This course takes a multidisciplinary approach to the study of education policy. The course draws on the literature in sociology, history, and political science to investigate some of the most pressing education policy issues of the past fifty years, with particular attention to current policy debates. The issues to be examined this semester include the achievement gap, affirmative action, school choice reforms, and urban education reform with a particular focus on New York City. The first aim of the course is to provide a solid, introductory grounding in these particular policy debates. The second goal is to furnish students with the historical grounding and analytical tools they need to examine the education policy issues of particular relevance and interest to them in their own fields of study.

GRADED REQUIREMENTS

- Class Participation: 25% of grade (including two self-assessments, due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, March 4th and Tuesday, April 22nd)
- Weekly Reading Questions or Responses: 15% of grade
- Final Paper: 60% of grade (due on Monday, May 5th at 4:00 p.m.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

1. **Office Hours:** I have regularly scheduled office hours and am available by appointment. I am also regularly accessible by e-mail and by phone. I will make every effort to respond as promptly as possible to all e-mails.

2. **Class Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance is required for this course. If you must miss or arrive late to a class for any reason, please let me know in advance. I expect that everyone will participate in seminar discussion. I also expect that this participation will be based on an informed familiarity and thoughtful engagement with the assigned reading.

3. **Class Participation Self-Assessment:** Twice over the course of the semester (Tuesday, March 4th and Tuesday, April 22nd) you will be asked to turn in short self-assessments of your class participation, which I will take into account when I assign your grade.
for class participation at the end of the semester. This assignment also will provide
the opportunity for you to convey any concerns you have about your participation and
the dynamic of the class and any goals you would like to set for yourself regarding
your participation. It also will allow me to provide written feedback to you on your
participation.

4. **Weekly Reading Questions or Responses**: Students have weekly reading questions or
responses due every Tuesday by 10:00 a.m., beginning on week two of the semester.
You will have one week during the course of the semester – which you can choose –
during which you do not need to submit a post. Please post approximately five
questions or a 1-2 paragraph response to the week’s readings to the course
Blackboard site. You will not get credit for late submissions. To sign onto
Blackboard, sign onto your NYU e-mail account, go to the tab marked “Academics”
on the top right-hand corner of the screen. Under the “Classes” section, our class
should be listed. Click on our class listing to take you to the Blackboard site. Then, go
to the “Communication” section, then, “Discussion Board,” and click on “Reading
Questions and Responses, January 29” (for example). Then click “add a new thread”
and submit your posting. You will also see directions for how to read and respond to
the postings of others in the class. I encourage you to read the questions/responses of
others before you post your own – so that you can also include responses and/or
follow-up questions. You are not responsible for responding to others, although you
are encouraged to do so. Hopefully, having the questions/responses of others
accessible to you on the website will be useful to your own thinking. The main goal
of this assignment is for you to engage critically with the material and to come to
class with a set of questions and responses guiding your exploration of the texts in the
course. Response paragraphs can be engagements with any aspects of the reading. If
you choose to submit reading questions: This kind of question asking is the goal of
much academic work, and coming up with good questions that guide and shape your
research is often the most difficult part of academic projects (like dissertations). I
regard this as a substantive exercise. I am asking you to engage with the work and to
really ask questions that provide purpose, that you leave the text with, and that you
would like to discuss further.

5. **Final paper**: The final paper is due on Monday, May 5th at 4:00 p.m. It will be a
substantial research paper of approximately 20 pages in length (double-spaced, in 12-
point font). Students will have two options for this paper. The first option is open-
ended, and allows students to apply the ideas and lenses of the course to an education
policy debate of their choosing. The second option is a response to the following:
You have just been elected mayor of New York City, and you now have control of
the New York City public school system. Using the lenses of the course, what would
you propose to substantially improve the quality of schooling in the city? We will talk
more about this paper assignment in class. I encourage you to talk with me and with
others in the course about your papers. I will be happy to discuss outlines of your
papers with you, although I will not read paper drafts.
6. **Deadlines:** All course deadlines are firm. *I will not grant extensions* on the term paper, except in the case of absolute emergency. For each day that the paper is late, the paper grade will be lowered by one-third of a grade (e.g., an A- becomes a B+ if a paper is one day late). Papers are also considered late if they do not meet the time deadline (papers due at 4:00 p.m. are due *promptly* by 4:00 p.m.).

**REQUIRED READINGS**

There are 6 required books for this course. The books are available at the campus bookstore. There also is a required coursepack for the class, which is available at Unique Copy (252 Greene Street). The coursepack is a selection of readings, and readings found in this coursepack are marked “(CP)” below. All books and the coursepack are also available on reserve at Bobst Library. These books are:

[Bobst call number: LA216 .T92 1995]

[Bobst call number: E185.615 .S744 1995]

[Bobst call number: TBD]

[Bobst call number: LA339.N5 R38]

[Bobst call number: LB2844.53.U6 K34 2007]

[Bobst call number: LC5131 .N64 2003]
COURSE OUTLINE

JANUARY 22: Introduction

JANUARY 29: School Policy and Reform Overview: Change and Continuity in American Public Education


FEBRUARY 5: Race and Education: Approaches to the Achievement Gap


FEBRUARY 12: Race and Education: Framing the Affirmative Action Debate


FEBRUARY 19: Race and Education: Political and Legal Developments in Affirmative Action in Higher Education

2007-001, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan.  
http://fordschool.umich.edu/research/working_papers.php

J. Harvie Wilkinson III. “Chapter 10. The Argument” and “Chapter 11. The Decision.”  

Grutter v. Bollinger et al. and Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al. 23 June 2003 Supreme Court majority opinions. (to be distributed)

FEBRUARY 26: School Choice: History and Legal Status of the Voucher Reform


Text of the opinion of Zelman v. Simmons-Harris (27 June 2002). (to be distributed)

MARCH 4: School Choice: An Overview of the Charter School Debate


http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/docs/charter.PDF

MARCH 11: School Choice: Charter School Assessment as a Case Study in Evaluating Controversial School Reform


MARCH 18: NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK

MARCH 25: School Choice: History, Politics, and Broader Meanings of Choice


APRIL 1: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Historical Frameworks


APRIL 8: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Al Shanker and Teachers’ Unions

APRIL 15: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Local School Choice Politics and Policies

Guest speaker: Dirk Tillotson. Chief Operations Officer, NYC Center for Charter School Excellence

Readings TBA

APRIL 22: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Current Reforms

Guest speaker: Professor Diane Ravitch. Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in the Professions, New York University

Readings TBA
