MTLA 602 Critical Issues in Contemporary Education
Spring, 2013
Dr. Christine Finnan

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Meeting Time and Place: Tuesday: 5:00 PM – 7:45 PM ECTR 219
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 to 4:30 PM, Thursday 9:00 to 11:30 AM or by appointment

Course Description
This course examines current issues in American public education, focusing on issues facing today’s students, teachers, and the teaching profession. The course also places these issues within an international context.

Course Text/Materials


PEN NewsBlast (go to PEN’s website (http://www.publiceducation.org) and follow the instructions in the lower left-hand section of the homepage).

National Education Policy Center (go to http://nepc.colorado.edu/ and a pop-up to subscribe to news alerts should come up)

Education Week (go to www.edweek.org and register for a free subscription – this gives you limited access to content)

Sign up for an Evernote account at http://evernote.com/. We will be using this to keep track of sources for your literature review.

Additional readings available on OAKS.

Course Objectives
1. Develop critical understanding of the underlying philosophical, historical, and cultural underpinnings of contemporary educational issues and policies (e.g., standards; testing and accountability; teacher recruitment, retention and evaluation; school structure and finance) (EHHP 7, ETC 3)
2. Understand how policies are developed, disseminated, and implemented and the influences on this process (EHHP 7, ETC 3)
3. Be able to place issues and policies in state, national, and international context (EHHP 7, ETC 3)
4. Be able to see multiple sides to issues (EHHP 7, EHHP 4, ETC 3)
5. Be able to distinguish between opinion and research in relation to educational issues and policies EHHP 7, EHHP 4, ETC 3)
6. Be able to analyze and synthesize professional literature and produce a coherent literature review, clearly identifying and substantiating a compelling problem. (EHHP 5, ETC 3)

Course Outcomes
All teacher education programs in the School of Education are guided by a commitment to Making the Teaching and Learning Connection. Teachers who make the teaching and learning connection: 1. Understand and value the learner; 2. Know what and how to teach and assess and how to create an environment in which learning occurs, and 3. Understand themselves as professionals. These three elements of teacher competency
are at the heart of the EHHP conceptual framework and guide what you will learn and how your learning will be assessed. Each course in the teacher education programs provides opportunities for you to develop and extend your knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to become an effective teacher.

ETC 1-Outcomes related to understanding and valuing the learner: The course will examine current issues and policies within and outside of school that influence student learning. The ultimate goal is to help you advocate for children by gaining a better understanding of how policies impact on them.

ETC 2-Outcomes related to knowing what and how to teach and assess and how to create an environment in which learning occurs: The course will provide a better understanding of the connection between policy and classroom practice. We will examine how policies created at the district, state and national levels impact classroom practice as well as how teachers’ decisions in the classroom influence how policies are implemented. Specific attention will be paid to policies related to curriculum, assessment and school climate. The ultimate goal is to help you advocate for meaningful and appropriate curriculum, instruction and assessment by understanding current policies and how teachers can influence policy development and shape implementation.

ETC 3-Outcomes related to understanding self as a professional: The course will focus deeply on the current emphasis on teacher quality in state, national and international policy. These policies include those affecting teacher training, certification, retention, and evaluation. You will be better prepared to advocate for the teaching profession by understanding the influences on current policies and the research used to support and challenge current policies.

Course Requirements

Demonstration of SOE Dispositions and how students express them in this course:

- Belief that all students can learn (attitudes expressed about students and learning)
- Value and respect for individual differences (participation in class discussions)
- Value of positive human interactions (participation in class discussions)
- Exhibition and encouragement of intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm about learning, and willingness to learn new ideas (participation in class discussions; completion of reading assignments; quality of course projects)
- Dedication to inquiry, reflection, and self-assessment (quality of course assignments; active participation in class discussions; support and encouragement of diverse ideas)
- Value of collaborative and cooperative work (participation in class activities)
- Sensitivity toward community and cultural contexts (insights expressed in class discussions and reflected in course assignments)
- Engagement in responsible and ethical practice (performance on course assignments and contribution to class activities)
- Development of professional mastery over time (performance over time on all assignments)

Students are responsible for:

- Completing all assigned readings and projects on time. Late assignments are accepted only at the instructor’s discretion. Points will be subtracted from late assignments.
- Attending to all course content (lecture, text, outside reading, handouts, research)
- Retrieving all missed assignments/notes from someone in class, not the instructor
- Utilizing internet, word processing, email and OAKS. Please consult with instructor to arrange tutoring if you are unfamiliar with any of these applications.
- Attending regularly and on time and actively participating in class (YOU CAN MISS NO MORE THAN TWO CLASS SESSIONS)
- Assuring that all work is their own and that sources are properly cited and credited (see http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml for examples of acceptable and unacceptable use of sources.)
The professor is responsible for:

- Being prepared and actively engaged in all classes
- Being accessible to students outside of class
- Facilitating safe and stimulating classroom discussions
- Providing timely and constructive feedback on student work

**Description of Projects/Assignments and Evaluation Criteria**

**Critique of Research Article**
Select one of the research articles you will use in your literature review and provide a detailed description of the following:

- Rationale for selecting this article (How does it fit with your topic?)
- Initial assessment of the article (Did you think it would support or oppose your argument?)
- Critique of literature review in article (What is the quality of literature cited? Are multiple arguments presented fairly?)
- Critique of the data presented (Is the data collection and analysis process described clearly? Are the data and literature review clearly related? Are the conclusions consistent with the data presented?)
- Description of role article will play in your literature review (How significant is this article in supporting/refuting your argument? How does it relate to other research articles on this topic? What is especially useful or not useful about this article?)

*Points: 50*
*Length: 3 pages double-spaced*
*Due: February 12*

**Issues Pro/Con**
You should identify a problem that can be viewed from at least two perspectives. Your task is to clearly describe the problem and to identify two perspectives on the problem. **For each perspective** describe and support with research:

- Explanations proponents of the position give for why the problem exists
- Research and opinion supporting the perspective (be sure to clearly distinguish research and opinion)
- Solution/s proponents of this position offer
- Likely costs and benefits of the solution/s
- Arguments opponents give against this definition of the problem and solutions

Repeat this process for an alternative perspective.

*Points: 50*
*Length: 3-4 pages double-spaced*
*Due: February 26*

**Policy Memo**
Assume you are a policy advisor/analyst to Governor Haley, Superintendent Zais, Dr. McGinley (or your district’s superintendent) or the school board. Identify a problem and what you think is a major cause of the problem and suggest a potential policy solution. Write a short (no more than three pages) memo that:

- Describes the problem and cause
- Presents evidence (distinguishing between research and opinion) supporting the importance of the problem and the cause you have identified
- Outlines one potential solution
- Details the steps and resources necessary to implement the solution
- Identifies potential roadblocks and supports to implementation

*(Do NOT pick the same problem as that of the Literature Review or Issue Pro/Con).*

*Points: 50*
*Length: 3 pages double-spaced*
Literature Review
Following the procedure outlined in *The Literature Review* and using the format presented in the UC Davis guide, you will complete a literature review that provides a thorough exploration of existing research and opinion on a topic of your choice. The paper includes two parts. The first describes how you completed the six steps outlined in *The Literature Review*. This part of the literature review will be turned in in segments throughout the semester. You are expected to use Evernote to organize your sources. We will develop a schedule jointly for completion of the six steps. You will also give a presentation in the same format used for capstone presentations.

The second part is your completed literature review (Step 6). You should select a topic that interests you for your capstone project so that the literature review can be used to support your research proposal and presentation of findings. The literature review should:

- Make a clear problem statement and provide a convincing thesis explaining the problem
- Present alternative conceptions of the problem
- Clearly present literature from multiple perspectives
- Critique the current literature on the problem
- Identify areas needing additional research

You will give a five-minute presentation of your key findings and next steps. The presentation must be done through either a video or Prezi format.

**Points:** 150

**Length:** 5-7 pages (Part 1) and 10-12 pages (Part 2)

**Due:** Final version of Parts 1 & 2 -- April 23; presentation April 30

Participation
This course will function as a seminar in which active participation of everyone is REQUIRED. By active participation I mean regular, on-time attendance, completion of all reading and homework assignments prior to the beginning of class, thoughtful participation in discussion, allowance of time for others to speak, and attentive, respectful reception of classmates’ opinions and ideas, and avoidance of diversions such as web surfing and texting during class.

**Points:** No points are allocated for participation but your grade may be affected by inappropriate or inadequate participation

**Total points = 300**

**Evaluation Scale**
- A = 100 – 93
- B+ = 92-88
- B = 87-83
- C+ = 82-78
- C = 77-74
- F = 73 and below

**Class Schedule for Spring 2013 (Tentative)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Schedule Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
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<td><strong>Part One:</strong> Educational issues past and present</td>
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| 2    | January 22 | Schools and equity | Cohen and Moffitt (OAKS)  
Meet with Jared Saey – College of Charleston Librarian  
Gamoran (OAKS)  
Reardon (OAKS)  
Ladd (OAKS) |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Authors/References</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Standards, testing, and accountability</td>
<td>Ravitch (Ch.1,2, 6,8,9)</td>
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<td>Guest speaker: Dr. Terry Peterson, director</td>
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<td><strong>Afterschool and Community Learning Alliance.</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Upsetting apple carts and other strategies</td>
<td>Ravitch (Chs 3,4,5,10)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Focus on teachers</td>
<td>Mernane and Steele (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Guest speaker: Melissa Matarazzo – CCSD</td>
<td>Jacob (OAKS)</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher Incentive Fund grant</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>International comparisons</td>
<td>Rotberg (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Koretz (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Ripley (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Hancock (OAKS)</td>
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<td><strong>Part Two: Understanding policy design and implementation</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Policy development</td>
<td>Anderson (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Bardach (Parts 1-3)</td>
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<td><strong>Issues Pro/Con due</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>Levels of policy making: Federal, state and local</td>
<td>Wirt and Kirst (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Berkman and Pultz (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Conley (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Mitchell (OAKS)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>Issues with implementation</td>
<td>Lipsky (OAKS)</td>
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<td>McLaughlin (OAKS)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>Policy research</td>
<td>Swanson (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Supovitz (OAKS)</td>
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<td><strong>Part Three: Focused policy analysis</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Focused policy analysis: Teacher quality</td>
<td>Brookings (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Taylor and Tyler (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Rice (OAKS)</td>
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<td><strong>Policy Memo due</strong></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Focused policy analysis: Curriculum and testing</td>
<td>Springer (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Jennings (OAKS)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Focused policy analysis: School effectiveness and choice</td>
<td>CREDO (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Rand (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Hess (OAKS)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>Continued focused policy analysis</td>
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<td>Wrap up</td>
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<td><strong>Literature Review due</strong></td>
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<td>Final</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Presentation of research topic</td>
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