

GOVT 455 Education Policy and Politics in the U.S.

Fall 2017, CRN 16390

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Course Meetings: 131 Tyler Hall, M 3:30-6:20pm

Office Hours: W 3:00-5:00pm and by appointment

1. Course description

Welcome to GOVT 455. This research seminar explores the policy and politics of K-12 education in the United States. The course considers these issues through several theoretical lenses, competing perspectives, and activities. Recall that the course carries 4 credits, which means the workload will be intense, akin to a graduate-level course. Each year I have similar high expectations for this class and the vast majority of my students always have been up to the challenge. You can count on me to offer plenty of help and feedback as the semester unfolds.

2. Readings

These books are required and available for purchase on-line or at the college bookstore.

- Jeffrey R. Henig. 2013. *The End of Exceptionalism in American Education: The Changing Politics of School Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. ISBN 9781612505114.
- Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick. 2003. *The American Dream and the Public Schools*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780195176032.
- Jeffrey R. Henig, Richard C. Hula, Marion Orr, and Desiree S. Bedescleaux. 1999. *The Color of School Reform: Race, Politics, and the Challenge of Urban Education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ISBN 9780691088976.
- Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer. 2010. *Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America's Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9780521148863.
- Sarah Reckhow. 2013. *Follow the Money: How Foundation Dollars Change Public School Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190227340.
- Frederick M. Hess and Max Eden (eds.). 2017. *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What It Means for Schools, Systems, and States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. ISBN 9781682530122.

Other required readings will be handed out in class or posted on Blackboard.

3. Assignments and grading

Course grades are based on these items. Students must complete all items to receive course credit.

Percent	Item
40	Class participation, including being the class discussion starter for one week
10	Research paper preliminaries: (a) prospectus, (b) research design, (c) draft intro, theory, and hypotheses paper; (d) peer-review assignment
10	Research paper presentation
40	Research paper

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

3.1 Class participation

In addition to regular class participation, each week two seminar members will be discussion starters to help kick off our conversation. Your active participation and attendance at all seminar sessions is absolutely essential for the success of this course. Please see me immediately if talking in class makes you nervous. I am confident that with my assistance you will overcome those fears. Put simply, the class will flop unless every week, all class members are prepared to exchange ideas and have lively debates. Consider yourself ill-prepared if before class you are not taking notes on the readings and preparing some written ideas to the discussion questions I will provide.

The best contributions extend or develop discussions. In other words, you speak to help push the conversation forward, not simply to have us hear your voice. As much as possible, you should ground your comments in the readings and point us to specific passages to back your arguments. You should avoid comments that draw mainly on your personal biography and begin with something like “Back home in my school . . .” And you should not rely on a few seminar members to lead or carry the discussion.

To facilitate discussion, I will restrict the use of electronic devices to certain segments of each class. These devices will be appropriate during periods in which I am lecturing or when we are brainstorming ideas about research papers. Unless you are accessing the readings electronically, laptops and other devices should be turned off during our discussion of readings.

3.2 Research paper

The course’s capstone assignment is a major research paper on a topic related to K-12 education policy or politics. As an original research paper your work will be grounded in a theoretical orientation that you use to generate hypotheses and interpret empirical evidence. The paper will have a clear research design that you will develop with the help of myself and your classmates.

You will define the scope of your project and begin to launch it by completing three short papers: a prospectus, a research design, and draft intro, theory, and hypotheses summary. Those assignments, my feedback, and peer-review feedback from your classmates will serve as building blocks for the final paper. Near the semester’s end, all students will present initial results of their research to the entire class and invited guests. Because these presentations will occur before the final papers are due they also will enable you to gather additional feedback before completing your final paper.

3.3 Academic misconduct

I begin by assuming academic misconduct will not become an issue in this class. If it does, for any questions about the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, or other types of misconduct, please see the William & Mary Honor Council website and relevant pages about 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 minimum, recommend to the Council that the student receive an “F” for the course.

4. Schedule

We will adjust this schedule as needed. You can count on due dates remaining firm or, if shifted, the shifts will allow you more time to complete the assignment.

4.1 Contexts

M, 9/4 – Course introduction

M, 9/11 – Researching education policy and politics

a. Research design readings

- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Ch. 1. The *science* in social science. pp. 3-23 (stop before beginning section 1.2.3).
- John Gerring. 2008. “Case selection for case-study analysis: Qualitative and quantitative techniques.” In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 645-684.

b. Research paper example readings from prior GOVT 455 classes

- Read from start to finish one Group A paper and one Group B paper.
- Skim the other papers (spend about 10-15 minutes with each one).

Group A – mainly quantitative methods	Group B – mainly qualitative methods
Rachel Brooks. 2013. The potential priming effects of schools: Can polling location influence voter choice on education-related measures?	Mary Covington. 2013. American Indian and Alaskan Native education: A case of shifting bureaucratic accountability.
Althea Lyness-Fernandez. 2012. The moral majority: The influence of traditionalism in state health education policy.	Will Perkins. 2010. Policy entrepreneurship in teacher union contract negotiations: Two case studies in mayoral control districts.
Hilary Ramp. 2008. The rhetoric of education policy in U.S. national party platforms.	Anne Hyslop. 2006. Hybridization and urban school performance in Virginia: A case study of Hopewell and Petersburg City public schools.

M, 9/18 – The shifting sands of education governance and politics

- Henig, *The End of Exceptionalism in American Education*.
Read all chapters.
- **PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE AT START OF CLASS (bring to class)**

M, 9/25 – Education policy goals in tension

- Hochschild and Scovronick, *The American Dream and the Public Schools*
Read Introduction, Ch. 1, Ch. 8.
Read at least 3 chapters from among Ch. 2-7.
Skim the chapters you chose not to read.

4.2. Issues

M, 10/2 – Standards and curriculum in the policy process

- Berkman and Plutzer, *Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America’s Classrooms*
Read Ch. 1-4.

M, 10/9 – Standards, curriculum, and teaching in local communities and the classroom

- Berkman and Plutzer, *Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America's Classrooms*
Read Ch. 5-9.

F, 10/13 – RESEARCH DESIGN DUE BY 5:00PM

M, 10/16 – No class due to fall break [10/14-10/17]

M, 10/23 – Race, governance, and urban education reform

- Henig et al, *The Color of School Reform*
Read Ch. 1-4.

M, 10/30 – Race, pluralism, and urban education reform

- Henig et al, *The Color of School Reform*
Read Ch. 5-8.

M, 11/6 – Foundation interests, school politics, and accountability

- Reckhow, *Follow the Money*
Read all chapters.

M, 11/13 – The federal role, federalism, and intergovernmental policy implementation in education

- Hess and Eden, *The Every Student Succeeds Act*
Read Introduction.
Skim Ch. 1-3.
Read Ch. 4-9.
Skim Ch. 10-11, Conclusion, Afterword.

F, 11/17 – DRAFT INTRO, THEORY, AND HYPOTHESES PAPER DUE TO PEER REVIEWERS AND PROF. MANNA BY 5:00PM

4.3 Student research

M, 11/20 – Peer review circles and presentation demo

- **PEER-REVIEW ASSIGNMENT DUE AT START OF CLASS (bring to class)**

M, 11/27 – Presentations round 1

M, 12/4 – Presentations round 2

Th, 12/14 – Presentations round 3. This meeting is in our final exam time slot. I would be up for holding this meeting earlier in the week if it weren't too disruptive to everyone's schedule. We can discuss possible options.

W, 12/20 – RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY 12:00NOON