

EFOP 2010/3010: Educational Systems, Macro Policy, and Politics**Fall 2021**

University of Pittsburgh
Cathedral of Learning Room G20
Mondays 3pm-5:40pm

Instructor:

Hayley Weddle

hweddle@pitt.edu**Office hours:** Please email me to set up a meeting—I look forward to connecting.**Course Description**

Welcome to the macro education policy course! I am excited to learn with all of you this semester. This course examines issues and trends in education policy, with a primary focus on the United States. The course uses critical policy analysis as a grounding framework, and addresses key issues pertaining to education policy across the P-20 pipeline such as: (a) the ways that educational organizations are shaped by a stratified society; (b) how policies at the federal- and state-levels mediate education at the local level; (c) how educational systems have been impacted by movements including accountability, privatization, and choice and (d) how power, politics, and advocacy influence policy processes. The course is designed to be collaborative and engaging, and will include opportunities for group teaching as well as individual presentations.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, we will be able to:

1. Describe policy issues, debates, and stakeholders at different points along the P-20 education pipeline
2. Apply a critical lens to evaluate the equity implications of policies across levels of the education system (e.g. federal, state, local)
3. Examine policy advocacy and change processes, including what counts as evidence
4. Communicate clearly about complex education policy and equity issues to a variety of audiences

Course Materials

The core text for this course is:

Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge.

This book is available [electronically on PITTCat](#) and thus does not need to be purchased (although you are welcome to do so if you'd like). All other readings will be uploaded to Canvas.

Assignments

Below are the assignments for the course; more details will be provided during class.

Individual meeting (Weeks 1-2): During the first two weeks of class, please sign up for a 20-minute virtual meeting with me so that we can get to know one another. I am excited to learn about what brought you to your graduate program, how I can best support your learning, and your experiences/interests related to education policy. Meetings will be via zoom. (10%)

Reflection Paper: Connecting macro policy issues to personal experience (Week 5): For this individual paper, students will reflect on how macro policy issues shape educational experiences. Students will identify and describe a macro policy issue from class (e.g. high-stakes accountability, privatization, choice, etc.) and reflect on how this issue has influenced their experiences in education, as well as how their thinking about this issue has evolved over time. Reflections may focus on experiences as a student or as a professional in any education setting. Papers should be about 4 pages double spaced, and should include at least two references to class readings. (15%)

Co-teaching about a policy issue (Week 7 or 8): During week 4 of class, you will be assigned to a small group responsible for leading a future class session focused on examining a particular education policy issue. Each group will select a relevant reading for the class to complete prior to their session. When leading class, each group will do a short presentation on their macro policy issue (10 minutes), and lead a discussion or activity (20-30 minutes). These peer-facilitated sessions will occur in Weeks 7 and 8. (20%)

Example policy issues/topics for small groups: High-stakes accountability; school choice; teacher shortages; college access; addressing equity, diversity, & inclusion in curriculum; special education; international education policy

Abstract for critical examination of literature (due Week 9): To prepare for your critical examination of the literature assignment (see below), you will submit a 200-250 word abstract. Abstracts should include a brief overview of the policy issue that will be explored in the assignment, the types of sources that will be included, and a brief preview of what you found out about the issue through reviewing these sources. (5%)

Critical examination of literature about a policy issue: part one (due Week 11): For this assignment, you will select an education policy issue (e.g. high-stakes accountability, school choice, college access, the role of philanthropy, etc.) and write a concise and evidence-based examination of relevant literature. In your paper, you will analyze 8 relevant sources from a critical perspective. The full paper should be about 10-12 double spaced pages (not including references) and written in APA format. In part one, please include the following:

- Overview of the education policy issue and why it is important to examine (about 1 page)
- Critical reviews of 4 sources. Each review should be about one page in length, and include a brief summary of the focus/audience and the main argument as well as your

perspective on strengths and shortcomings of the piece. Questions to address for each source might include: How convincing is the evidence or argument presented, and why? What contribution does the piece make to the field? How might the study or argument have been improved? How does the piece align with, expand, or complicate what you know about this topic? (about 4 pages) (10%)

Critical examination of literature about a policy issue: part two (due Week 13): Building on part one above, part two should include the following:

- Critical reviews of 4 additional sources. Each review should be about one page in length, and include a brief summary of the focus/audience and the main argument as well as your perspective on strengths and shortcomings of the piece. Questions to address for each source might include: How convincing is the evidence or argument presented, and why? What contribution does the piece make to the field? How might the study or argument have been improved? How does the piece align with, expand, or complicate what you know about this topic? (about 4 pages)
- A discussion section synthesizing themes across sources. Potential questions to address include: How are perspectives across sources similar or different? How has this policy issue evolved over time? What does the research reveal about how this policy issue reproduces or disrupts inequities? How do we know (what counts as evidence)? (about 1 page)
- Brief conclusion outlining suggestions for future research (half page) (10%)

Final presentation: evidence-based policy advocacy (Week 15): Advocacy is a key aspect of policy making and reform. In this creative assignment, you will be responsible for creating and presenting an advocacy tool related to the issue you explored in your critical examination of the literature. Potential advocacy tools you could create include an email to a stakeholder, an infographic to raise awareness, a course assignment for students, brief public comment at a hearing or board meeting, a short (e.g. 30 second) preview for a podcast episode or movie, an agenda for a meeting with a decision-maker, etc. Each student will share their tool with the class during a 4-5 minute presentation during the final week of class. In your presentation, please include a brief overview of the policy issue and why you selected it, a description of your advocacy tool, and the intended impact of the tool. Please upload a copy of your tool and presentation slides (if you plan to use slides) to Canvas prior to our final class session. (10%)

Ongoing engagement: Consistent engagement in class activities is the foundation of our collective learning. Please complete readings prior to our class sessions. Recognizing that students may feel more comfortable participating in different ways, I am open to many forms of engagement (e.g. sharing during breakout groups, participating in full-class discussions, adding insights to online platforms such as Jamboard, etc.). I also understand that this is a hard year, and everyone is navigating complicated circumstances. Please reach out if you cannot attend a class session or have other circumstances you would like to address, and we can work together to find an appropriate (and manageable) solution. (20%)

Course Schedule and Readings

*Please read the materials listed for each week in advance of that class session, as they will be discussed during class. All readings will be available on Canvas, or in the [core text](#)

Week 1—August 30th

Class will be held this week via Zoom.

Introduction to the course: thinking critically about education policy issues

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.

Week 2— No Class on Sept 6th, Labor Day

Week 3—Sept 13th

Thinking critically about education policy issues, continued

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge.
 - Chapter 1: The politics of education policy in an era of inequality
 - Chapter 2: Critical policy analysis: Interrogating process, politics, and power
- Weaver-Hightower, M. B. (2008). An ecology metaphor for educational policy analysis: A call to complexity. *Educational Researcher*, 37(3), 153-167.

Week 4—Sept 20th

Choice, markets, and accountability

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge. (Chapter 3: Public schools or private goods? The politics of choice, markets, and competition)
- Chapman, T., & Donnor, J. (2015). Critical race theory and the proliferation of U.S. charter schools, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 48(1), 137-157.
- Au, W. (2016). Meritocracy 2.0: High-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism. *Educational Policy*, 30(1), 39-62.

Week 5—Sept 27th

Examining levels of the US educational system

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge.
 - Chapter 4: Federal and State Education Policy and Reform
 - Chapter 5: School District Governance and Education Leadership

Reflection paper is due on Tuesday Sept 28th by midnight via Canvas

Week 6—October 4th

The role of philanthropy, think tanks, and universities

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge. (Chapter 6: Philanthropy, donors, and private influence)
- Anderson, G., De La Cruz, P., & López, A. (2017). New governance and new knowledge brokers: Think tanks and universities as boundary organizations. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 92(1), 4-15.

Week 7—October 11th

Two small group presentations (co-teaching assignment)

- *High stakes accountability group*: Heissel, J. A., Adam, E. K., Doleac, J. L., Figlio, D. N., & Meer, J. (2021). Testing, stress, and performance: How students respond physiologically to high-stakes testing. *Education Finance and Policy*.
- *Teacher pay group*: Hendricks, M. D. (2014). Does it pay to pay teachers more? Evidence from Texas. *Journal of Public Economics*, 109, 50-63.

Week 8—October 18th

Two small group presentations (co-teaching assignment)

- *School choice group*: Harris III, J. J., Ford, D. Y., Wilson, P. I., & Sandidge, R. F. (1991). What should our public choose? The debate over school choice policy. *Education and Urban Society*, 23(2), 159-174.
- *Addressing EDI in school curriculum group*: Fuentes, M. A., Zelaya, D. G., & Madsen, J. W. (2021). Rethinking the course syllabus: Considerations for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. *Teaching of Psychology*, 48(1), 69-79.

Week 9—October 25th

Macro policy issues: K-12 teaching

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge. (Chapter 7: The New Professional: Teaching and Leading Under New Public Management)
- Milner IV, H. R. (2013). *Policy Reforms and De-Professionalization of Teaching*. National Education Policy Center.

Abstract for critical examination of literature is due on Tuesday Oct 26th by midnight via Canvas

Week 10—November 1st

Macro policy issues: access and equity in higher education

- Guzman-Alvarez, A., and Page, L. (2021). Disproportionate Burden: Estimating the Cost of FAFSA Verification for Public Colleges and Universities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.
- CA Council for Postsecondary Education (2021). *Recovery with equity: A roadmap for higher education after the pandemic*. (read the executive summary closely, skim the rest)

Week 11—November 8th

International perspectives

- National Research Council. (2003). *Understanding others, educating ourselves: Getting more from international comparative studies in education*. National Academies Press. (Chapters 1 and 2).
- Mehta, J., & Peterson, A. (2019). International learning communities: What happens when leaders seek to learn across national boundaries? *Journal of Educational Change*, 20(3), 327-350.

Critical examination of literature part one is due on Tuesday Nov 9th by midnight via Canvas

Week 12—November 15th

Putting the “public” back in public schools

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge.
 - Chapter 8: In Pursuit of Democratic Education: Putting the Public Back in Public Schools
 - Chapter 9: Building Power: Community Organizing, Student Empowerment, and Public Accountability

No Class on November 22nd (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 13—November 29th

Policy change and advocacy

- Dumas, M.J., & Anderson, G. (2014). Qualitative research as policy knowledge: Framing policy problems and transforming education from the ground up. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22 (11)
- Harrison, C. (2017). Advocacy groups and the discourse of teacher policy reform: An analysis of policy narratives. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 92(1), 42-52.
- Kelley, C., & Mead, J. (2017). Revolution and counter-revolution: Network mobilization to preserve public education in Wisconsin. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 92(1), 103-114.

Critical examination of literature part two is due on Tuesday Nov 30th by midnight via Canvas

Week 14—December 6th

Future directions of education policy and research

- Horsford, S. D., Scott, J. T., & Anderson, G. L. (2018). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality: Possibilities for democratic schooling*. Routledge. (Chapter 10: Reclaiming the Power of Public Education)
- Patel, L. (2016). Reaching beyond democracy in educational policy analysis. *Educational Policy*, 30(1), 114-127.

Week 15—December 13th

Final presentations will take place during class

- No assigned readings, please spend the time finalizing your advocacy tool and presentation

Upload a copy of your advocacy tool and presentation slides (if applicable) to Canvas before class

University Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial](#).

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services \(DRS\)](#), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Health and Safety

During this pandemic, it is extremely important that you abide by the [public health regulations](#), the University of Pittsburgh's [health standards and guidelines](#), and [Pitt's Health Rules](#). These rules have been developed to protect the health and safety of all of us. Universal [face covering](#) is required in all classrooms and in every building on campus, without exceptions, regardless of vaccination status. This means you must wear a face covering that properly covers your nose and mouth when you are in the classroom. If you do not comply, you will be asked to leave class. It is your responsibility to have the required face covering when entering a university building or classroom. For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please visit coronavirus.pitt.edu and check your Pitt email for updates before each class.

My priority is your well-being, and I am committed to being flexible. Please reach out with any concerns, scheduling conflicts, or other circumstances you would like to address so that we can strategize together.