

EAD 943: Politics and Education

Fall 2012

Wednesdays from 4:10-7pm

Michigan State University

311 Bessey Hall

Professor Rebecca Jacobsen

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Office Hours: By appointment. Just email me and we will set up a time.

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the complex and often contested field of politics and education. The purpose of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the forces that shape educational policy, with an emphasis on governance structures, stakeholders, public engagement, and current policy issues and political contexts.

It begins with an overview of the development of politics and education as a field. We then examine major theories of policy making which will serve as a guide for understanding who gets what, when and how as we examine different education policy issues. The course provides opportunities to apply theoretical perspectives to "mini" case studies of education policymaking processes in organizational settings of particular interest to students.

Focus of the Course:

Harold Lasswell, American political scientist and professor of law at Yale University said, "*Politics is who gets what, when, and how.*" This will be our guiding big idea throughout the course. Who is able to get what from the education system? Who is able to get what from education policy leaders? When are different groups able to get particular policies passed? How are they able to have influence?

To examine these questions, we will focus on the US school system. Comparisons to other political systems are welcome. Further, we will consider:

The Policy Making Process

- How is policy made?
- What theories explain why some policies are adopted while other policy ideas go unexamined?
- How is policy made in education?

Changing Power Dynamics

- Who has been influential in deciding education policy?
 - Who has formal power?
 - Who has informal power?
- How has this above list changed and shifted overtime?

Power Over/Power To Influence The Issues

- When considering specific issues, are the politics different? Should they be?

- What venues do different groups/individuals use to shape education policy?
- What strategies do different groups/individuals use to shape education policy?

Course Requirements:

1) Readings, Class Participation and Attendance

Learning how to think and talk critically about ideas and evidence are central tasks for the advanced graduate student. Accordingly, it is very important that all members of the class do the required reading and do so *before* the class session at which it will be discussed. It is expected that students will bring questions related to the text to each class and make references to the reading during class discussions.

Regular on-time attendance and full participation in class is critical to learning. Of course, illness and other emergencies cannot be avoided (within reason). If you are unable to attend a class session, you must email me in advance. If you miss more than one class, additional work will be expected to make up for the missed class sessions. Decisions for what is considered appropriate make up work will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Students are responsible for initiating this process.

I take class participation seriously. That means having things to say (and questions to ask) that are interesting, original, and helpful to the other students. It also means listening to others and building upon their ideas. I expect all students to contribute to the discussion in a manner that is respectful and thoughtful. The professor reserves the right to adjust your grade as a response to absences or excessive tardiness.

How to Read:

I know, I know. We all know *how* to read. But reading effectively for a doctoral course is a different style of reading. To prepare for class, I HIGHLY recommend you bring the following notes to each class.

1. Getting the Basics Down (You DON'T need to know every single idea in every single article!):
 - a. What is the **argument** of the piece? (1 sentence)
 - b. What **evidence/method** did the piece use to support the argument? (list)
 - c. Who is (are) the author(s) **responding** to? (2-4 sentences)
 - i. Are they building on an existing argument?
 - ii. Are they challenging an existing argument?
 - iii. Are they elaborating/refining an argument?
 - iv. Are they incorporating other disciplinary ideas (outside of more typical education frameworks)?
 - d. How does the piece **contribute** to the field's understanding of the issues? (1-3 sentences)
 - e. How **effective** is the argument and evidence in your opinion? (3-5 sentences)
 - i. What assumptions does (do) the author(s) make?
 - ii. What's missing from the analysis?
 - iii. Do you know of existing counter evidence?
 - iv. Is the study generalizable?
 - v. Do you think there is a "real world" application for the ideas in the piece?
2. Connecting the Class Session:

- a. Step back and ask: What does this reading contribute to the session topic identified on the syllabus? How do the readings for the week agree/disagree? What's the root of the disagreement?
3. Connecting to the Course:
 - a. Step back again and ask: How does the reading address the big ideas of the course? How does the reading contribute to our understanding of the politics and education?
4. What's Next:
 - a. If you were to take up this topic, what else would you want to know? What questions still linger for you? (2-3 questions – aim for big idea questions, not fact specific questions)

Required Readings:

There are 3 required books for this course. They can be purchased through the bookstore or online. Additionally, books are also available at the library on reserve. Readings that are from the texts below are marked with an asterisks (*).

- 1) Kirst, Michael and Wirt, Frederick. (2009). *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (4th edition). New York: Teachers College Press.
- 2) Mitchell, Douglas, Crowson, Robert and Shipps, Dorothy. (2011). *Shaping education policy: Power and process*.
- 3) Cooper, B., Fusarelli, L. & Randall, E.V. (2004). *Better Policies, Better Schools: Theories and Applications*. New York: Pearson
- 4) McDermott, K. (2011). *High-Stakes Reform: The Politics of Educational Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Press.

All additional readings listed in the syllabus are available through the Angel website.

2) Course Assignments

Assignment 1: Examining the Policy Making Process for a Particular Education Policy

Working in groups, choose a policy or a single policy component of a comprehensive state or federal law (like No Child Left Behind or IDEA). Write a paper of about 15 (no more than 20) double-spaced pages in which you:

- 1) Identify and describe the policy you are examining in greater depth.
- 2) Getting on the Agenda: Briefly summarize key details about how the policy came to be (how did it get on the agenda, who championed it, was there a window, what political compromises were made, etc.) and if it is still in place
- 3) Policy Formulation: Identify what this policy is/was supposed to do (its intended goal or goals)
- 4) Policy Implementation: Identify how this policy is/was supposed to accomplish the goals or who/what entity was responsible for implementing the policy.
- 5) Policy Evaluation: Summarize the evidence available regarding whether the policy “worked” (Review at least 5 research articles on the topic. Not all research studies are created equal however. So don't just go for the first five you find. Try to locate the “big” evaluation study/ies that are commonly cited for this topic).
- 6) On the basis of this evidence, propose a change that will either make the policy more successful in attaining its goals or move the policy in a direction of a new and better goal.

Possible Policies Include:

- Class Size Reduction Policies
- School Voucher Policies or Lottery Choice Programs
- Accountability Policies (like NCLB, but select some aspect to examine)
- Student Retention (vs. Social Promotion) Policies
- Teacher Certification Policies (requiring an MA, Student Teaching, etc.)
- Teacher Merit Pay Policies
- Universal Pre-K Policies
- Bilingual Education Policies (like limiting the number of years a student can be in bilingual education)
- Student Assignment Policies to Foster Integration (see Seattle or Louisville)

Group Papers Due: 11:59pm on Sunday, October 28. Upload directly to Angel.

Assignment 2: Scholarly Book Review

During Week 13, we will, as a class, read a recent book on the politics of accountability and then read a scholarly review of this book. The purpose will be to both understand the text, but also to examine the genre of scholarly book reviews.

Students should also examine several other reviews in the journal *Education Review* and be prepared to discuss the style of a scholarly review. <http://www.edrev.info/contribute.html>

For Week 14, you will select a book to read from the list provided in the syllabus. In groups, you will present the text to class and discuss how it relates to themes and ideas we have discussed throughout the semester.

Individually, you will write a scholarly book review following the format and style of the book reviews examined in week 13.

Book Review Due: 11:59 pm on Wednesday, December 5th. Upload directly to Angel.

Assignment 3: The Politics of Who Is/Should Be In Charge of Schools

There are two parts to this assignment. However, the paper should be written as one coherent manuscript. Your introduction and thesis should set up both parts of the paper.

Part 1: You are to describe and synthesize the course readings on the ever-present dilemma of who should control the US education system. What have you learned about who has influence, how and when? Identify the tensions that exist in the US system. Describe how these tensions have shifted and evolved over the past century. Explain any trade-offs between different goals of education when different groups have more/less power to control education in the US.

Part 2, Option 1: Who should be in control of the US education system? Describe how you would set up the balance of power in the US education governance system. Identify how this balance of power aids the development of the education purposes (both educational and social) that you believe are important. Identify any weakness(es) or drawback(s) to your proposed governance system and argue why your model should be preferred despite this/these weakness(es).

Part 2, Option 2: Who has a better model? Compare and contrast the US governance system to that of another country. Explain the system with enough detail to support your argument for which system (either the US or a different country) is superior. What goals or purposes are both fostered and limited by the other country's system of governance. Argue why the one country's system is superior even though some goals may not be pursued.

Final Papers are Due: 11:59 pm on Wednesday, December 12th. Upload directly to Angel.

Grades will be based on the following weighting scheme

Weekly Class Attendance:	10%
Weekly Class Participation:	15%
Group Policy Assignment:	20%
Scholarly Book Review:	20%
Final Assignment:	35%

Please Note: A grade of 'I' (incomplete) may be given only when the students (a) has completed at least 12 weeks of the semester but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reasons; AND (b) had done satisfactory work in the course; AND (c) in the instructor's judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course. Grades of 'I' will be given out rarely and students should speak with or email Professor Jacobsen as soon as possible if an issue arises.

Other Important Details:

Students with disabilities: I will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Please feel free to speak with me if there are issues of which I should be aware.

Academic Honesty and Integrity: We assume that students are honest and that all course work represents the student's own work. Violations of the academic integrity policy such as cheating, plagiarism, selling course assignments or academic fraud are grounds for academic action and/or disciplinary sanction as described in the University's student conduct code.

Incidents of Plagiarism: They will be taken very seriously and will be pursued. Students are strongly cautioned not to copy any text verbatim without appropriate quotations and source citations.

For University regulations on academic dishonesty and plagiarism, please refer to:

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html>

WEEKLY CLASS OUTLINE

Introduction: Politics & Education – Why study this? Does politics in education do more harm than good?

Class 1 – The Study of Education Politics: What is it and where did it come from? Should the study of politics be part of education research? Should we try to take politics OUT of education?

9/5

- 1) McDonnell, L. M. (2009). Repositioning politics in education's circle of knowledge. *Educational Researcher*. 38 (6): 417-427.
- 2) Plank, D.N. & Boyd, W.L. (1994). "Antipolitics, Education and Institutional Choice: The Flight from Democracy." *American Educational Research Journal*. 31(2): 263-281.
- 3) Moe, T. (2000). The two democratic purposes of education. In *Rediscovering the democratic purposes of education*. Edited by McDonnell, L. M., Timpane, P. M. and Benjamin, R. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.
- 4) Mintrom, M. (2001). "Educational governance and democratic practice." *Educational Policy*. 15 (5): 615-643.

The Politics of Policy and the Policy Making Process

Class 2 – Policy Making in Education – Where does policy come from?

9/12

- 1) *Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall. (2004). "Introduction." In *Better Policies, Better Schools: Theories and Applications*. Pgs. 1-18.
- 2) *Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall. (2004). "The birth of policy: Problem definition, agenda setting and policy formulation." In *Better Policies, Better Schools: Theories and Applications*. Pgs. 63-82.
- 3) *Mitchell, D. (2011). The surprising history of education policy 1950-2010. In *Shaping education policy: Power and process*. Edited by Mitchell, D., Crowson, R. and Shipps, D. New York: Routledge.

Class 3 – Policy Making in Education – How does education policy get implemented?

9/19

EVERYONE READS:

- 1) *Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall. (2004). "Education policy implementation." In *Better Policies, Better Schools: Theories and Applications*. Pgs. 83-98.
- 2) Odden, A. (1991). "The evolution of education policy implementation." In *Education Policy Implementation*. Pgs. 1-12.
- 3) Honig, M. (2006). "Complexity and policy implementation: Challenges and opportunities for the field." In *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity*. Pgs. 1-24
- 4) Spillane, Reiser & Gomez. (2006). "Policy implementation and cognition: The role of human, social, and distributed cognition in framing policy." In *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity*. Pgs. 25-46.

Class 4 – Policy Making in Education – How does education policy get evaluated? Does education research matter?

9/26

- 1) *Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall. (2004). “Using evaluation to improve education.” In *Better Policies, Better Schools: Theories and Applications*. Pgs. 99-134.
- 2) Henig, J. (2008). “The evolving relationship between researchers and public policy.” In *When research matters: how scholarship influences education policy*. Pgs. 41-62.
- 3) Weiss, C. (1999). “The interface between evaluation and public policy.” *Evaluation*. 5(4): 468-486.

Class 5 – NO MEETING – RJ is at a conference

Groups Should Meet to Work on the First Course Assignment: Group Policy Paper

10/3

Who has a say, when and how in education policy?

Class 6 – Overview of Education Governance

10/10

- 1) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). Part 1: Concepts and Historical Perspectives. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 1-66).
- 2) Corcoran, T. and Goertz, M. (2005). “The Governance of Public Education” (Chapter 2). In *The Public Schools*. Edited by Fuhrman, S. and Lazerson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 3) *Malen, B. (2010). An enduring issue: The relationship between political democracy and educational effectiveness. (Chapter 2). In *Shaping education policy: Power and process*. Edited by Mitchell, D., Crowson, R. and Shipps, D. New York: Routledge.

Class 7 – Local Power Part I – Can we trust the people to hold those they elect accountable? Will they bother to even pay attention?

10/17

- 1) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). School policy access: Elections and referenda. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 101-130).
- 2) Meier, K. and England, R. (1984). “Black representation and educational policy: Are they related?” *The American Political Science Review*. 78(2): 392-403).
- 3) Berry, C. and Howell, W. (2008). Accountability and local elections: Rethinking retrospective voting. *The Journal of Politics*. 69(3): 844-858.
- 4) Allen, A. and Plank, D. (2005). School board election structure and democratic representation. *Educational Policy*. 19(3): 510-527.

Class 8 – Local Power Part II – Outdated and Failing?

10/24

Superintendents:

- 1) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). The Chief Administrator as Professional and Politician. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 181-202).
- 2) Hess, F. (1999). Organizational and personal incentives for reform. In *Spinning Wheels: The politics or urban school reform*. (Chapter 2). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

School Boards:

- 3) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). Local school boards, politics and the community. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 131-158).
- 4) Finn, C. and Keegan L. G. (2004). Lost at sea: Time to jettison one of the chief obstacles to reform: the local school board. *Education Next*.

**** Policy Papers Due by 11:59pm on Sunday, October 28****

Class 9 – Local Power Part III – Salvageable in the Right Hands?

10/31

Mayors:

- 1) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). Mayoral control of schools: Politics, trade-offs and outcomes. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 159-180).
- 2) Hess, F. (2008). Looking for leadership: Assessing the case for mayoral control of urban school systems. *American Journal of Education*. 114(3): 219-245.
- 3) Wong, K., Shen, F., Anagnostopoulos, D and Rutledge, S. (2007). Chapter 1: The historical and political context of integrated governance and Chapter 8: The political dynamics of building public support for education. In *The education mayor: Improving America's schools*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Press.

Class 10 – The Power of the State – The Rightful Ruler?

11/7

- 1) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). Part III: The history and evolution of the state role in education policy. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 227-256)
- 2) Fusarelli, L. (2009). Improvement or interference? Reenvisioning the “State” in education reform. (Chapter 12). In *The rising state: How state power is transforming our nation's schools*. Edited by Fusarelli, B. and Cooper, B. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- 3) Sunderman, G. and Orfield, G. (2006). Domesticating a revolution: No Child Left Behind and state administrative response. *Harvard Educational Review*. 76(4): 526-556.

Class 11 – Federal Power – Small Contribution, Big Strings

11/14

- 1) *Kirst, M. W. and Wirt, F. M. (2009). Politics of Federal Aid. In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. (pgs 283-308).
- 2) Manna, P. (2007). Patterns of federal interest in education (chapter 3) & Patterns of federal involvement in education (chapter 4). In *School's In: Federalism and the national education agenda*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- 3) Sunderman, G. and Kim, J. (2007). The expansion of the federal power and politics of implementing the No Child Left Behind act. *Teachers College Record*. 109(5): 1057-1085.

Class 12 – Interest Groups: Whose interests are they pursuing?

11/21

- 1) Cibulka, J. (2001). The changing role of interest groups in education: Nationalization and the new politics of education productivity. *Educational Policy*. 15(1): 12-40.
- 2) Ravitch, D. (2010). The billionaire boys' club. (chapter 10) In *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York: Basic Books.
- 3) Moe, T. (2011). "The problem of union power." In *Special interest: Teachers unions and America's public schools*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- 4) Reckhow, S. (2009). "Disseminating and legitimating a new approach: The role of foundations." In *Between public and private: Politics, governance, and the new portfolio models for urban school reform*. Bulkeley, K., Henig, J. and Levin, H. (Eds.) New York City: Teachers College Press. 106-136.
- 5) Toch, T. Education entrepreneurs on the Potomac. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 92(7): 68-69.
- 6) Lugg, C. and Robinson, M. (2009). Religion, advocacy coalitions and the politics of U.S. public schooling. *Educational Policy*. 23(1): 242-266.
- 7) Higgins, M., Hess, F., Weiner, J. and Robison, W. (2011). Creating a corps of change agents. *Education Next*. Summer: 18-25.

Power and the Issues: Looking at Accountability Policies

Class 13 – Politics of NCLB and Accountability

11/28

- 1) McDermott, Kathryn. (2011). *High-Stakes Reform: The Politics of Educational Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- 2) Soland, Jim. (2012 February 29) Review of High Stakes Reform: The Politics of Educational Accountability, Kathryn A. McDermott. Education Review, 15.
<http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1159.pdf>

Class 14 – Politics of Governance Book Review

12/5

Book Options Include:

- The Ordeal of Equality: Did Federal Regulation Fix the Schools?
- Collision Course: Federal Education Policy Meets State and Local Realities
- Controlling Education: Localism vs. Equity
- From a Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind: National Education Goals and the Creation of Federal Education Policy
- Politics, Ideology & Education: Federal Education Policy During the Clinton and Bush Administrations
- No Child Left Behind and the Transformation of Federal Education Policy

NOTE: There are several book reviews for each of the above. DON'T consult them until AFTER you have submitted your paper.

*****SCHOLARLY BOOK REVIEWS DUE: 12/5/11 at 11:59pm *****

Class 15 – Final Class Wrap Up

12/12

- 1) *Mitchell, D., Shipp, D., and Crowson, R. (2011). What have we learned about shaping education policy? In *Shaping education policy: Power and process*. Edited by Mitchell, D., Crowson, R. and Shipp, D. New York: Routledge.
- 2) Henig, J. (2009). Mayors, governors, and presidents: The new education executives and the end of educational exceptionalism. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 84(3): 283-299.

*****FINAL PAPERS DUE: 12/13/11 at 11:59pm *****