

EDLDR, EDTHP, & HIED 587
Educational Policy and Politics

The Pennsylvania State University College of Education
Fall Semester, 2006

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Course website: Angel, <http://cms.psu.edu>

Mondays, 9:45 - 12:45
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. Readings will be available directly as links on the World Wide Web, or through electronic reserves at Pattee and Paterno libraries. One teaching case used in the course ("Assessment in the Commonwealth of Virginia") will be available for purchase at the Penn State bookstore later in the semester. Another teaching case can be purchased via the Kennedy School of Government case program (link is available on the course website).

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).
- A case analysis of 5 to 7 pages, chosen from one of the two cases to be discussed in class.
- An analytic paper of 5 to 7 pages, 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/edservices/certification/academic_integ.htm

Grading

Case analysis:	15%
Analytic paper:	15%
Oral policy briefing:	15%
Policy briefing paper:	35%
Class participation:	20%

Course Schedule and Assignments

- September 11 **Introduction to the study of educational policy**
Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College*, ch. 3
- September 18 **The educational policy system – I (Don)**
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.
- September 25 **The educational policy system – II (Dana)**
One paragraph proposal for policy briefing due
Stokey, E. and Zeckhauser, R. (1978). "Thinking About Policy Choices and Putting Analysis to Work," in *A Primer for Policy Analysis*, 3-7, 320-329.
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.
- October 2
Don out **The policy process – I (Dana)**
First analytic paper due
McDonnell, L. and Elmore, R. (1987). "Getting the Job Done: Alternative Policy Instruments," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 133-152.
Schneider, A. and Ingram, H. (1993). "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy," *American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 334-347.
- October 9 **The policy process – II (Don)**
One page proposal for policy briefing due
Kingdon, J. (1995). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (2nd ed.), ch. 8.
Palumbo, D. (1988). *Public Policy in America: Government in Action*, 43-48, 50-58.
- October 16 **First case study – K-12 education (Dana)**
First case analysis due
Kennedy School of Government, *Zero Tolerance in Memphis* (available from the KSG case program; make sure to order both part A and part B)
- October 23 **Policy implementation – I (Don)**
Spillane, J. P. (2000). "Cognition and Policy Implementation: District Policymakers and the Reform of Mathematics Education," *Cognition and Instruction*, 18(2), 141-179.
Ness, E., and Noland, B. (2003). *Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarships: A Case Study of the Policy Process*. Paper presented at the 2003 ASHE Conference, Portland, OR.
- October 30 **Policy implementation – II (Dana)**
Second analytic paper due
McLaughlin, M. (1987). "Learning from Experience: Lessons from Policy Implementation," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 171-178.
Shulman, Lee (1983). "Autonomy and Obligation: The Remote Control of Teaching" from Shulman & Sykes, *Handbook of Teaching and Policy*, 484-504.

9. November 6 **Higher education policy issues (Don)**
Final report, Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education
other readings TBA
10. November 13 **Second case study – higher education (Don)**
Second case analysis due
Harvard Graduate School of Education, *Assessment in the Commonwealth of Virginia* (available at the Penn State Bookstore)
11. November 20 **Student policy briefing presentations**
12. November 27 **Student policy briefing presentations**
13. December 4 **Policy research and evaluation (Don)**
Dana out
Gupta, D. K. (2001). *Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques*. ch. 14.
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (2004). *The Impacts of Regular Upward Bound: Results from the Third Follow-up Data Collection*, selected sections.
14. December 11 **Scale and sustainability (Dana)**
Final papers due in class
Second analytic paper due
Elmore, R. F. (1996). "Getting to Scale with Successful Educational Practices," *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 1-26.
Coburn, C. (2003). Rethinking scale: Moving beyond numbers to deep and lasting change" *Educational Researcher*, 32(6), 3-12.

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

Initial proposal idea (September 26)

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 30), we will provide comments on your proposed topic.

One page proposal (October 10)

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 (October 14).

Oral policy briefing (November 28 and December 5)

The oral briefing dates will be assigned by October 17, 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 will be allotted approximately 20 minutes 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 on December 9 at noon. 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.