

Education Policy and Politics
EDUC 251
Spring 2019: Tuesdays 1:00-3:50

Course Instructor

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office hours: By appointment

Note: The current version of course materials will be on Canvas.

Origins of my teaching the course

Professor Emily Penner is the usual instructor for this course and I am filling in for her to ensure that the course is offered at least once every two years. I have borrowed shamelessly from her syllabus and appreciate her willingness to share it with me. I have also borrowed material from the reading list of Professor Gary Henry. That said, I have introduced enough changes to be culpable for any shortcomings that you might experience in the course.

Course objectives

This course is designed to review the academic literature on key policy issues surrounding the pre-K through grade 12 educational system in the United States. There is much more of an emphasis on policy than politics.

By structuring the class with student presentations of most of the material (see below), I also aspire to promote student skills in synthesizing and presenting key articles in the research literature. In addition to discussing the articles in the syllabus, we will spend time each week discussing the effectiveness of the presentations themselves. Moreover, all students are required to submit discussion questions/issues before each class (see below), which is intended to develop critical thinking.

Finally, by requiring a paper that is written in the style of a registered report, I hope to promote that skill as well.

Course structure

First of all, the class will not meet in Week 1, so the first class will be on Tuesday April 9th. My decision to teach the course came after I had committed to chair a meeting in Washington DC on Monday and Tuesday of the first week in April. We will cover the readings in Weeks 1 and 2 in our Week 2 class. I will lead the discussion during our Weeks 2 and 3 classes.

Beginning with Week 4, each class will be divided into two roughly equal parts with separate sets of readings for each part. In most cases, the material in the two parts will address the same

general theme. The two-part division is intended to limit the length of any given student's presentation and its discussion to just half the class period.

A persistent requirement for all students is to submit discussion questions or issues by Monday noon – 24 hours before each class. On some occasions I will add a question and expect students to submit answers by Monday noon as well. These discussion issues/questions will be viewable by all students in the class and should help the students preparing for their presentations. Questions are presented in the “Assignments” section of Canvas.

Student presentations: I will randomly assign students into five groups. Group size obviously depends on total enrollment but I anticipate 2-3 students in most groups. With roughly 7 weeks of student presentations and two presentations per week, there will be about 14 opportunities for student group presentations. So each group will be responsible for 3 presentations over the course of the quarter.

One student from each group will provide a given week's presentation during the first or second half of the class period. All students are expected to present at least once during the quarter. Presentations should take about 25 minutes and cover the highlights of the assigned readings. Each presentation should include: i) a general motivation for why the subject is important; ii) a brief background for the issues covered in the readings; and iii) a presentation of the methods and results in the empirical paper(s). Item iii) will take the most time by far. By and large, these presentations should be structured like most outside speaker and job talk seminars. Please prepare powerpoint or equivalent presentations and strive for minimum word counts with maximal clarity, and for clear, easy to understand graphs rather than dense and often indecipherable tables. Because students will be required to submit questions or issues about the readings 24 hours before the class, the presenting group will have a chance to reflect on those and perhaps incorporate them into their presentations.

Course Materials

Nearly all course materials can be found on Canvas.

There two books for the course:

Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2014). *Restoring opportunity: The crisis of inequality and the challenge for American education*. Harvard Education Press. I have included a pdf of it in Canvas but you may wish to buy a used copy. If you buy a new one let me know and I will donate my meager royalty from it to the School of Education.

Payne, C. M. (2008). *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. Used copies of this book abound on the internet.

Course requirements and grading

- A. Weekly discussion questions, usually submitted on the Monday before class (40 percent).**
- B. In-class participation (15 percent) and individual presentation (20 percent).** Please come to class prepared to engage in lively discussion. In order to do so, you will need to complete the assigned readings and complete the weekly assignments.
- C. Final Paper – due the Monday of finals week (25 percent).** For the final paper requirement, students are expected to write a [registered report](#). Registered reports are complete papers except that they are written before any actual analysis takes place. The idea is to eliminate any possibility that results influence how you frame the paper and went about getting the results. Almost all of the elements of a conventional paper are there – an abstract (without sentences describing the results); a motivational introduction; a (for us, shorter-than-usual) literature review; a data section; an “analytic approach” section; tables of results *without the results*. The tables should show exactly what kind of (usually) regression analyses you intend to run. And no summary/conclusion. **I strongly encourage students to submit drafts of their papers by May 24th. I will provide feedback on these drafts, which may help with the final version of the paper.**

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>):

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 or the Office of Academic Integrity & Student Conduct, and will not give credit for plagiarized work.

SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Group number	
			1 st half	2 nd half
1	April 2	Purposes of Schools		
2	April 9	Income Inequality and Schools		
3	April 16	Early Childhood Education		
4	April 23	Teacher preparation and recruitment	1	2
5	April 30	Teacher evaluation, coaching and performance and student achievement	3	1
6	May 7	School Organization	2	3

7	May 14	School Desegregation	1	2
8	May 21	School Finance	3	1
9	May 28	School Accountability	2	1
10	June 4	School Choice	3	2

Week 1, April 2 Purposes of Schools

NO CLASS THIS WEEK. THESE READINGS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE FIRST HALF OF WEEK 2.

Guiding Questions:

1. What are the purposes and goals of school in America?
2. What led us to our current educational system?
3. What is the rationale for public schools?

Readings:

Brighthouse, H., Ladd, H., Loeb, S. & Swift, A. (2016) "Educational Goods." *Theory and Research in Education* 14(1), 3-25.

Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 39-8

Friedman, M. The Role of Government in Education, From *Economics and the Public Interest*, ed. Robert A. Solow.

Week 2, April 9: Income Inequality and Schools

Assignments: Please submit three discussion questions about the Week 1 readings and three discussion questions on the Duncan & Murnane book by noon on Monday, April 8th.

Readings:

Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2014). *Restoring opportunity: The crisis of inequality and the challenge for American education*. Harvard Education Press.

Watch the three videos on restoringopportunity.com

Week 3, April 16th: Early Childhood Education

Guiding Questions:

1. What are the most important policy questions facing the preschool system in the United States?
2. What are the characteristics of model programs from the 1960s and 1970s that had longer-run follow-ups?
3. How should we characterize the impacts of more recent early childhood programs?

4. What is the best path forward?

1st half

Duncan, G. J., & Magnuson, K. (2013). Investing in preschool programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(2), 109-32.

Phillips, D. A., Lipsey, M., Dodge, K., Haskins, R., Bassok, D., Burchinal, P., Duncan, G., Dynarski, M., Magnuson, K. and Weiland, C. (2017). *The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects* https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/duke_prekstudy_final_4-4-17_hires.pdf Please read the overview and consensus statement; optional but very informative are the remaining chapters.

Bailey, D., Duncan, G. J., Odgers, C. L., & Yu, W. (2017). Persistence and fadeout in the impacts of child and adolescent interventions. *Journal of research on educational effectiveness*, 10(1), 7-39. See, especially, “skill-building” theories.

2nd half

Reread chapter 5 from *Restoring Opportunity*, rewatch the Boston pre-K video and read the associated interview transcripts.

Puma, M., Bell, S., Cook, R., Heid, C., Shapiro, G., Broene, P., ... & Ciarico, J. (2010). Head Start Impact Study. Final Report. *Administration for Children & Families*. (Summary)

Watts, T. W., Duncan, G. J., and Rivas, M. A Reanalysis of Impacts of the Tennessee Voluntary Prekindergarten Program, working paper.

Week 4 April 23: Teacher Preparation, Recruitment and Retention

Guiding Questions:

1. To what extent does teacher preparation affect student learning?
2. How does teacher pay affect recruitment and retention?

Readings:

First half

Harris, Douglas, and Tim Sass. 2011. Teacher training, teacher quality and student achievement. *Journal of Public Economics* 95(7-8): 798-812.

Clotfelter, C., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. (2010). Teacher Credentials and Student Achievement in High School: A Cross-Subject Analysis with Student Fixed Effects. *Journal of Human Resources*. 45(3), 655-681.

Second half

Feng, L., & Sass, T. (2015). *The impact of incentives to recruit and retain teachers in “hard-to-staff” subjects: An analysis of the Florida Critical Teacher Shortage Program* (No. 141). Calder Center Working Paper.

Loeb, S., Miller, L. C., & Strunk, K. O. (2009). The state role in teacher professional development and education throughout teachers' careers. *Education Finance and Policy*, 4(2), 212-228.

Clotfelter, C.T., E. Glennie, H.F. Ladd and J.L. Vigdor. Would Higher Salaries Keep Teachers in High-Poverty Schools? Evidence from a Policy Intervention in North Carolina. *Journal of Public Economics* 92.5-6 (June, 2008): 1352-1370.

Week 5, April 30 Teacher evaluation, coaching and performance and student achievement

Guiding Questions:

1. What constitutes great teaching and how does it relate to student outcomes?
2. How does teacher coaching and pay affect teacher performance?

First half

Hill, H. C., Kapitula, L., & Umland, K. (2011). A validity argument approach to evaluating teacher value-added scores. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(3), 794-831.

Chetty, R., Friedman, J., & Rockoff, J. (2012). Great Teaching: Measuring its Effects on Students' Future Earnings. *Education Next*, 12 (3): 59-64.

Kraft, M.A. (in press). Teacher Effects on Complex Cognitive Skills and Social-Emotional Competencies. *Journal of Human Resources*.

Second half

Taylor, E. S., & Tyler, J. H. (2012). The Effect of Evaluation on Teacher Performance. *The American Economic Review*, 102(7), 3628-3651.

Springer, M.G., Ballou, D., Hamilton, L., Le, V., Lockwood, J.R., McCaffrey, D., Pepper, M., and Stecher, B. (2010). Teacher Pay for Performance: Experimental Evidence from the Project on Incentives in Teaching. RAND Report.

Kraft, M. Taking Teacher Coaching to Scale, *Education Next* 18(4), Fall 2018.

Week 6 May 7th: School Organization

Guiding Questions:

1. How do school structure and dynamics affect school reforms?
2. How can high school structures influence high school performance?

First half – School Structure and School Reform

Professor George Farkas will help to lead this discussion

Payne, C. M. (2008). *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Second half – High School

Reread “foot-in-the-door” theories discussion in Bailey, D., Duncan, G. J., Odgers, C. L., & Yu, W. (2017). Persistence and fadeout in the impacts of child and adolescent interventions. *Journal of research on educational effectiveness*, 10(1), 7-39.

Cortes, K. E., Goodman, J. S., & Nomi, T. (2015). Intensive math instruction and educational attainment long-run impacts of double-dose algebra. *Journal of Human Resources*, 50(1), 108-158.

Reread chapter 7 from *Restoring Opportunity*, rewatch the Urban Assembly video and read the associated interview transcripts.

Bloom, H. S., & Unterman, R. (2014). Can small high schools of choice improve educational prospects for disadvantaged students? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(2), 290-319.

Week 7, May 14: School Desegregation

Guiding Questions:

1. How has school desegregation evolved over the past 60 years?
2. What are the ways that white communities react(ed) to desegregation?
3. What are some of the shorter and longer-run consequences of desegregation for students?

Background Readings & Audio Recordings:

School desegregation milestones: [Wikipedia article](#)

Hittenberger, J. Episode 1. Mendez v. Westminster. Deeper Learning Podcast.

<http://deeperlearning.ocde.us/>

Additional materials in [this](#) Dropbox folder

First half

Delmont, M. F. (2016). *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation*. University of California Press. Pp. 1-53.

Reardon, S. F., & Owens, A. (2014). 60 years after Brown: Trends and consequences of school segregation. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40, 199-218.

Reardon, S. F., Grewal, E. T., Kalogrides, D., & Greenberg, E. (2012). Brown Fades: The End of Court-Ordered School Desegregation and the Resegregation of American Public Schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 31(4), 876-904.

Second half

Billings, S. B., Deming, D. J., & Rockoff, J. E. (2012). School segregation, educational attainment and crime: Evidence from the end of busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg (No. w18487). *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(1), 435-472.

Johnson (2011). Long-run Impacts of School Desegregation & School Quality on Adult Attainments. NBER Working Paper No. 16664.

Week 8, May 21 School Finance

Guiding Questions:

1. One option for school finance is that schools are financed entirely by state funds, with no additional contributions from the local level. What are some of the benefits of this approach as opposed to a system that allows some local revenue raising for schools?
2. One option for school finance is that all schools receive the same per pupil funding. What are some of the disadvantages of this approach? If some districts should receive more than other districts, what characteristics of districts should be considered? How might we tell how much more one district should get than another district?
3. In almost all states funding goes to districts and then districts decide what to do with the funds. Another option is to fund individual schools or individual students. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives?

Readings:

First half

Fisher, R. "Education" Chapter 19 in *State and Local Public Finance*, Thomson, 2007.

Heather Rose and Margaret Weston (2013). *California School District Revenue and Student Poverty Moving Toward a Weighted Pupil Funding Formula*. Public Policy Institute of California.

Second half

William S. Koski; Rob Reich, When Adequate Isn't: The Retreat from Equity in Educational Law and Policy and Why It Matters, 56 *Emory Law Journal* 545, 618 (2006)

Jackson, C. K., R.C. Johnson and C. Persico (2016). "The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol 131(1), pages 157-218.

Week 9, May 28 School-Level Accountability**Guiding Questions:**

1. Much of governance is a question of who makes what decision pertaining to education policy and practice. What are five decisions that you think are particularly important for education quality? Why are they important and who should make them?
2. What are the aims of test-based accountability? What are some of the possible worries? What changes would you make in the current system to help support the aims and mitigate the worries?
3. Currently math and reading tests in grades 4 through 8 have the most weight in accountability systems. How would you change that, if at all, and what are the potential drawbacks of these changes?
4. Consequences are a necessary feature of accountability systems. What are the consequences for schools built into the current systems? How would you alter these consequences and why?

Readings:

First half

- Harris, D.N., H. F. Ladd, M. S. Smith, and M. R. West (2017) *A principled federal role in PreK-12 education*. Brookings Institution.
- Figlio, D. and S. Loeb (2011). "School Accountability," *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, Volume 3, Elsevier.
- Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. (2016, March 31). Issues A-Z: The Every Student Succeeds Act: An ESSA Overview. *Education Week*. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/every-student-succeeds-act/>

Second half

- Rouse, C.E., J. Hannaway, D. Goldhaber and D. Figlio, (2013). "Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure," *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, American Economic Association, vol. 5(2), pages 251-81
- Dee, T. S., & Jacob, B. (2011). The impact of No Child Left Behind on student achievement. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30(3), 418-446.

Week 10, June 4: School Choice

Guiding Questions:

1. School choice may improve the matching of students to schools, the diversity of schools, and the overall quality of schools? How might charter schools, in particular, affect these three potential outcomes? What are some potential barriers to these changes?
2. School competition may increase as the result of increased school choice by parents. What types of school choice are likely to elicit greater competition? What outcomes for students are likely to incentivize by school choice? How might schools respond to this increased competition?
3. How should we approach accountability and governance with public charter schools? Is it appropriate to let markets exclusively determine whether schools are adequately performing? If not, how could we appropriately balance accountability and regulations with autonomy for school operators?
4. The most attention-grabbing schools of choice have been KIPP-style, urban, "No Excuses" charter schools that have produced exceptionally high test scores. Is it realistic that traditional public schools could get some of the same positive effects by adopting similar practices? Would it be desirable for them to try?

Readings:

First half – Charter Schools

Abdulkadiroglu, A., J. Angrist, S. Dynarski, T. Kane, and P. Pathak (2011). Accountability and Flexibility in Public Schools: Evidence from Boston's Charters and Pilots. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126 (2)

Fryer, R. G. (2014). Injecting charter school best practices into traditional public schools: Evidence from field experiments. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(3), 1355-1407.

Second half – vouchers

Hsieh, C. T., & Urquiola, M. (2006). The effects of generalized school choice on achievement and stratification: Evidence from Chile's voucher program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 90(8-9), 1477-1503.

Mills, J. and Wolf, P. (2017) How Has The Louisiana Scholarship Program Affected Students? Education Research Alliance for New Orleans.