

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

Fall 2011, Section 01, CRN 16808

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Course Meetings: 4 Morton Hall, W 3:30-6:20pm

Office Hours: T 10:00-11:30am, F 2:00-3:30pm, 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. Overall, the workload will be intense, akin to a graduate-level course. Each year I have had similar expectations for this class and the majority of my students 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.

- Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer. 2010. *Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America's Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9780521148863
- Julian R. Betts and Tom Loveless, eds. 2005. *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings. ISBN 978081575331.
- Dan Goldhaber and Jane Hannaway. 2009. *Creating a New Teaching Profession*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press. ISBN 9780877667629.
- Frederick M. Hess and Eric Osberg. 2010. *Stretching the School Dollar: How Schools and Districts Can Save Money While Serving Students Best*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. ISBN 9781934742648.
- Paul Manna. 2011. *Collision Course: Federal Education Policy Meets State and Local Realities*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN 9781608716494.
- Diane Ravitch. 2010. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*. New York: Basic Books. ISBN 9780465014910.

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
10	Research paper presentation
40	Final research paper

I will assign grades using an A to F 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). Each assignment will be weighted based on the percentages in the above table.

3.1 Class participation

In addition to regular class participation, each week two seminar members will serve as discussion starters. Your active participation and attendance at all seminar sessions is absolutely essential. Please see me immediately if talking in class makes you nervous. With my assistance, we can help you overcome those fears. Put simply, this 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 at least some (ideally all) of 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 minimize comments that draw 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 laptop computers to certain segments of each class. Laptops will be appropriate during periods in which I am lecturing or when we are brainstorming ideas about research papers. Laptops must be turned off during discussion of the readings.

3.2 Research paper

The course’s capstone assignment is a 25-page 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 by completing two short writing assignments, listed above as “research paper preliminaries.” Those assignments and my feedback 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 draft.

3.3 Academic misconduct

For any questions about the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, or other types of misconduct, please refer to the William and Mary Honor Council website and the relevant pages about the Honor Code from 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 to the Council that the student receive an “F” for the course.

4. Schedule

We will alter this schedule as needed. **=Reading handed out in class or on Blackboard.

4.1 Contexts

W, 8/24 – Course introduction

W, 8/31 – Researching education policy and politics: Theoretical perspectives

- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Ch. 1. The Science in Social Science. pp. 3-33. **
- Jeffrey R. Henig. 2009. Mayors, governors, and presidents: The new education executives and the end of educational exceptionalism. *Peabody Journal of Education* 84(3): 283-299. **
- Andrew Karch. 2010. Policy feedback and preschool funding in the American states. *Policy Studies Journal* 38(2): 217-234. **
- Paul Manna. 2006. Control, persuasion, and educational accountability: Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. *Educational Policy* 20(3): 471-494. **

W, 9/7 – Federal and state governance

- James E. Ryan. 2004. Ch. 3. The Tenth Amendment and other paper tigers: The legal boundaries of education governance. In Noel Epstein (ed.) *Who's in Charge Here?* pp. 42-74. **
- Manna, Ch. 1.
- Berkman and Plutzer, Ch. 1-4. (Note: Read Ch. 1 & 4; you can skim ch. 2-3).

Friday, September 9. RESEARCH PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE BY 5PM.

W, 9/14 –Local governance

- Ravitch, Ch. 3-5
- Jane Hannaway and Maggie Stanislawski. 2005. Flip-flops in school reform: An evolutionary theory of decentralization. In Hess (ed.) *Urban School Reform: Lessons from San Diego*. pp. 53-70. **
- Peter Meyer. 2008. New York City's education battles. *Education Next*. Spring. pp. 11-20. **

W, 9/21 – Street-level bureaucracy

- Berkman and Plutzer, Ch. 5-9.

4.2 Policy controversies and challenges

W, 9/28 – Finance

- Hess and Osberg, Ch. 1-3, 6, 8-10
- Center on Education Policy. 2011. Strained Schools Face Bleak Future: Districts Foresee Budget Cuts, Teacher Layoffs, and a Slowing of Education Reform Efforts. Washington, DC: Author. **

W, 10/5 – Teachers and reform: Proposals

- Goldhaber and Hannaway, Ch. 1, 3, 6-9, 11
- Hess and Osberg, Ch. 5

Monday, October 3. RESEARCH DESIGN PAPER DUE BY 5PM

W, 10/12 – Teachers and reform: Politics

- Goldhaber and Hannaway. 2009. *Creating a New Teaching Profession*, Ch. 12-16
- Ravitch, Ch. 9.
- Terry M. Moe. 2006. Union power and the education of children. In Hannaway and Rotherham (eds.) *Collective Bargaining in Education*. pp. 229-255. **

W, 10/19 – Standards, testing, and accountability: Theories of action and implementation

- Manna, Ch. 2-5
- Ravitch, Ch. 2

W, 10/26 – Standards, testing, and accountability: Student results and reform

- Manna, Ch. 6-7
- Ravitch, Ch. 6 and 8.

W, 11/2 – Public and private school choice

- Betts and Loveless (eds). 2005. *Getting Choice Right*. Ch 1 (skim), 3, 5-7, 9-10.
- Ravitch, Ch. 7

W, 11/9 – Washington, DC trip

- Readings about our guest speakers to be announced.

4.3 Research

W, 11/16 – Washington, DC debrief and research paper discussion

W, 11/23 – No class. Thanksgiving break.

W, 11/30 – Research paper presentations

M, 12/13, 9am-12noon – Research paper presentations

This is our final exam time. I would prefer to switch this meeting to Wednesday, 12/8.
Let's discuss this possibility.

Wednesday, December 15. FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 5PM.