

EDLDR, EDTHP, & HIED 587
Educational Policy and Politics

The Pennsylvania State University College of Education
Fall Semester, 2011

Donald E. Heller, 401C Rackley, 865-9756, dheller@psu.edu
Dana Mitra, 302A Rackley, 863-7020, dana@psu.edu
Course website: Angel, <http://cms.psu.edu>

Mondays, 9:05 a.m.– 12:05 p.m.
Classroom: 403 Rackley
Office hours by appointment

Course Description

This course is about the role of politics and public policy in education. It will examine policy models and frameworks, and their application to current policy issues in the K-12 and higher education arenas. The course is designed to explore theoretical frameworks necessary for understanding public policymaking; to offer a perspective on the role that research plays in the policy process; and to provide students with the chance to interpret the context of policy development for current policy issues. The curriculum focuses on local, state, and federal education policy.

Course Requirements

1. Required Readings

All required readings are available on the course website on Angel.

2. Assignments

- Students will work in teams of 2 or 3 to lead an activity related to each week's readings (this assignment will be assessed as part of each student's class participation).
- Two short papers:
 - A case analysis of 5 to 7 pages (double spaced), chosen from one of the two cases to be discussed in class, and;
 - An analytic paper of 5 to 7 pages (double spaced), chosen from one of two designated course sessions.
- Policy briefing (oral presentation and written paper) on an issue of education public policy chosen by the student in consultation with the professors. A description of this requirement follows the course schedule.

Late assignments (without the consent of the professors) will be penalized with lower grades.

3. Class Participation

Students will be expected to complete all assigned readings for each class and come prepared to participate in the discussion. Students will also be expected to participate in class discussions via the course website on Angel. The quality of the course will depend strongly on the level of student participation in the course.

4. Academic Integrity

The definitions, expectations, and policies pertaining to academic integrity applicable to this course are published in the College of Education Advising Handbook available at:

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/current-students/academic-integrity/academic-integrity>

Grading

Case analysis and analytic paper:	15% each
Oral policy briefing:	15%
Policy briefing paper:	35%
Class participation:	20%

Course Schedule and Assignments

- August 22 **Introduction to the study of educational policy; The educational policy system – I (Don)**
 Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College*, ch. 3
 Spring, J. H. (2005). *Conflict of Interests*, 5th ed., ch. 2.
 Keefe, W. J. & Ogul, M. S. (2001). *The American Legislative Process*, 10th ed., ch. 2 & 4.
 Lemann, N. (2010). "Comment: Schoolwork." *The New Yorker*, 9/27/10
 New America Foundation. (2011). *Summary and Analysis of President Obama's Education Budget Request, FY 2012*.
- August 29 **The educational policy system – II (Dana)**
 Last names A-K read: Stone, D. (1998). *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 1-13.
 Last names L-Z read: Majone, G. (1989). *Evidence, Argument, & Persuasion in the Policy Process*, 1-20.
 Rosen, L.(2009). Rhetoric and Symbolic Action in the Policy Process *Handbook on Education Policy Research*. Routledge. ch. 22, pp. 267-285.

September 5 No class – Labor Day
- September 12 **The policy process – I (Dana)**
One paragraph proposal for policy briefing due
 McDonnell, L. & Elmore, R. (1987). "Getting the Job Done: Alternative Policy Instruments," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 157-184.
 Schneider, A. & Ingram, H. (1993). "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy," *American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 334-347.
- September 19 **The policy process – II (Don)**
First analytic paper due.
 Kingdon, J. (1995). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (2nd ed.), ch. 8.
 Mumper, M. (2003). "Does Policy Design Matter? Comparing Universal and Targeted Approaches to Encouraging College Participation," *Educational Policy*, 17(1), 38-59.
 McLendon, M. K. & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2008). "Understanding Education Policy Change in the American States: Lessons from Political Science," In B. S. Cooper, J. G. Cibulka, & L. D. Fusarelli (Eds.), *Handbook of Education Politics and Policy*.
 Ness, E. C. & Mistretta, M. A. (2009). "Policy Adoption in North Carolina and Tennessee: A Comparative Case Study of Lottery Beneficiaries," *The Review of Higher Education*, 32(4), 489-514.
- September 26 **Policy implementation – I (Don)**
One page proposal for policy briefing due
 National Center on Education and the Economy, *Tough Choices or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*, executive summary.
 Murnane, R. J. & Levy, F. (1996). *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy*, chapter 4.
- October 3 **Policy implementation – II (Dana)**
 Shulman, Lee (1983). "Autonomy and Obligation: The Remote Control of Teaching" from

Shulman & Sykes, *Handbook of Teaching and Policy*, 484-504.

Datnow & Park (2009). Conceptualizing Policy Implementation: Large-scale Reform in an Era of Complexity. *Handbook on Education Policy Research*. Routledge. Chapter 28, pp. 348-361.

7. October 10 **Policy research, evaluation, and accountability (Don)**
Guest speaker: Megan McClean, Managing Director of Policy & Federal Relations National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
 Gupta, D. K. (2001). *Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques*. ch. 14.
 Hanushek, E. A. & Raymond, M. E. (2002). "Improving Educational Quality: How Best to Evaluate Schools," in Y. K. Kodrzycki (Ed.), *Education in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges of a Changing World*, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.
 Kane, T. J. (2002). "Discussion: Improving Educational Quality: How Best to Evaluate Schools," in Y. K. Kodrzycki (Ed.), *Education in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges of a Changing World*, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.
A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education (2006), Final report, Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education.
 Ruben, B.D., Lewis, L., Sandmeyer, L., Russ, T., Smulowitz, S., & Immordino, K. (2008). *Assessing the Impact of the Spellings Commission* (executive summary). Washington, DC: NACUBO.
8. October 17 **Obama's Educational Policy (Dana)**
First case analysis due
Race to the Top executive summary. (2009). U.S Department of Education
Obama's Blueprint for Education. (2010). U. S. Department of Education
Education Week's Spotlight on the Stimulus. (2009). Education Week. February
 Bifulco, R. & Bulkley, K.E. (2008). Charter Schools. In H.F. Ladd and E.B. Fiske (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 425-446.
 Darling-Hammond, L & Youngs, P. (2002). Defining "Highly Qualified Teachers": What Does "Scientifically-Based Research" Actually Tell us? *Educational Researcher*, December
 Folder of newspaper articles critiquing the Obama administration policies on ANGEL
9. October 24 **Bridging high school and college (Dana)**
 Harvey, J. (2002, April). *Gathering Momentum: Building the Learning Connection between Schools and Colleges*. Paper presented at the Learning Connection Conference, Kansas City, Missouri.
 Kirst, M. W., & Venezia, A. (Eds.). (2004). *From High School to College: Improving Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education*, chapter 7.
 Porter, A, McMaken, J., Hwang, J. & Yang, R. (2011). Accessing the Common Core Standards: Opportunities for Improving Measures of Instruction. *Educational Researcher* 40: 186-188.
Common Core Standards movement website
New York Times Debate Forum on "Will National Standards Improve Education?"
 Current newspaper articles on Common Core Standards (in the readings folder for this week).
10. October 31 **Higher education policy issues (Don)**
Second analytic paper due
 TG Research and Analytical Services. (2005). *Opening the Doors to Higher Education: Perspectives on the Higher Education Act 40 Years Later* (read pp. 1-42).
 McGuinness, Jr., A. (2011). "The States and Higher Education." In Altbach, Gumport, and Berdahl (Eds.), *American Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century* (3rd ed.).
 Selection of reports and articles on the Department of Education's Gainful Employment regulations
11. November 7 **Scale and sustainability (Dana)**
 Tyack, D. B. & Cuban, L., *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, chapters 2 & 3.
 Coburn, C. (2003). "Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change," *Educational Researcher*, 32(6), 3-12.

12. November 14 **Second case study – higher education (Don)**
Second case analysis due
 Leslie, D. W. & Berdahl, R. O., (2008). “The Politics of Restructuring Higher Education in Virginia: A Case Study,” *The Review of Higher Education*, 31(3), 309-328.
- November 21 **No class – fall break**
13. November 28 **Student policy briefing presentations**
14. December 5 **Student policy briefing presentations**
- December 9 **Final papers due at noon**

Policy Briefings

Subject Matter

You are a public policy analyst who is serving as advisor to one of the following:

- a member of Congress
- a state legislator
- a governor
- the director of a federal or state agency with responsibility for education, such as a state department of education, ministry of education, or higher education governing board.

In order to improve education in the United States or another country and impress your boss at the same time, you are going to present her with a carefully researched and written policy recommendation or set of recommendations on a specific topic. Your briefing should focus on either:

- What legislation this specific policymaker should introduce or support, or
- What the federal or state agency should do about this issue

Your policy proposal does *not* have to be original (i.e., one that has not been discussed in the policy arena in the past), but it should represent a substantive change from an existing policy. This can include a large-scale change in the level of effort or funding for an existing policy. Your proposal may concern any aspect of education, but it should be realistic, practical, and understandable to professional policymakers and lay people alike. You do not have to assume that your proposal would automatically garner widespread popular acceptance, but you should predict for your boss what the likely public reaction to your proposal would be. Your recommendations should be based on a careful analysis of the existing policy environment as well as any research on the topic that has been conducted, and they should be well supported and justified.

Students may optionally work in groups of no more than three students to complete this project.

Initial proposal idea (September 12)

Provide a one-paragraph description of the general education policy topic you would like to explore. If you wish to complete the project as a group assignment you should indicate so at this time. Please note that if you choose to do a group project, both students in the group will receive the same grade. By the end of that week (September 16), we will provide comments on your proposed topic.

One page proposal (September 26)

Provide a one-page proposal that explains in more detail your chosen topic for a policy briefing. Your proposal should include the following:

- a brief description of the existing public policy issue;
- the organization in which you are working and the title of the public official you are advising;
- the major policy alternatives and your own policy recommendation among them;
- the principal bibliographical sources you plan to use, including (if advisable) face-to-face, telephone, and/or e-mail interviews.

Comments on your proposal will be provided to you by the end of that week (September 30).

Oral policy briefing (November 28 and December 5)

The oral briefing dates will be assigned by October 24, and the oral briefings will be presented in class on November 28 and December 5. In order for you to make sure the whole class understands your topic, select one or two background articles for us to read in advance (articles from *Education Week*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New York Times*, or similar sources are recommended). One week before your oral briefing, distribute copies of your article to the class.

Each student or group will be allotted approximately 15-20 minutes (depending upon the number of presentations to be given) for the oral briefing including time for questions and discussion. The time allotted will depend upon how many students are enrolled in the class and how many group projects there are. Bring handouts or visual aids if appropriate and if they will help enhance your presentation. Include in your briefing some information about how your policy recommendation will be implemented, i.e., the logistics of passing your legislation or implementing your proposal within an executive branch agency. Besides providing background information regarding policy alternatives, be an advocate for the specific policy recommendation you have chosen. Keep your briefing succinct and lively.

There will be opportunity for questions from the class and discussion of the issue(s) you have raised, and everyone will be expected to participate.

Written policy briefing (due December 9)

Your written policy briefings are due at noon on December 9. These should be 15 - 25 pages (25 - 30 for group projects), double-spaced. More information about the format and content of the briefings will be provided during the semester.

Late papers (without the consent of the professors) will be penalized with lower grades.