

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

Fall 2013, CRN 16808

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Course Meetings: 37 Morton Hall, W 3:30-6:20pm

Office Hours: T 3:30-5:00pm, 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, (c) draft intro, theory, and hypotheses; (d) peer-review papers
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 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 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 books electronically, laptops and other devices must be turned off during our discussion of 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 a three short papers: a prospectus, a research design, and draft intro along with 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 draft.

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

4.1 Contexts

W, 8/28 – Course introduction

W, 9/4 – Researching education policy and politics: Theoretical perspectives and examples

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. 2007. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Ch. 5. Techniques for choosing cases. Read pp. 86-91, especially Table 5.1, very carefully. Then, pick a few of the designs discussed in Table 5.1 and read about them in more detail in the remaining pages of the chapter. **

b. Research paper example readings from prior GOVT 455 classes

Read three papers up thru their discussion of “theory and hypotheses.” Typically that means you can stop reading before getting into the “data and methods” part. Then pick one Group A paper and one Group B paper and read those two thru to the end.

Group A – mainly quantitative methods	Group B – mainly qualitative methods
Meredith Dost. 2012. Representative bureaucracy and Latino student achievement: A case for increased minority representation on school boards in US public schools. **	Anne Hyslop. 2006. Hybridization and urban school performance in Virginia: A case study of Hopewell and Petersburg City public schools. **
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. **	

W, 9/11 – Federal and state governance

- Manna, Ch. 1 (pp. 4-6 on “Evolving Federal Ambitions” and pp. 11-15 on “Institutions and Politics”).
- 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. **
- Berkman and Plutzer, Introduction and Ch. 1-4.

Friday, September 13. PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE BY 5PM.

W, 9/18 – Local governance

- Ravitch, Ch. 3-5.
- Goldhaber and Hannaway, Ch. 13.
- Jane Hannaway and Maggie Stanislawski. 2005. Flip-flops in school reform. In Frederick M. Hess (ed.), *Urban School Reform: Lessons from San Diego*. pp. 53-70. **

W, 9/25 – Street-level bureaucracy

- Berkman and Plutzer, Ch. 5-9.

4.2 Policy controversies and challenges

W, 10/2 – Finance

- Hess and Osberg, Introduction, Ch. 1-3 and 8-11.

W, 10/9 – Teachers and reform: Proposals

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

Friday, October 11. RESEARCH DESIGN DUE BY 5PM

W, 10/16 – 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 Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham (eds.), *Collective Bargaining in Education*. pp. 229-255. **

W, 10/23 – Standards, testing, and accountability: Theories of action and implementation

- Manna, Ch. 1-5.
- Ravitch, Ch. 2.
- Hess and Osberg, Ch. 6.

W, 10/30 – Student results and reform: NCLB, RTTT, and the NCLB waiver debate

- Manna, Ch. 6 (read all) and 7 (read 148-159).
- Ravitch, Ch. 6 (skim) and 8 (read all).
- Paul Manna and Laura L. Ryan. 2011. Competitive grants and educational federalism: President Obama's Race to the Top program in theory and practice. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 41(3): 522-546. **
- Wayne Riddle and Nancy Kober. 2012. What Impact Will NCLB Waivers Have on the Consistency, Complexity, and Transparency of State Accountability Systems? Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy. (read pp. 1-3; skim pp. 3-7; read pp. 7-13; skim pp. 13-25; read pp. 25-27). **
- Wayne Riddle and Nancy Kober. 2012. Accountability Issues to Watch Under NCLB Waivers. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy. **

W, 11/6 – Public and private school choice

Due at start of class: RESEARCH PAPER DRAFT INTRO, THEORY, AND HYPOTHESES.

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

4.3 Student research

W, 11/13 – Final push: Peer review circles and presentation demo

Due at start of class: PEER-REVIEW PAPERS.

W, 11/20 – Research paper presentations, Round 1

W, 11/27 – No class—Thanksgiving break

W, 12/4 – Research paper presentations, Round 2

Tuesday, 12/17, 9am-12noon (our final exam slot) – Research paper presentations, Round 3

→ NOTE: I would like to reschedule this session for some time during the week of 12/9-12/13.

Wednesday, December 18. FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY 5PM.