

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

Fall 2023

University of Pittsburgh
5405 Wesley Posvar Hall
Tuesdays 5pm-7:40pm

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. While many of the readings have a focus on the United States, students are encouraged to make comparisons to other contexts in class discussions and assignments. 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 high-stakes accountability and privatization, (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

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. (5%)

*If I am your advisor, you do not need to sign up as we are already meeting regularly.

Article/reading review: Critically examining a reading (due Week 3)

For this individual paper, students will select one reading from any week of class to engage in a critical examination of that piece. Papers should begin with the relevant citation and a brief summary of the selected reading, followed by your analysis. Questions to address might include:

- How convincing is the evidence or information presented, and why?
- What assumptions are the author(s) making?
- How might the study, argument, or framing have been improved?
- Does the piece reflect a critical policy analysis frame, or more traditional? How so?
- How does the piece align with, expand, or complicate what you know about this topic?
- What unanswered questions do you have after reading this piece?

Please include at least one reference to another reading from class.

Length: 2 pages double spaced (max) (10%)

Co-teaching and facilitation (Weeks 7-12): During week 4 of class, you will be assigned to a small group responsible for leading a future class discussion focused on a reading about an education policy issue. Each group will be assigned one reading from the syllabus. Each group will do a short presentation on their reading (10 minutes max), and lead a discussion or activity (20 minutes max). These peer-facilitated sessions will occur in Weeks 7-12. (15%)

Paper: Identifying a macro policy issue to examine (due Week 5): For this short individual paper, students will identify an education policy issue (e.g. high-stakes accountability, school choice, higher ed access, the role of philanthropy, etc.) which will be the focus of the Week 8 critical examination of sources. Papers can focus on any international context (or more than one context). These short papers should include:

- Overview of the education policy issue & why it is important to examine
- Rationale for selecting this issue (connection to your work, interests, or future research)
- Plan for identifying relevant sources, to be critically reviewed in your Week 8 assignment

Include at least one reference to a class reading, in addition to other relevant citations.

Length: 1 page double spaced (this short paper is an introduction). (10%)

Critical examination of a policy issue: Source reviews (due Week 8): For this assignment, you will continue examining the policy issue you selected for your Week 5 assignment and write a concise and evidence-based examination of relevant sources. In your paper, you will analyze relevant sources from a critical perspective. Masters students will review 3 sources, and PhD students will review 4. The paper should be double spaced and written in APA format.

Each source review should include a very brief summary (e.g. 2 sentences) followed by your *analysis* of the source. Questions to address in your analysis for each source might include:

- How convincing is the evidence or information presented, and why?
- What assumptions are the author(s) making, if any? How do you know?
- How might the study, argument, or framing have been improved?
- Does the piece reflect a critical policy analysis frame, or more traditional? How so?
- How does the piece align with, expand, or complicate what you know about the policy issue you selected?
- What unanswered questions do you have after reading this piece?

For each source, provide the APA citation (single spaced) then your analysis (double-spaced). Length: Each source review should be 1.5-2 double-spaced pages. (15%)

Peer review: feedback on issue paper (due Week 10)

Students will engage in a constructive asynchronous review process to provide feedback on a peer's paper. See here for the template, which was discussed in our Week 8 class. Our Week 9 session is canceled to allow for asynchronous work on this assignment.

Length: Complete the 1-2 page feedback template, which will be shared with your assignment partner as well as with Dr. Weddle via Canvas. (5%)

Critical examination of a policy issue: Discussion/conclusion (due Week 12):

Building on the source reviews submitted in Week 8, this paper should include the following:

- A synthesis of themes across your sources. Potential questions to address include:
 - How are findings or information across sources similar or different?
 - Whose perspectives/experiences are considered across sources? Whose perspectives are missing?
 - What does the research reveal about how this policy issue reproduces or disrupts inequities? How do we know (what counts as evidence)?
 - What unanswered questions remain about this policy issue?
- Preliminary implications for policy, practice, and/or future research

Length: 2 double spaced pages max. (10%)

Presentation: celebrating our policy learning and change ideas (Week 14): In this short assignment, students will engage in round-table style presentations (3 minutes max per person). present an idea for change related to the issue explored in their critical examination of a policy issue. Presentations will focus on either 1) what is one idea for change that arose during your policy issue examination? OR 2) what is an idea from class that you're taking into your future research or practice? (1 slide total). (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 small group breakouts, participating in full-class discussions, adding insights to online platforms such as Jamboard, etc.). 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 29th

Introduction to the course and thinking critically

- 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 (available free in the [core text](#))
- Diem, S., Young, M. D., & Sampson, C. (2019). Where critical policy meets the politics of education: An introduction. *Educational Policy*, 33(1), 3-15.

Week 2— September 5th

Thinking critically about education policy issues

- 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 2: Critical policy analysis: Interrogating process, politics, and power
- Freidus, A., & Turner, E. O. (2022). Contested Justice: Rethinking Educational Equity Through New York City's COVID-19 School Reopening Debates. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

Week 3—Sept 12th

Examining US education systems

- Lenhoff, S. W., Singer, J., & Gottfried, M. (2022). Thinking ecologically in educational policy and research. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 97(1), 1-5.
- 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.
 - Excerpts from Ch. 4 and Ch. 5 [pages 69-77, 82, and 89-95] *book page numbers, not PDF numbers
- American Council on Education. (2019). *A Brief Guide to US Higher Education*. [skim report, read pages 21-25 more closely] *report page numbers, not PDF numbers.

Article review is due on Tuesday September 12th by 3pm via Canvas

Week 4—Sept 19th

Choice, privatization, 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
- Sattin-Bajaj, C., & Roda, A. (2020). Opportunity hoarding in school choice contexts: The role of policy design in promoting middle-class parents' exclusionary behaviors. *Educational Policy*, 34(7), 992-1035.

Week 5—Sept 26th

Current issues in higher education policy

- American Association of University Professors (2023). Higher education policy issues. [look through entire list, select two issues to read more about]
- Brookings (2023). How will the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling affect college admissions? (Podcast).
- Reddy, V., & Dow, A. (2021). *California's Biggest Return: Raising College Attainment to 60 Percent for All by 2030*. Campaign for College Opportunity. [feel welcome to skim]

Identifying a macro policy issue is due on Tuesday September 26th by 3pm via Canvas

Week 6—October 3rd

Politics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in education

- Sampson, C., & Bertrand, M. (2020). "This is civil disobedience. I'll continue.": the racialization of school board meeting rules. *Journal of Education Policy*, 37(2), 226-246.
- Pollock, M., Rogers, J., Kwako, [...] & Howard, J. (2022). *The Conflict Campaign: Exploring Local Experiences of the Campaign to Ban "Critical Race Theory" in Public K-12 Education in the U.S., 2020-2021*. UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access. [executive summary only]
- Surovell, E. (2023). Diversity spending is banned in Florida's public colleges. Chronicle.

Week 7—October 10th*Informing education policy*

- Rubin, P. G., Ayscue, J. B., & Uzzell, E. M. (2022). Analyzing Congressional Research Service Reports on Education: How Is Information Used at Congress's Think Tank?. *AERA Open*.
- Moyer, J. S., Warren, M. R., & King, A. R. (2020). "Our stories are powerful": The use of youth storytelling in policy advocacy to combat the school-to-prison pipeline. *Harvard Educational Review*, 90(2), 172-194.

Week 8—October 17th*The role of philanthropy and private influence*

- 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. L., & Donchik, L. M. (2016). Privatizing schooling and policy making: The American Legislative Exchange Council and new political and discursive strategies of education governance. *Educational Policy*, 30(2), 322-364.

Critical examination: source reviews is due on Tuesday Oct. 17th by 3pm via Canvas

Week 9—October 24th NO CLASS, Asynchronous peer review

Engage in asynchronous peer review exercise, due Week 10

Week 10—October 31st*De-professionalization of K-12 teaching*

- Kraft, Matthew A., and Melissa Arnold Lyon. (2022). The Rise and Fall of the Teaching Profession: Prestige, Interest, Preparation, and Satisfaction over the Last Half Century. (EdWorkingPaper). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University.
- 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: Teaching and Leading Under New Public Management

Peer review is due on Tuesday Oct. 31st by 3pm via Canvas

Week 11—November 7th*Civil rights*

- Hopkins, M., Weddle, H., Castillo, M., ... & Salas, V. (2022). Upholding Multilingual Learners' Civil Rights under ESSA: State Education Agency Leaders and the Contextual Factors Shaping Their Work. *American Journal of Education*, 128(4).
- DeBray, E., Finnigan, K. S., George, J., & Scott, J. (2022). A Civil Rights Framework for the Reauthorization of ESEA. National Education Policy Center. [executive summary more closely, skim rest]

Week 12—November 14th

Policy advocacy and change

- 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 [skim]
- Cole, R. M., & Heinecke, W. F. (2020). Higher education after neoliberalism: Student activism as a guiding light. *Policy Futures in Education*, 18(1), 90-116.

Critical examination of a policy issue: Discussion/conclusion is due on Tuesday Nov. 14th by 3pm via Canvas

No Class on November 21st (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 13—November 28th

Policy change 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 9: Building Power: Community Organizing, Student Empowerment, and Public Accountability
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409-428.

Week 14—December 5th

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)

Final presentations will take place in small groups during our Week 14 class. Please upload a copy of your presentation slide to Canvas.

Week 15—December 12th NO CLASS, Optional 1:1 Virtual Meetings

No class—please spend the time wrapping up the semester and taking good care of yourself. I would be happy to connect 1:1 with you to discuss how you might build upon your assignments from this class, your future research or professional goals, etc.

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. The University's requirements for face coverings will at a minimum be consistent with [CDC guidance](#) and masks are required indoors (campus buildings and shuttles) on campuses in which COVID-19 Community Levels are High. This means that when COVID-19 Community Levels are High, 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. Masks are optional indoors for campuses in which county levels are Medium or Low. Be aware of your [Community Level](#) as it changes each Thursday. [Read answers to frequently asked questions regarding face coverings](#). For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please visit the [Power of Pitt site](#) 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.