

A560 – Political Context of Education

Indiana University-Indianapolis
Spring 2007, Section 25793
Wednesdays 5:30-8:30
ES 1116

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Introduction and Rationale

This course seeks to develop doctoral students' understanding of how educational politics and policies permeate educational systems and decision-making in schools. Students are expected to increase their capacity to engage multiple perspectives and to critically examine political processes and policy arrangements.

As educators lead important and practical decision-making processes within their school communities, they inevitably act in political ways. Through their daily work in and around schools, educators work with multiple coalitions and stakeholders that represent competing needs, values, interests, and power resources (Scribner & Layton, 1994). Additionally, educators interact with a web of policies that are received and articulated in the cultural practices of schools (Taylor, et. Al, 1997). When educational leaders, teachers, and students interpret and make decisions about policies, they are also participating in the policy process (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). The approaches undertaken in this class will lead us to conceptualize policies as cultural practices of normative decision making that are woven into the everyday life of schools. Rational-technical policy cycle models of formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Theodoulou, 1995) are reconceptualized as dynamic entities that are continuously mediated by our "street level" actions (Majone & Wildasky, 1973). This approach challenges educational leaders to recognize how they have agency in reframing and shaping political processes and policies, while simultaneously recognizing multiple ways that political processes and policies structure work done around schools

Course objectives and student responsibilities

While we survey educational politics, policy development and implementation at international, federal, state, and local levels, the course is also designed to provide you with a foundational grasp of power and politics. We will use practical applications of theory to illuminate the various contexts particular educational policies have arisen from, to evaluate how policy processes are arranged, to assess particular policies' value assumptions, to explore whose interest particular policies serve, to examine how policies are implemented, and to collectively struggle over how to participate in policy advocacy (Taylor, et. Al, 1997). We will seek to understand how local actors such as teachers, school community members,

and administrators are agentic policy actors- how they frame, interpret, and utilize policy and reform initiatives toward ends valued by local schools and communities. It is my intention that you complete the course with greater macro- and micro-political awareness of whose values and interests are privileged and contested in the process of schooling. You will be called upon to examine how policies are received and articulated in your own school and community contexts.

As a result of your experience in this class, you should further develop your capacity to review and synthesize a substantial body of literature, as well as act with your newly acquired knowledge. You are expected to further develop your ability to generate knowledge and to apply their knowledge of politics and policy to critically analyze their own work as educational leaders. It is the instructor's belief that educational leaders benefit from conceptual knowledge and terminology that emboldens them to interrogate, analyze, and reframe the political processes and policy cycles that influence macro to micro level decisions around schooling. In addition, in preparation for dissertation research, students are expected to read deeply and critically in order to synthesize a body of politics and policy literature pertinent to potential (or already developed) dissertation topics.

Guiding Questions

These questions serve to guide our discussion and analysis throughout the semester.

What are the goals and purposes of public education? Is policy a cultural concept or better characterized as technical and (imperfectly) rational instrumentation?

What is the nature of federal and state support to K-12 education? Which key interest groups and coalitions influence education policy? How are education policy development, implementation, and evaluation structured at multiple levels? In what ways do educational policies and politics frame the daily experiences of principals, teachers, school-community groups, and children?

What characteristics of district and school governance or culture influence federal and state roles in education? How do teachers and principals act as power brokers and policy makers? How do these actors' school and community assumptions, capacity, and cultural patterns influence reform implementation? How is authority evidenced in classrooms?

How have the politics of testing and high-stakes accountability shaped education policy? In what ways might the effects of these policies be differentiated across racial and class geographies? How might broader urban policies be conceptualized as education and school-based policies? How do culture of poverty assumptions influence the development educational policies and what does that imply for our practice as school leaders?

How might we think and act differently around power and politics in schools? How do I apply this new knowledge to my daily work?

Required Texts

Datnow, A., Hubbard, L., & Mehan, H. (2002). *Extending educational reform: From one school to many*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Lipman, P. (2004). *High-stakes education: Inequality, globalization, and urban school reform*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Marshall, C. & Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2005). *Reframing educational politics for social justice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Pace, J. & Hemmings, A. (Eds.). (2006). *Classroom authority: Theory, research, and practice*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Stein, S. (2004). *The culture of education policy*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Course requirements and evaluation procedures

Evaluation Overview

Completed work is not necessarily “A” work. If work is not completed to quality, students will be allowed to resubmit their work. I also encourage students to contact me before assignments are due with ideas or drafts, as I am willing to provide constructive feedback. Incompletes are discouraged and will be granted only if the bulk of the requirements have been completed. Lack of time or other ongoing obligations are not adequate reasons for an incomplete to be granted. Removal of an incomplete requires completion of all assignments and one additional assignment.

Class attendance and participation: 35 points

Attendance is expected at all class sessions. You should prepare carefully for each class by completing the necessary readings and assignments before class. Missing more than 30 minutes of a class constitutes an absence. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. However, students will have the opportunity to earn the points deducted due to an absence, by completing an alternative assignment from a list provided by the instructor.

Each class member is expected to contribute thoughtfully and regularly through class participation. This participation is a critical component of the course, and communication with others will be an important part of your class contribution assessment. You are expected to collaborate constructively during small group activities and to provide personal insight, critical reflection, and questions during the discussion of the readings and learning tasks. As such discussion should reflect each class member’s ability to: (1) listen openly to opinions that differ from their own, (2) communicate disagreement constructively, (3) seek information for clarification, (4) solicit the participation of others, and (5) mediate conflict between others.

Class discussion and summative essay: 15 points

During the first 5 class sessions students will read articles (selected by the instructor) which extend perspectives and/or theoretical frameworks introduced in the Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin text. Working in pairs, students will write and distribute a 2 page summary of the readings to all class members. The summary should note the salient points of each of the articles and reflect on how the articles extend knowledge and impact practice. Additionally, the pairs of students will lead a 30 minute discussion for the class. In your discussion, you are expected to explain the content of each of the articles to your fellow students, and when possible, connect the content of the articles to the Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin text, other pertinent assigned readings, and students' experiences.

Students will have the opportunity to select from the following dates during the first class session: January 17, January 24, January 31, February 7, and February 14.

Review of Articles: 10 points

Each student will submit a 3-5 page (12 point font, double space) review of **three** interrelated peer-reviewed articles. The articles should address political and policy aspects of an issue that relates to a potential dissertation topic. The review of articles should contain the following elements-

A summary of each article

An **explicit** statement of how the articles relate to each other (how are they "in conversation" with each other)

A discussion of how the articles inform your potential area of dissertation research, including what questions these articles raise for you.

Assignment due: February 21

Book Review: 10 points

Each student is to submit a 3-5 page (12 point font, double space) review of a book approved by the instructor. The book content should address political and policy aspects of an issue that relates to a potential dissertation topic. The book review should contain the following elements-

A summary of the book content

An **explicit** description of:

The type of research the authors utilize (frameworks, authors, perspectives)

How this book relates to and/or expands on these perspectives

A reflection on the quality and utility of the book to the field and to your work in particular

Assignment due: March 7

Literature Review: 30 points

Students will consult with the instructor to select an area of educational politics and policy that relates to a potential dissertation topic. Students are expected to use class assignments as well as a significant amount of literature from outside the class. The review will be developed through multiple assignments submitted in this class. A one page written statement of the potential topic and potential sources must be submitted to me by January 31 for formative feedback. Subsequently, you will be conducting a review of articles and a book. It is highly recommended that the work you do for those two assignments become incorporated (but not “cut and pasted”) into your literature review. An initial draft of the literature review is due to the professor by **March 28** for formative feedback. The final literature review will range from 12 – 20 pages and is due on the last day of class. Throughout the class we will discuss elements of a literature review.

Assignment due: January 31 (Potential topic statement); March 28 (Draft); April 25 (Final paper)

Grades

The points required to earn a grade are listed below:

A = 90-100

B = 80-90

C=75-80

I= Anything below 75 points will receive a grade of incomplete.

Accessibility Statement

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with us, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform us immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office.

Office location: ES 3152

Office hours: Wednesdays 12-3 and by appointment

To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker), students must register with Student Disability Services. This is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements. Another resource is IU’s Information and Technology Services Office. For more information about the rights of people with disabilities, please visit <http://campuslife.indiana.edu/DSS/>.

Academic Honesty Statement

Academic honesty is expected. Academic dishonesty may affect both your grade in this course as well as your enrollment status in the University. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, you should seek clarification from the *IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibility and Conduct* (<http://campuslife.indiana.edu/Code/index.html>) as soon as possible.

**Course Schedule
A560 Doctoral Seminar
Spring, 2007**

January 10: Course introduction

Assigned Readings:

Stout, R., Tallerico, M., Scribner, K. P. (1995). Values: The 'what?' of the politics of education. In J.D. Scribner & D. Layton (Eds.), *The study of educational politics: The 1994 commemorative yearbook of the Politics of Education Association* (5-20).

January 17: Frameworks for puzzles in Politics and Policy

Assigned Readings:

Marshall & Gerstl- Pepin, Chapters 1 & 2

Student led presentations and discussion:

Group 1: Agenda Setting and policy making

Kingdon, J. (1995). Agenda Setting. In S. Theodolou & M. Cahn (Eds.), *Public Policy: The essential readings*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Lindblom, C. (1995). The 'science' of muddling through. In S. Theodolou & M. Cahn (Eds.), *Public Policy: The essential readings*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Schulman, P. (1995). Nonincremental policy making. In S. Theodolou & M. Cahn (Eds.), *Public Policy: The essential readings* (128- 137). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Group 2: Interest Groups

Bjork, L.& Lindle, J. (2001). Superintendents and interest groups. *Education Policy*, 15 (1), 76-92.

Mawhinney, H. & Lugg, C. (2001). Theoretical approaches to understanding interest groups. *Educational Policy*, 15 (1), 187-214.

Opfer, D. (2001). Beyond self-interest: Educational interest groups and congressional influence. *Education Policy*, 15 (1), 135-152.

January 24: Alternatives for advocacy politics

Assigned Reading:

Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, Chapter 3

Student led presentations and discussion:

Group 1: Politics of the body

- Lugg, C. (2003). Sissies, faggots, lezzies, and dykes: Gender, sexual orientation, and a new politics of education. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39(1), 95-134.
- Pillow, W. (2006). Teen pregnancy and education. *Educational Policy*, 20 (1), 59-84.
- Pillow, W. (2003). "Bodies are dangerous": Using feminist genealogy as policy studies methodology. *Education Policy*, 18 (2), 145-159.

Group 2: Politics of race and class

- Brantlinger, E. (2003). *Dividing classes: How the middle class negotiates and rationalizes school advantage*. New York: Routledge. Read Chapter 5: Positions and outlooks of teachers at different schools (pp. 79-116).
- Hess, F. & Leal, D. (2001). The opportunity to engage: How race, class, and institutions structure access to educational deliberation. *Educational Policy*, 15 (3), 474-490.
- Noguera, P. (2001). Racial politics and the elusive quest for excellence and equity in education. *Education and Urban Society*, 34 (1), 18-41.

Group 3: Politics of language

- Gebhart, M. (2002). Charter schools and Bilingual Education: A case study of teachers negotiating policy-making roles. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 35 (2) 255-264.
- Valenzuela, A. (2002). High-stakes testing and Mexican-American Youth in Texas: The case for multiple compensatory criteria in assessment. *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*, 14 (1), 97-116.
- Wiley, T. & Wright, W. (2004). Against the undertow: Language minority education policy and politics in the "age of accountability". *Educational Policy*, 18 (1) 142-168.

January 31: Globalization, New Public Management, and Spectacle

Assigned Reading:

Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, Chapter 8

Student led presentations and discussion:

Group 1: New Public Management and Accountability

- Court, M. (2004). Talking back to new public management versions of accountability in education. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 32 (2), 171-194.
- Fusarelli, L. & Johnson, B. (2004). Educational governance and the new public management. *Public administration and management: An interactive journal*, 9 (2), 118-127.

Rustique-Forrester, E. (2005). Accountability and the pressures to exclude: A cautionary tale from England. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 13 (26). Retrieve from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n26/>.

Group 2: Political Spectacle

Anderson, G. (2005). Performing school reform in the age of the political spectacle.

In

K. Alexander, G. Anderson, & B. Gallegos (Eds.). *Performance theories in education: Power, pedagogy, and the politics of identity* (pp. 199-215).

Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.

Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18 (2), 215-228.

Humes, W. & Bryce, T. (2003). Poststructuralism and policy research in education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18 (2), 175-187.

Smith, M.L. (2004). *Political Spectacle and the fate of American schools*. New York: Routledge. Read chapter 1, School policy under the spotlight, (pp. 1-41).

Assignment due: One page summary of literature review topic

February 7: State and Federal Role in Education

Assigned Readings:

Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, Chapters 6 & 7

Student led presentations and discussion:

Group 1: Presidential Politics and NCLB

Hess, F. & McGuinn, F. (2002). Seeking the mantle of opportunity: Presidential policies and the educational metaphor. *Educational Policy* 16(1), 72-95.

Manna, T. (2006). Control, persuasion, & educational accountability: Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. *Education Policy*, 20 (3), 471-494.

Olson, L. & Hoff, D. (2006). Framing the debate. *Education Week*, 26 (15), 22-30.

Group 2: State Role in Education

Cohen, D. & Hill, H. (2001). *Learning policy: When state education reform works*. New York: Yale University Press. (skim book).

Elezar, D. (1994). The political subcultures of the United States. In D. Elezar (Ed.). *The American Mosaic: The impact of space, time, and culture on American politics*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Opfer, D. (2006). Evaluating equity: A framework for understanding action and inaction on social justice issues. *Educational Policy*, 20 (1), 271-290.

Tonn, J. (2006). State education leaders debate national standards. *Education Week*, 26 (14), 20, 22.

February 14: Politics of Policy Implementation and School-Level Reform

Assigned Readings:

Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, Chapters 4 & 5

Student led presentations and discussion:

Group 1: Politics of implementation and reform

Cuban, L. (1990). Reforming again, again, and again. *Educational Researcher*, 19(1), 3-13.

Kirst, M. (2002). Mayoral influence, new regimes, & public school governance. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Rowan, B. (2006). The school improvement industry in the United States: Why educational change is both pervasive and ineffectual. In Dieter-Meyer, H. & Rowan, B. (Eds.). *The new institutionalism in education* (67-85). Albany: SUNY Press.

Group 2: Politics of school-level reform

Cooper, B., Ehrensals, P., & Bromne, M. (2005). School-level politics and professional development: Traps in evaluating the quality of practicing teachers. *Educational Policy*, 19 (10), 112-125.

Firestone, W., Schorr, R., & Monfils, L. (2004). *The ambiguity of teaching to the test*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates. Read chapter 5: The principal, test preparation, and educational reform (pp. 91-112).

Walker, E. (2004). The impact of state policies and actions on local implementation efforts: A study of whole school reform in New Jersey. *Educational Policy*, 18 (2), 338-363.

February 21: Globalization, high-stakes education, and inequality: Chicago reform

Assigned Reading:

Lipman, part 1

Assignment due: Review of articles

February 28: Globalization, high-stakes education, and inequality: Chicago reform

Assigned Reading:

Lipman, part 2

March 7: The role of research and assumptions: Title 1 Policy development and implementation

Assigned Reading:
Stein, Part 1

Assignment due: Book review

March 14: The role of research and assumptions: Title 1 Policy development and implementation

Assigned Reading:
Stein, Part 2

March 21: No class- spring break

March 28: Case study: Politics of bringing reform to scale

Assigned Reading:
Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, part 1

Assignment due: Draft of Literature Review

April 4: Case study: Politics of bringing reform to scale

Assigned Reading:
Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, part 2

April 11: No class: Student literature review work session

April 18: Micropolitics- Authority and the classroom

Assigned Reading:
Pace & Hemmings, Chapters 1, 2, & 4

April 25: Review and Strategies for Policy Advocates

Assigned Reading:
Pace & Hemmings, Chapters 5, 6, 7, Epilogue
Review of Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin

Assignment Due: Literature Review