This course is a workshop for educational researchers who want to understand American educational policy. Over the quarter, we will survey the landscape of contemporary U.S. educational policy and politics. The class has three objectives:

1. To identify some of the central policy dilemmas in American education today.
2. To understand cutting-edge educational policy research methods in order to prepare students to conduct policy research that is empirically valid.
3. To analyze the role that empirical research plays in educational policy disputes in order to prepare students to conduct research that is politically influential.

Our timing is fortuitous. As we meet, the Obama administration and the U.S. Congress are beginning the long-overdue process of reauthorizing the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act (or, as it is known in its latest incarnation, the No Child Left Behind Act.) Therefore, it seems appropriate to center our discussion around the ESEA and the challenges and opportunities for using federal policy to improve American K-12 education.

We will begin by considering the politics of education at the federal level, looking at the 2001 NCLB authorization process as a case study. NCLB introduced a wide range of changes to American educational policy, with the overall goal of insuring that all students in American schools were reading and writing at grade level by 2014. We will undertake a global evaluation of the law’s consequences, and then assess the effectiveness of each of the policy strategies embodied in the bill. In the process, we will pay close attention to the role that educational research plays in the process of policy making and implementation. In addition, we will look for new policy strategies for improving the educational opportunities available to all American youth.

This course is organized according to a learning community model. Each week, every student in the class will bring questions and thoughts to help guide our discussion. In addition, in weeks 3-10, students will broaden the class’s coverage by presenting relevant research that is not in our assigned readings.
Course texts:

Students should purchase the following books:


*I will make the assigned chapters from this book available electronically.*

However, most of our readings will be journal articles, working papers, and policy reports that are either freely available on the Web or available online through the UCI library. Complete references for these readings are in the week-by-week seminar schedule below.

Assignments and grading:

This class is a collaborative learning project. It is essential that you keep up with the readings, and come to every class meeting prepared to participate in class discussions. Your class participation will account for 5% of your grade.

In addition, each student will make a brief in-class presentation regarding research relevant to the course topic but not directly covered in the syllabus. These in-class presentations, which will take place in weeks 3-10, should provide a careful summary of high-quality research. You should meet with me to discuss relevant literature and prepare for your presentation at least 1 week before you present. Your in-class presentation will account for 15% of your grade.

In weeks 2-10, students will submit informal reading journals. These journals should summarize the key points that you gathered from the week’s readings. In addition, the journals should raise questions about the readings. These questions can be questions of clarification (i.e. “What assumptions must the authors make in order to draw causal inferences from these analyses?”) or conceptual questions (i.e. “Based on these readings, we know X. But what do we know about Y?”) I will collect reading journals at the beginning of each class meeting; they should be no more than 1 page long. Your reading journals will account for 10% of your grade.

At the end of the quarter, you will write a final paper that synthesizes the research that we have reviewed to provide a critical assessment of *No Child Left Behind* and an evidence-based proposal regarding most promising future directions for educational policy. Students will submit this final paper in two drafts:

- In week 7, students will submit a preliminary draft of the paper. This draft should include an outline of the paper as well as an annotated bibliography of the sources that the paper will draw upon. *This preliminary draft will account for 10% of your grade.*

- The final draft of the paper will be due at 9AM on Friday, June 15. *Your final paper will account for 30% of your grade.*
Finally, on we will have in class final exam on Monday June 11 covering the material we have read and discussed in class. *The final exam will account for 30% of your grade.*

**Academic honesty:**

I will strictly enforce the academic honesty principles laid out in the UCI Principles of Community ([http://www.editor.uci.edu/catalogue/appx/appx.2.htm](http://www.editor.uci.edu/catalogue/appx/appx.2.htm)):

Students have responsibility for:

1. Refraining from cheating and plagiarism.
2. Refusing to aid or abet any form of academic dishonesty.
3. Notifying professors and/or appropriate administrative officials about observed incidents of academic misconduct. The anonymity of a student reporting an incident of academic dishonesty will be protected.

Students who witness plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty should contact me. I will report all instances of academic dishonesty to the appropriate Associate Dean, and will not give credit for plagiarized work.
Seminar Schedule:

April 2, 2012: Introduction

April 9, 2012: No Child Left Behind and educational policy research


April 16, 2012: Evaluating No Child Left Behind


April 23, 2012: Accountability and incentives for school reform


April 30, 2012: Charters and school choice


**May 4, 2012: Teachers and teacher quality**


**May 11, 2012: Strategies to improve teacher quality**


**May 18, 2012: Curricula and incentives in middle and high school**


May 28, 2012: Memorial Day, no class

Week of May 28, 2012: Beyond the schoolhouse, Part I: Early education and family policy


June 4, 2012: Beyond the schoolhouse, Part II: College access and retention


June 11, 2012: Final Exam

June 15, 2012: Final papers due