

SPI 387: Education Policy in the United States
Spring 2023: MW 10-10:50, Robertson Bowl 16

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Preceptors:
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Public education has always been a contentious issue. Again and again, similar debates have erupted over its goals, how students and resources should be assigned to schools, what students should learn, and how schools should be governed and evaluated.

This survey course will introduce you to the central issues in K-12 education policy. We will first consider the normative dimensions of education policymaking: What are the substantive and distributional goals of K-12 public education? What does, and should, equality of educational opportunity mean in theory and practice? After introducing a framework for combining values and evidence, we will consider the empirical evidence on a range of policy levers, including policies that address school and teacher accountability, teacher quality, school choice, and curricula.

You will develop your ability to critically evaluate and synthesize social science research evidence, render complex judgments that combine consideration of competing normative values and research evidence, and engage constructively with others who have different educational experiences or beliefs. Through consideration of specific cases and policy scenarios, you will learn how to apply those skills to problems as they are encountered in the real world, where there are no clear prompts or right answers.

My hope is that this course kindles your interest in educational policy more generally. Whether your future lies in classrooms, the private sector, a non-profit organization, the statehouse, the courthouse, or elsewhere, this course will supply you with a toolkit to become a thoughtful and rigorous education policy analyst.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the multiple and competing normative values raised by education policies, and combine consideration of values and research evidence
- Critically read social science research, understand the challenges inherent to making causal claims about the effects of educational interventions, and synthesize these claims in a review of the literature.
- Analyze public policies to identify the theories of action underlying them, and predict the likely consequences, intended and unintended, of these policies.

Course Requirements and Grading:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Reading Responses (10)	30%
Paper 1 (Midterm paper)	25%
Final paper proposal	5%
Paper 2 (Final paper)	32%
Participation	8%

Assignment of grades: A (93.5 and above), A- (90-<93.5), B+ (86.5-<90), B (83.5-<86.5), B- (80-<83.5), C+ (76.5-<80), C ((73.5-<76.5), C- (70-<73.5).

Books and Readings: There are no books to purchase; all readings are posted on Canvas.

Papers: You will receive detailed directions for your papers well in advance of their due date, as well as the rubric on which they will be evaluated. In this class, we will conduct grading blindly (for your papers, not your reading responses), so please upload your paper without your name in the document and with your Tiger ID number as your document title.

Reading responses (500 words): Reading responses provide us with the opportunity to process what we have read, read our peers' work, and generate questions for discussion in advance of class. Each week, we will post one or more prompts to which you will respond. We are evaluating these for engagement and completion, not assigning them with letter grades; if you write a complete, polished response and following the guidelines set out here, you will receive full credit each week.

Your responses should incorporate all readings, but we are not looking for summaries. We want you to make an argument, to critically analyze what you have read, and to identify common themes or tensions across the readings. In all weeks besides Week 1 and Week 6 (mid-term week), you will write a reading response. To accommodate those who may be traveling for the weekend, *reading responses are due each week by Monday by 9am.*

Lateness Policy: Because a central goal of reading responses is incorporating them into precepts and lecture, late reading responses will not be accepted. Any concerns with midterm or final paper deadlines should be handled through your residential college deans.

Participation: We expect you to attend *all* lectures and precepts. Happily, this is not a class where you will be anonymous, so if you are sick, please send Prof. Jennings and your preceptor an email. Participation refers to active engagement with the material and with your peers, not simply talking. Listening to your peers, and responding to or building on their ideas, is a key dimension of participation. We also appreciate that people have many ways of contributing; responding to your peers' reading responses is another way to participate.

Laptops and other digital devices: A large body of research has documented the many ways in which multitasking interferes with learning and performance. After an interruption, it takes an average of 25 minutes to return to the original task, and multiple studies have found declines in learning and performance in the presence of multitasking. For these reasons, *we strongly encourage you not to use laptops or other digital devices during lecture or section.* To ensure that

you don't miss anything on the slides by virtue of writing rather than typing, we will post slides to Canvas.

Office hours: Office hours are both an opportunity to talk about class content and assignments, and an opportunity for us to get to know each other. I strongly encourage all of you to visit my office hours at least once during the semester and to come to your preceptors' office hours as well.

ChatGPT: Educational institutions consistently have greeted new technology with confusion, fear, and resistance. Before ChatGPT, educators worried about the effects of calculators, applications like spell check, or crowdsourced information via Wikipedia. New technology alters the knowledge and capabilities needed to lead flourishing lives, affecting not only the labor market, but our participation in the collective enterprise of democratic deliberation. AI is already transforming our world, remaking many jobs and leading to higher returns to skills not easily duplicated by AI, such as those taught in this course. With that preamble, here is our course policy:

- You can use ChatGPT as a *resource*, but you cannot directly copy sentences from ChatGPT into your own work. As with any source, when someone copies verbatim or omits a citation without acknowledging its contribution to one's thinking, we call that academic dishonesty. The same is true with ChatGPT. If you choose to use it, treat it as a *starting point* for your original thinking and writing, not a substitute.
- Your baseline assumption should be that ChatGPT's information is incorrect. I have identified a number of education policy-related errors in testing it myself. Confirm ChatGPT-provided information with secondary sources. Ultimately, you are responsible for its mistakes.
- With each assignment, you will explain whether and how you used ChatGPT (or any other AI tools), and attach the specific prompts you used and its output. I will post a clear example of what I'm looking for on Canvas.

*** I suggest reading in the order listed. ***

Weeks 1-2 (Jan 30, Feb 1, 6, 8): Substantive and Distributional Goals of Public Education

Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U.S. 510 (1925).

Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972).

Hochschild, Jennifer. 2001. "Public Schools and the American Dream." *Dissent* (Fall): 35-42.

Brighthouse, Harry, Helen F. Ladd, Susanna Loeb, and Adam Swift. 2016. "Educational Goods and Values: A Framework for Decision Makers." *Theory and Research in Education* 14(1): 3-25.

Labaree, David F. 1997. "Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle Over Educational Goals." *American Educational Research Journal* 34(1): 39-81.

Jencks, Christopher. 1988. "Whom Must We Treat Equally for Educational Opportunity to Be Equal?" *Ethics* 98: 518-533.

Week 3 (Feb 13 & 15): History, Governance, and Finance

Labaree, David. 2011. "Consuming the Public School." *Educational Theory* 61(4): 381-394.

San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 1 (1973).

Jackson, Kirabo, 2020. "Does School Spending Matter? The New Literature on an Old Question." American Psychological Association.

Reckhow, Sarah, Jeffrey R. Henig, Rebecca Jacobsen, and Jamie Alter Litt. 2017. "'Outsiders with Deep Pockets': The Nationalization of Local School Board Elections." *Urban Affairs Review* 53(5): 783-811.

Week 4 (Feb 20 & 22): Equal Protection in Public Education: Legal Frameworks

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896); Harlan dissent.

Lum v. Rice, 275 U.S. 78 (1927)

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974)

Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)

Bell, Derrick A., 2005. "The Unintended Lessons in *Brown v. Board of Education*." *NYLS Law Review*, 49(4): 1053-1067.

Week 5 (Feb 27 & Mar 1): How Do Differences Between Schools Affect Students' Outcomes and Experiences?

Cohodes, Sarah. 2018. "Charter Schools and the Achievement Gap." *Future of Children*: 1-16.

Golann, Joanne W. 2015. "The Paradox of Success at a No-Excuses School." *Sociology of Education* (88): 103-119.

Jennings, Jennifer L., David Deming, Christopher Jencks, Maya Lopuch, and Beth E. Schueler. 2015. "Do Differences in School Quality Matter More Than We Thought? New Evidence on Educational Opportunity in the Twenty-First Century." *Sociology of Education* 88(1): 56-82.

Khan, Shamus Rahman. 2010. "Getting In: How Elite Schools Play the College Game." In *Educating Elites: Class Privilege and Educational Advantage*: 97-112.

Week 6 (March 6 & 8): How Do Differences Within Schools Affect Students' Outcomes and Experiences?

Oakes, Jeannie. 1985. *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. Chapter 4, "The Distribution of Knowledge."

Owens, Jayanti. 2022. "Double Jeopardy: Teacher Biases, Racialized Organizations, and the Production of Racial/Ethnic Disparities in School Discipline." *American Sociological Review* 87(6): 1007-1048.

Tyson, Carolyn et al. 2005. "'It's Not a Black Thing': Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement." *American Sociological Review* 70: 582-605.

Jiménez, Tomás R., and Adam L. Horowitz. 2013. "When White Is Just Alright: How Immigrants Redefine Achievement and Reconfigure the Ethnoracial Hierarchy." *American Sociological Review* 78(5): 849-871.

*** Paper 1 (due Friday, March 10, 9pm) Explaining Educational Disparities by Socioeconomic Status, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, or Sexuality:** We will provide you with a selection of articles from which you will write a 7-page literature review evaluating the explanations provided for one type of categorical disparity. See Canvas for rubric.

SPRING BREAK

Week 7 (March 20 & 22): Testing and Accountability

National Research Council. 2011. *Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Education: Summary*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Koretz, Daniel. 2005. "Alignment, High Stakes, and the Inflation of Test Scores." *Teachers College Record* 107(14): 99-118.

Mittleman, Joel and Jennifer L. Jennings. 2018. "Accountability, Achievement, and Inequality in American Public Schools: A Review of the Literature." *Handbook of the Sociology of Education in the 21st Century*, pp.475-492.

Booher-Jennings, Jennifer L. 2005. "Below the Bubble: "Educational Triage" and the Texas Accountability System." *American Educational Research Journal* 42: 231-268.

Aviv, Rachel. 2013. "Wrong Answer." *The New Yorker*.

Week 8 (March 27 & 29): Teachers, Instruction, and Reform

Green, Elizabeth, 2014. *Building a Better Teacher: How Teaching Works (And How to Teach It to Everyone)*. WW Norton & Company. Chapter 1.

Corcoran, Sean P. 2007. "Long-Run Trends in the Quality of Teachers: Evidence and Implications for Policy." *Education Finance and Policy*, 2(4): 395-407.

Valenzuela, Angela. 2005. "Subtractive Schooling, Caring Relations, and Social Capital in the Schooling Of US-Mexican Youth." *Beyond silenced voices: Class, race, and gender in United States schools*: 83-94.

Turetsky, Kate M., Stacey Sinclair, Jordan G. Starck, and J. Nicole Shelton. 2021. "Beyond Students: How Teacher Psychology Shapes Educational Inequality." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 25(8): 697-709.

Cohen, David K., and Jal D. Mehta. 2017. "Why Reform Sometimes Succeeds: Understanding the Conditions that Produce Reforms that Last." *American Educational Research Journal* 54(4): 644-690.

Week 9 (April 3 & 5): Public School Choice

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2016. "Choosing a School for My Daughter in a Segregated City." *New York Times*.

Hailey, Chantal A., 2022. "Racial Preferences for Schools: Evidence from an Experiment with White, Black, Latinx, and Asian Parents and Students." *Sociology of Education*, 95(2): 110-132.

Sattin-Bajaj, Carolyn. 2015. "Unaccompanied Minors: How Children of Latin American Immigrants Negotiate High School Choice." *American Journal of Education* 121(3): 381-415.

Jennings, Jennifer L. 2010. "School Choice or Schools' Choice? Managing in an Era of Accountability." *Sociology of Education* 83(3): 227-247.

Week 10 (April 10 & 12): School Vouchers

- Driver, Justin. 2019. *The Schoolhouse Gate: Public Education, the Supreme Court, and the Battle for the American Mind*. Vintage, 2019. "Chapter 7: The Quiet Détente over Religion and Education."
- Eckes, Suzanne E., Julie Mead, and Jessica Ulm. "Dollars To Discriminate: The (Un) Intended Consequences of School Vouchers." *Peabody Journal of Education* 91, no. 4 (2016): 537-558.
- Jabbar, Huriya, Carlton J. Fong, Emily Germain, Dongmei Li, Joanna Sanchez, Wei-Ling Sun, and Michelle Devall. 2022. "The Competitive Effects of School Choice on Student Achievement: A Systematic Review." *Educational Policy* 36(2): 247-281.
- Burke, Lindsey M. and Jay P. Greene. 2021. "The Values-Based Case for School Choice is Also the Winning Case." American Enterprise Institute.

*** Final Paper Proposal (due Friday, April 14th, 5pm)**

Week 11 (April 17 & 19): Contested Curricula

- Apple, Michael W. 1971. "The Hidden Curriculum and the Nature of Conflict." *Interchange* 2 (4): 27-40.
- Zimmerman, Jonathan. 2022. *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*. Chapter 2: "Struggles Over Race and Sectionalism" and "Conclusion: Where Are We Now?"
- Dee, Thomas S., and Emily K. Penner. 2017. "The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum." *American Educational Research Journal* 54(1): 127-166.
- Pondiscio, Robert and Tracey Schirra. 2021. "Using Codes of Conduct to Ensure Viewpoint Diversity and Restore Trust in Schools." American Enterprise Institute.
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Week 12 (April 24 & 26): Grading and Evaluation

- Demerath, Peter. 2009. *Producing Success: The Culture of Personal Advancement in an American High School*. University of Chicago Press, Chapters 1-3 and Ch 5.
- Crocker, Jennifer, and Katherine M. Knight. 2005. "Contingencies of Self-Worth." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 14(4): 200-203.