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Public Affairs 974, Spring 2009  
Office Hrs.: 10:00-11:30 R  
By Appointment

## **EDUCATION POLICY AND REFORM**

This graduate seminar is a comprehensive course in education policy in the United States. I do not, however, assume students will have extensive prior knowledge of education policy. The focus is mostly on Pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, although student papers could be on higher education issues as well. The course will spend almost all of our time on current problems and policy issues. There will be a number of analytical readings, but I will talk the class through the analytical techniques and statistics. For those with prior statistical training, the course will provide interesting applications of subjects you have covered. I have made an effort to utilize the wealth of education expertise on the University of Wisconsin campus in the readings I list below. This will provide students introductions to top scholars with whom they may wish to work.

### **Course Objectives**

The objectives of the course are to provide: 1) basic background and knowledge of the major educational policy issues in America as we begin the twenty-first century; and, 2) to acquire analytical skills that allow you to take more advanced courses in public policy and/or become a participant in the policymaking process itself. A more general objective is to stimulate your interest in, and enthusiasm for the study and practice of education in America and elsewhere in the world.

### **Course Organization and Readings**

This course is organized around the basics of education and the key policy issues of 2009 and beyond. The topics begin at the basic family level, and then move from pre-school, to school, and then to the state and national level. Each of the topics incorporate policy issues that will be addressed in the next several years at the state and national level. Thus we will be working back and forth between basic knowledge, research findings, and policy.

Many of the readings will be provided electronically so we can access the very latest research and education policy information. For example, we will track and analyze the education policy proposals of the Obama administration and the early action on reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. Students will also be able to recommend readings for their "session leadership" period (below) as well as in general as I have intentionally left some readings light so that we can add readings as we proceed.

## Course Requirements

The course requirements will be as follows:

| <u>Requirement</u>                           | <u>Due Date</u> | <u>Weight</u> |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Session Leadership                           | Varies          | 20%           |
| Policy Memorandum<br>(5 pages double-spaced) | March 10        | 20%           |
| Research/policy Paper                        | May 5           | 50%           |
| Seminar Participation                        | Whole Course    | 10%           |

The *session leadership* will be a team activity in which student teams lead the discussion on selected days for half the period (1 hour). We will assess interests in topics the first class period and I will then set up teams in accordance with preferences. The teams will be able to add additional readings and will then lead the discussion during the session. The *policy memorandum* will be a concise policy writing assignment that I will hand out on **February 24**. Everyone will write on the same topic. The research/policy paper will be approximately 20 pages and will be on topic of the students choosing, with my approval. A written abstract of the paper will be due no later than **March 3**, but I hope earlier so I can help guide the research. We will talk about all these areas in more detail during the first class.

## Course Readings

Readings for the course are from two books available at either The University Bookstore or Underground Books. The rest of the readings will be either on a course website or emailed to the class as electronic documents. The books are:

Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Education Gap* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004).

Diane Ravitch (ed.), *Brookings Papers on Education Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

*It is absolutely necessary that readings will be done in advance of the sessions in that they will be discussed at length in the classes. Because there are no exams in this course, I am trusting students to want to learn the material and do the readings.*

## Reading Schedule

### **Week 1: History and Structure** – January 20

Gerald L. Gutek, *An Historical Introduction to American Education* (Waveland Press, 1991), pp. 55-84, 97-136.

John F. Witte, “Choice and Control: An Analytic Overview,” in William S. Clune and John F. Witte (eds.), *Choice and Control in American Education: Volume 1*: New York and London, Falmer Press, pp. 11- 46.

### **Weeks 2 and 3: Family and Culture** – January 27 and February 3

Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), entire

Larry V. Hedges and Amy Nowell, “Black-White Test Score Convergence since 1965.” In Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips (eds.), *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington, D.C. Brookings, 1998), pp.149-181.

Derek Neal, “Why Has Black-White Skill Convergence Stopped?” *Handbook of Economics of Education*, edited by Eric Hanushek and Finis Welch, Elsevier. 2006 (NBER Working paper #11090)

### **Week 4: Pre-School** – February 10

William Gormley, et al., “The Effects of Universal Pre-k on Cognitive Development, in *Developmental Psychology*, November 2005.

John F. Witte, “A Proposal for Income Targeted, State-Level, Pre-school Vouchers.” *Peabody Journal of Education*: 82:4 (2007): pp. 1-28.

William Gormley – Model Comparison Tables.

### **Week 5: Reading** - February 17

Margaret Moustafa, “Contemporary Reading Instruction,” in Tom Loveless (ed.), *The Great Curriculum Debate: How Should We Teach Reading and Math?*, Washington D.C.: Brookings, pp. 247-267.

Diane Ravitch (ed.), *Brookings Papers on Education Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2005), pp. 175-250.

**Week 6: Math** – February 24

David Klein, “A quarter century of U.S. ‘math wars’ and political partisanship,” *The Bulletin: Journal of the British Society of History of Mathematics* 22, March 2007: 22-33.

Richard Askey, “Learning from Assessment,” Chapter 9 in ....

Adam Gamoran, “Beyond Curriculum Wars: Content and Understanding in Mathematics,” in Tom Loveless (ed.), *The Great Curriculum Debate: How Should We Teach Reading and Math?*, Washington D.C.: Brookings, pp. 134-162.

**For Background:**

David Klein, “A Brief History of American K-12 Mathematics Education in the 20th Century,” in James Royer (ed.), *Mathematical Cognition*, Information Age Publishing, 2003.

**Week 7&8: Teachers** – March 3 and 10

Douglas N. Harris, “The Policy Uses and Policy Validity of Value-Added and Other Teacher Quality Measures,” in D.H. Gitomer (ed.), *Measurement Issues and Assessment for Teacher Quality*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 99-129.

Douglas N. Harris, “Would Accountability Based on Value-Added Be Smart Policy? An Examination of the Statistical Properties and Policy Alternatives,” paper given at the University of Wisconsin National Value-Added Modeling, April 2008.

Derek Neal, “Designing Incentive Systems for School,” in Matthew Springer (ed.), *Performance Incentives: Their Growing Impact on American k-12 School*: Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, forthcoming.

**Policy Memorandum Due March 10.**

**Week 9&10: School Finance** – March 24.

Andy Reschovsky and Jennifer Imazeki, to be announced.

Allan Odden, Michael Goetz, and Lawrence Picus, "Using Available Evidence to Estimate the cost of Education Adequacy," *Education Finance and Policy* 3, Simmer, 2008: 374-397.

**Week 11&12: Choice** – March 31 and April 7.

Diane Ravitch (ed.), *Brookings Papers on Education Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2005), pp.89-174.

John Witte, Joshua Cowen, David Fleming, Patrick Wolf, *Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Longitudinal Education Growth Study, Year 2*, March 2009. To be distributed when released on March 27, 2009

Stephane Lavertu and John Witte, "A Multifaceted Analysis of Milwaukee Charter Schools." Paper presented at the 2008 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, August 28-31, Boston, MA.

**Week 13&14: Standards, Assessment and Accountability: No Child Left Behind**  
April 14 and 21.

Diane Ravitch (ed.), *Brookings Papers on Education Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2005), pp. 7-46.

Additional readings on reauthorization of NCLB to be announced and distributed later.

**Week 15& 16: Added Topic To Be Determined plus "Futures"** – April 28 and May 5.

Robert Evans, "The Culture of Resistance." In Lesley Iura (ed.), *The Jossey-Boss Reader on School Reform*. Jossey-Bass, 2001, pp. 510-521.

John F. Witte, "Education in the New Millenium: Continuity and Change in Public Education." *Stanford Law & Policy Review* 11:2 (Spring 2000), pp. 225-234.

**Research Paper Due May 5**