

Critical Policy Analysis

EDUC 3501

First Thursday of each month: 3-5:40 (Posvar 5400)

Remaining Thursdays: 3-4:30 (web-based)

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88051941771?pwd=T29kQUUzbFpsWUJSbVJiMW8xaUtNQT09>

password: CritPol

Course Instructor:

Leigh Patel, Ph.D.

Pronouns: (she/her)

Office hours: by appointment

Email: lpatel@pitt.edu

[Online Discussion Space](#)

[Tentative Weekly Schedule](#)

Grounding Principles

The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is raised - James Baldwin

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them. - Ida B. Wells

things are not getting worse
they are getting uncovered
we must hold each other tight
and continue to pull back the veil - adrienne marie brown

Course Goals, Objectives, and Themes:

The primary goals of this course are to:

- To understand critical policy analysis and its focus on power relations enacted through

- formal and informal policies
- To study the utility and limitations of critical policy analysis
- To engage in policy analysis for altering the future possibilities of living beings
- To learn from the collective projects of the social movements, including their internal and external policies and practices
- To engage in critical genealogies to reckon with knowledge systems and power
- To develop writing as way of teaching through receiving and providing feedback with peers
- To compose a coherent policy analysis that addresses power and possibility
- To design alternative policies that are grounded in freedom for all

Required Texts

[The Marrow Thieves](#) by Cherie Dimaline, available through Pitt Bookstore, Birchbark Books, and several independent bookstores ([hard copy also on reserve at the library](#))

[Race for profit: How banks and the real estate industry undermined Black homeownership](#) by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, available through Pitt Bookstore and several independent bookstores

Recommended Policy Analyses

[So much reform, so little change: The persistence of failure in urban schools](#) by Charles Payne

[The real Ebonics debate: Power, language, and education of African American Children](#), edited by Theresa Perry and Lisa Delpit

Public pedagogy of policy analysis: Mariame Kaba's twitter account: @prisonculture

COURSE OVERVIEW

Critical Policy Analysis is an advanced graduate level course that explores critical policy analysis as a methodology and pathway to examine power relationships in policies and their effects. Policies are texts, so by that definition, they include some things and leave out others. That in and of itself is a political choice connected to power: wielding power, desiring power, squelching power, and/or gathering power. With this in mind, we will consider what it means to study policies as a practice of critical genealogy and for purposes well beyond deconstruction. To do this, it's good to have company. Being a learner and growing human being in collective is a productive intervention in a society that uses schooling, including higher education, primarily to stratify along lines of race, class, gender, ability, and sexual identity.

To meet the aims of this course, your full attendance and engagement are essential. In each

class session, key terms/definitions and an array of meaning-making strategies will be introduced and contextualized as prompts for our collective learning. In preparation for each class session, you will be asked to read and reflect upon selected texts—including journal articles, chapters from trade books, textbooks, websites, podcasts, music and music videos, films and television shows. Additionally, to move beyond the limits of critical policy analysis and toward radical and abolitionist policy analysis, we will use texts that ground us in policy analysis for futures of freedom for all.

A Living Syllabus

This syllabus, including the tentative weekly schedule is a living syllabus. There are many versions of a living syllabus, but in this case, it means that we will make changes as we learn collectively and pay attention to pressing policy issues. We will also use a living syllabus to co-design the course after the first six weeks, allowing for negotiation and input from course members. Please visit the tentative weekly schedule date regularly to stay up to date with any changes and updates.

Why We Will Not Use Canvas Centrally for Our Work

Our course syllabus, weekly schedule links, and some readings are the only materials of this course available through the learning management system (LMS), Canvas. We will not use Canvas for several reasons. First, anything that we write via this system is legally the property of the university. That is true of any university and its channels of communication. I would like you to engage with each other and me as we discuss various policies and how we can analyze them, including higher education policies and feel as unfettered as possible. Second, Canvas, like other LMS systems, has a linear design for learning. Do Module 1, then 2, etc. Unlearning and learning are intertwined in this course - that is fundamentally not linear. Finally, Canvas and higher education more broadly has a culture in which syllabi are fully developed before instructors and students interact. Because this course is focused on policy analysis that is both important to you and grounded in futurities, we must be able to adapt and collectively create our semesters' flow and scope. As an instructor, it is my responsibility to engage and listen to you, to think with you. Our google documents will allow for a living syllabus and for us to learn relationally in ways that a pre-designed 15-week course syllabus simply does not.

However, Canvas does offer two useful tools: assignment submission (speedgrader is incredibly efficient) and perusall for uploaded files. We will use Canvas for those two purposes only.

We will use our class sessions, google docs and email to communicate. Please do not email me through Canvas but through my Pitt email: lpatel@pitt.edu

ASSIGNMENTS

Guidelines and expectations for each assignment will be discussed in greater detail in advance of completion deadlines.

Participation

30 points

Ongoing

True to many traditions, we will engage in our work by being dialogic and answerable. This means reading, writing, and being in dialogue with each other. Answerability (Patel, 2016) means that we are answerable to many entities: ourselves, the course community, the land and its traditional stewards, our ancestors, and generations yet to come. More simply put, we will strive to be in conversation, showing respect, care, vulnerability, and growth.

Each week's materials will cover a significant amount of education topics and societal analysis. Additionally, we will make use of online spaces to engage in discussion, work on policy analysis projects on a weekly basis, and share materials with each other. Engagement in these various formats is imperative for us to transcend the individualized and competitive culture of the United States and higher education. Participation includes being fully engaged in class activities, reading and responding to assigned texts, leading and facilitating small group discussions as requested, and completing all in-class assignments. For this class, participation also includes thinking relationally and critically about your own experiences and practices, and when you deem appropriate for all, opening those reflections up to the collective. **These practices help us to make the praxis of collective happen in a graduate course.**

Additionally, in the first course session, each person will sign up to be the discussion anchor for that week's readings. By noon on Tuesdays, the discussion anchor should post a question, quote, and/or prompt to start our weekly discussion. Please post these prompts on our online discussion space.

This course focuses on educational policy and society. We will be discussing issues of oppression, collective freedom struggles, and formal education on a weekly basis. As a learner, I expect that we will all experience discomfort as we revisit ideas we've long held, as we are invited to think more deeply with each other, and as we, both unlearn and learn. Learning is not a prescriptive practice; studenting is. [Here](#) is a statement by Dr. Brittany Cooper that explains why in this course, I will not provide trigger warnings. But as a collective, we should all notice and be attentive to care as an ethical base.

Your participation will be evaluated **not simply according to quantity but also for quality**. Quality means that you have engaged with our texts deeply prior to class and you have used the online discussion space to actually discuss. This means commenting on each others' posts. [Here is a link](#) that provides more structure and detail on quality participation and how to prepare for class..

That said, we are living in several simultaneous pandemics. People are still getting sick, grieving, and the planet is talking back to us, loudly. Please let me know if you need space, help, or other things to be as well as you can be. Show up and be well so that your learning is productive for you and others in the course.

Please note that while we will access several texts digitally, I strongly encourage you to use the older technologies of pen and paper to take notes from lectures and conversations. More information on why it's better for you to write rather than type can be found [here](#). It is a suggestion for you to pay attention to your own learning practices; it is not a requirement.

We as an emerging collective need to be several things at once: safe, uncomfortable, growing in skills and rigorous and generous with others and ourselves.

Mid-point Application

30 points

To exercise our muscles of conducting critical and generative policy analysis, midway through the semester, you will present a concise policy analysis. Choose a current policy, one that is impacting your and others' daily lives at the time of the course. Create an analysis using the space of one powerpoint slide, with any kind of graphics, images, text and arrangement that you deem fit. Consider the space of that slide as your canvas and teach us, the viewers, about this text. During our course session dedicated to this mid-term application, we will use an online gallery walk to both present our work and engage with policies, analyses, and ways to build something better than a harmful policy. This assignment may be done in small groups, duos, or individually.

See updated notes on this based on group decisions in [discussion space](#)

Critical Policy Analysis

40 points

For your final course project, you will engage in a critical and abolitionist policy analysis. This will include tracing the roots of the policy, and if traceable, its intended and unintended effects. The abolitionist aspect of the analysis means moving beyond deconstruction to designing policies that are grounded in freedom for all. It is not enough to critique, we must also always practice making policies for freedom and liberation. The policy focus is entirely up to you, as is the format of the policy analysis. You may decide that a website is more conducive for showing the contours of the policy and abolitionist responses, or a policy brief for parents, or an OpEd intended for wide audiences, etc. Match your design with your purpose. This project is also open to joint collaboration with other students in the course. As the course moves into late February, we will dedicate course class time to discuss options and as needed.

Final assignment due by 19 April 2024 to lpatel@pitt.edu. Use APA style formatting for the citations of relevant research and resources.

GRADING, sigh.

Grading in many ways gets in the way of learning, and I am far more interested in learning than putting a number on what possibly has been learned and unlearned. Read [this short piece](#) that deftly explains how arbitrary and intersectionally harmful grades are. And it must be true because a mathematician wrote it, and they best know numbers, right? By the way, Bob Moses used math as a language for freedom. But, back to grading, which is far afield of freedom.

You all know how to student. You have studented your way through many years of schooling, and for some of you, this has involved a good deal of harm. Let's get into learning. Let's aim for the strength that Prentis Hemphill says is found in the space between stability and vulnerability. Part of the rationale of co-designing our learning space is to be answerable while actively taking part in the design of how learning can take shape. That is partially why our reading/text schedule is not fully formed at the start of the semester. None of what I just described deserves to sit under the low ceiling of an arbitrary point system.

And I know you want to know how 'grading' will happen. In essence, you will either pass or fail this course, as an advanced graduate course. If you are in danger of failing because of lack of engagement or engaging in distracting ways of being, for example 'being the devil's advocate,' because you are evading responsibility for your arguments, you and I will talk. However, simply showing up isn't the same as 'passing,' in the many meanings that word has. To pass, in the sense of our course includes a willingness to design, to try. You need to show up, listen up, engage in design, in dedicated study, and in thoughtful argumentation, again and again. Be willing to get something wrong to learn from that wrong. Be willing to dream. Why know if it doesn't include space to dream? Seek to know and knowledge for a clear purpose.

This statement on grading is heavily influenced by the intellectual work of Dr. Shanyce Campbell.

If you are experiencing home/health/food insecurity, please contact me or another person/org you trust. You are not alone.

Required Statements from the University of Pittsburgh

Lightly annotated by Prof Patel

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](#).

Dis/ability 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.

If you have an undocumented disability and/or an invisible disability, you are welcome to approach me at any time to talk about how I and others can best support your learning. Getting a disability documented is fully entrenched with the racial capitalism and ableism that is foundational to many of society's 'healthcare' systems.

Optional statements from the University of Pittsburgh

also lightly annotated by Prof Patel

Accessibility

Canvas is ADA Compliant and has fully implemented the final accessibility standards for electronic and information technology covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Please note that, due to the flexibility provided in this product, it is possible for some material to inadvertently fall outside of these guidelines. Also, [accessibility is about disability rights. Disability justice is something else entirely, but we'll get into that.](#)

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, see: <http://diversity.pitt.edu/affirmative-action/policies-procedures-and-practices>.

If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online: <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/make-report/report-form>. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Universities are inextricable from this nation's rapid economic growth through enslavement of African peoples and the dislocation and attempted genocide of Native peoples. This legacy now intertwines with many universities acting more like Univers-Cities where the university is the primary employer, labor contractor, landlord, law enforcement presence on campus, and healthcare provider, all while seeking to grow endowments

at all costs. To quote Ruha Benjamin again, “Plantations were diverse and inclusive. So, what are we actually talking about?” She question is meant to draw attention to conditions of power as we say widely used words. Diversity and inclusion are topics we’ll address in class, informed by knowing how such statements have come into being.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.

It’s fairly evident that we can control very little about how others may remember or narrate something we’ve said or done. So, when it comes to class discussions, be kind, be generous, be respectful. Let’s not record or paraphrase each other without permission, ok? Thanks.