>. pp. 309-29. CP
M 4/27	Reform 3: Comprehensive view of youth development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rothstein, Ch. 6 and 7
W 4/29	Class wrap-up

Due Wednesday, May 6 by 5pm – Essay #3