

# EFOP 3017 - Organizations, Networks, and Education Policy

Instructor: Joshua Bleiberg, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education Policy

[jbleiber@pitt.edu](mailto:jbleiber@pitt.edu)

Office Hours: By appointment and via [Calendly](#)

## Class Meetings

Posvar 5602: 1:00-5:00 PM

Saturday, January 11

Saturday, February 1

Saturday, March 3

Saturday, April 5

## Learning Goals

In this course, students will learn about the role of education policy in supporting equitable social structures through a focus on the dynamics of policy implementation. The course will draw on a broad set of theory-driven and applied texts in education policy, organizational science, political science, and sociology. Students will explore how policy influences educational networks and organizations. Working independently and in groups students will develop their own expertise, develop their Problem of Practice (PoP), and analyze illustrative education policy cases.

- Through engagement with course materials, activities, and content, students will be able to:
- Situate policy efforts towards educational change in their historical, political, and social context
- Name and explain common challenges in program and policy implementation, including agenda setting, appropriate allocation of resources, divergent stakeholder perspectives, supporting conceptual shifts, cooptation, and policy churn
- Develop concrete strategies to address relevant policy implementation challenges
- Explain and address tradeoffs associated with multiple frameworks for analyzing and/or supporting structural change including policy analysis, policy implementation, diffusion, and scaling

- Develop expertise in an education policy area of interest
- Develop their capacity to write policy briefs and analyze education policy implementation challenges

## Course Texts

All assigned materials will be made available to students digitally at no cost through the library ([Link to course summary](#)).

## Assignments

### *Attendance and Making up Classes*

Regular and prompt attendance at the Saturday class sessions is expected and is essential to the educational experience in the EdD program. Each course meets only four times, so missing one session constitutes a significant portion of face-to face interaction with instructors and peers. The course is designed to be optimized for in-person learning. For this reason it is not possible for students to participate in class virtually.

Working professionals may find themselves in a circumstance that causes them to miss a class meeting. Exceptions may be made for a required **work-related commitment, illness, or valid emergency**. If you have conflicts that you are aware of in advance make the instructor aware by completing this [Google form](#).

If you are going to be absent for class for an unanticipated required work-related commitment, illness or valid emergency, please follow these instructions:

1. Email the course instructor ([jbleiber@pitt.edu](mailto:jbleiber@pitt.edu)) that you are not able to attend the class. Please include a high level description of the reason you are not able to attend. You do not need to share private details or verifying documentation.
2. You may make up for missing the class by watching the zoom recording of the course session and reviewing the course materials (e.g., slides). Post a response to the discussion question for the session (See below). The response should be 175 to 200 words and posted in the corresponding thread on the canvas discussion page.

### *Make Up Prompts*

Session	Topic	Make-Up Prompt
1	Re-introduction to Education Policy	What changes would promote trust and collaboration between education organizations?

2	Education Organizations and Networks	How does the lack of successful education reform shape our understanding of the “problem” and potential solutions?
3	Agenda Setting and Resistance	Given the implementation challenges is it worthwhile to pursue national reforms?
4	Improving Education Organizations	What are the barriers to improving education organizations and how do we overcome them?

### ***Reading, Discussion, and Participation***

For each session you will need to prepare for class by engaging with the readings and a case study (See Reading List below). All readings are available through Pitt Cat and are posted to Perusall. We will use Perusall to collaboratively explore and discuss the weekly readings. It is required that you use Perusall only for the journal articles/book chapters and not for the case studies. Students can demonstrate engagement with the readings in Perusall by highlighting the text, commenting, writing wonderings/questions, sharing relevant experiences, and responding to other student's posts. I encourage you to think about your interaction with Perusall as closer to a conversation than a discussion board. If you encounter an idea that is confusing then please note that! If you disagree with an author's stance then say that as well!

### **Reading List**

#### **Re-introduction to Education Policy**

Read in preparation for Session 1, January 11

- [Mehta, J. \(2013\). \*The Allure of Order: High hopes, dashed expectations, and the troubled quest to remake American schooling\*. Oxford University Press. Page 1-9.](#)
- [Case: \*Glass, I., \(2004\). Two Steps Back. This American Life.\*](#)

#### **Education, Organizations, and Networks**

Read in preparation for session 2, February 1

- Skim the Problem of Practice Section for completed EdD dissertations
  - You can search [Pitt Cat](#) for material type “Dissertation” and keywords “university of pittsburgh” and “problem of practice”.
    - Examples: [Alberto, Christian](#); [Oriola, Emiola, Jr.](#); [Wright, Lauren O.](#); [Cohen, Steven L.](#); [Mussington, Marlon J., Sr.](#); [Bookhamer, Ryan S.](#)
- [Spillane, J. P., Parise, L. M., & Sherer, J. Z. \(2011\). \*Organizational routines as coupling mechanisms: Policy, school administration, and the technical core\*. \*American educational research journal\*, 48\(3\), 586-619.](#)
- [Joffe-Walt, C. \(2020\). \*Nice White Parents\*. New York Times. Episode 1: \*The Book of Statuses\*.](#)
- [Coburn, C. E., & Russell, J. L. \(2008\). \*District policy and teachers' social networks\*. \*Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis\*, 30\(3\), 203-235.](#)
- [Koon, D. S. V. \(2020\). \*Education policy networks: The co-optation, coordination, and\*](#)

<p><a href="#">commodification of the school-to-prison pipeline critique. American Educational Research Journal, 57(1), 371-410.</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Case: USHCA. (2015). Forging Steel: Leading the Transformation of Human Resources in Pittsburgh Public Schools.</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Agenda, Setting, and Resistance</b></p> <p>Read in preparation for Session 3, March 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Ewing, E. L. (2018). Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side. University of Chicago. Introduction and Chapter 1.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">McLendon, M. K., Cohen-Vogel, L., &amp; Wachen, J. (2014). Understanding education policy making and policy change in the American states: Learning from contemporary policy theory. In Handbook of education politics and policy (pp. 86-117). Routledge.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Cohen, D. K., Moffitt, S. L., &amp; Goldin, S. (2007). Policy and Practice: The Dilemma. American Journal of Education, 113(4), 515–548.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Century, J., &amp; Cassata, A. (2016). Implementation Research: Finding Common Ground on What, How, Why, Where, and Who. Review of Research in Education, 40(1), 169–215.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Porter, R. E., Fusarelli, L. D., &amp; Fusarelli, B. C. (2015). Implementing the Common Core: How educators interpret curriculum reform. Educational Policy, 29(1), 111-139.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Case: Winig, M., (2012). Michelle Rhee and the Washington D.C. Public Schools. HKS Cases.</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Improving Education Organizations</b></p> <p>Read in preparation for Session 4, April 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Spillane, J. P. (2009). Standards Deviation. Harvard University Press. Chapter 4 Making policy, making sense, pp. 71-90.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Allen, C. D., &amp; Heredia, S. C. (2020). Reframing Organizational Contexts from Barriers to Levers for Teacher Learning in Science Education Reform. Journal of Science Teacher Education, 1–19.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Coburn, C. E., Russell, J. L., Kaufman, J. H., &amp; Stein, M. K. (2012). Supporting Sustainability: Teachers' Advice Networks and Ambitious Instructional Reform. American Journal of Education, 119(1), 137–182.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Anderson, E. R., &amp; Colyvas, J. A. (2021). What Sticks and Why? A MoRe Institutional Framework for Education Research. Teachers College Record, 123(7).</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Elmore, R. F. (2016). "Getting to scale..." It seemed like a good idea at the time. Journal of Educational Change, 17(4), 529-537.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Case: Jubelirer, (2023, February). Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania. 627-663.</a></li> </ul>

### ***Problem of Practice Statement***

Students will develop their [Problem of Practice \(PoP\) statement](#) throughout the course of the semester. The PoP is the first milestone that must be completed to earn an [Education Doctorate](#). For this course the goal will be to support your progress towards that milestone by drafting and revising a version of your PoP. You will complete three iterative assignments related to your PoP: PoP topic statement, draft PoP statement, and revised PoP statement. Working on your PoP

statement through the course of the semester will provide numerous opportunities for feedback from your colleagues and myself. My expectation is that you make progress on completing your PoP statement. You are not required to finish this milestone as a part of your work for this class. More detailed directions are available on the assignment page along with a rubric.

### *Writing Resources*

Many students who have completed their Pitt EdD include a section in their dissertation called the Problem of Practice (or sometimes Problem of Policy). See examples below to use as resources. All Pitt EdD dissertations are available in Pitt Cat. You can search [Pitt Cat](#) for material type “Dissertation” and keywords “university of pittsburgh” and “problem of practice”.

Examples: [Alberto, Christian](#); [Oriola, Emiola, Jr.](#); [Wright, Lauren O.](#); [Cohen, Steven L.](#); [Mussington, Marlon J., Sr.](#); [Bookhamer, Ryan S.](#)

You may also want to reference resources for how to write a policy memo, which has a similar structure to the PoP. I would recommend exploring [EdResearch for Action](#) briefs. For recommendations for how to reform policy and practice, I would recommend using [How to Write a Policy Memo That Matters](#) and [How to Write a Policy Memo](#).

### *Case Analyses*

We will analyze several education policy cases this semester. We will both discuss cases in class and out of class as part of an assignment. The cases will mix together examples of reform from Pittsburgh/Pennsylvania and similar education systems (e.g., Chicago, Baltimore). For each case, your group will be assigned a perspective or argument for the case, which will center around a specific educational stakeholder (e.g., teachers, students, state). For the in class cases you will read the case prior to class and during class we will analyze/discuss the case. Each group will then present their arguments in class. Subsequently there will be time for discussion and for students to debrief. The goal of the assignment is to push students to consider alternative perspectives and the policy solutions to be considered in challenging environments.

For the out of class assignment cases students will read the case and discuss them with their group. Students will advocate for a position described in a prompt and submit a written response (about 250-300 words). Each student will submit their own short prompt. You may collaborate with your group, but your words must be your own. More detailed directions are available on the assignment page along with a rubric.

## **Grading Scale**

Grade	Point Range	Grade	Point Range
A	93-100	C	73-75
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	86-89	D+	67-69
B	83-85	D	64-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-63
C+	76-79	F	Less than 60

A grade of A+ will only be granted in cases of truly exceptional work that considerably exceeds the expectations for each assignment.

## Policies

### *Class Discussion Norms*

My goal is that our class discussions are a time of deep, collaborative learning. I expect you to be well prepared for each class. Class discussions will be a combination of free-flowing conversation and working through your answers to the prepared questions. To ensure that students are prepared for discussions and to ensure that we hear from everyone in the class, I will occasionally call on students **at random** to share their answers to the prepared questions. I recognize that this random calling may induce some degree of stress. Please know that my philosophy regarding these questions is that it is okay to be unsure of the answer, but only after you have engaged with the course material and attempted to answer the questions. **In short, it's okay not to know; it's not okay not to have tried.** My overarching goal is to facilitate a classroom environment that is **psychologically safe**. As my colleague Shannon Wanless (2016) describes, this means that you will feel enabled to take interpersonal risks that will not “result in embarrassment, ridicule or shame” but that will, instead, enable you to “engage, connect, change and learn” together.

### ***Inclement Weather Policy***

Only the Chancellor may officially close the Pittsburgh campus of the University. The University will remain open in all but the most extreme circumstances. Cancellation of classes ***does not imply*** that the University is closed.

The University offers an Emergency Notification Service (ENS) which is used to communicate with subscribers through voice, text, and email messages, as deemed appropriate in the event of an emergency. For instructions on how to register, please refer to CSSD's [website](#). Any changes to normal University operations will be announced as early as possible through the ENS and the University's official [website](#).

### ***Academic Integrity Guidelines***

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.

### ***University Policies***

Several university policies are pertinent to this course. As an instructor I am committed to pedagogy that is anti-racist, non-sexist, non-classist, non-heterosexist, non-ableist, and non-gender normative. This includes fostering an environment that is as safe and inclusive as possible. It is my intention to name and correct as best as possible any actions on my part that fall short of these commitments. If everyone in the class is likewise committed, the work should be more easily facilitated. I am also committed to making the class accessible to anyone wishing to participate.

### ***School of Education Policies***

The [Policies and Forms](#) page on the SOE website explains several policies and procedures, including academic probation, course repeats, leaves of absence, monitored withdrawal, transfer credits, and statute of limitations.

### ***Availability of Instructor***

The instructor will respond promptly to all e-mails and you may also request a face-to-face meeting with the instructor. Email for appointment availability or use [Calendly](#).

## ***Departmental Grievance Procedures***

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in the EdD program believes that a faculty member has not met their obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow the procedure described in the Guidelines (summarized here):

1. The student should talk to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the student should talk to the instructors' department chair, Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor (if the issue concerns this class), or the department chair of the student's advisor.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should talk to the chair of the EdD program, Dr. Rachel Robertson.
4. If needed, the student should next talk to the SOE Academic Integrity Officer, Assistant Dean Dr. Andrea Zito. If the matter still remains unresolved, the student should file a written statement of charges with the SOE Academic Integrity Officer.

## ***Disability Services***

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

## ***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.

## ***Accessibility***

Ensuring an accessible and pleasant experience to all users, regardless of disability, is a key focus of Canvas. The Canvas platform was built using the most modern HTML and CSS technologies, and is committed to W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative and Section 508 [guidelines](#). Read more about [Accessibility](#).

## ***Copyright Notice***

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or



retransmission of course materials. See [Library of Congress Copyright Office](#) and the [University Copyright Policy](#).

### ***Religious Observances***

The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructor, I am committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, exams, or other required attendance. If at all possible, please contact me (your course coordinator/s) within the first two weeks of the first class meeting to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks.

### ***Your Well Being Matters***

Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to care for yourself and seeking appropriate support can help you achieve your academic and professional goals. You are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax.

It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. The [University Counseling Center](#) is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.