Course Summary
This course focuses on current issues in education and social policy, with an emphasis on identifying underlying causes, how contextual factors present challenges for public schools, as well as considering potential solutions. Throughout the course we will engage in a critical examination of the evidence for and against various policy choices.

In the first half of the course, we explore the context of U.S. education and develop tools and frameworks for evaluating specific approaches to solving policy challenges. We will first analyze trends in U.S. student achievement, address the case for public intervention in the market for education, and discuss evidence about the problems facing U.S. education. Next, we discuss the role of schools to debate what exactly schools are supposed to do and how we measure their performance. In this section we review why it is so challenging to understand what works in education, and the key economic framework for understanding education inputs and outcomes: the education production function.

In the second half of the course we turn our attention to the intersection between education and social policy to focus on how different policy choices (e.g. health care, housing) as well as factors outside of schools influence student outcomes, and are a source of challenges for schools. We conclude by discussing the role of schools in an increasingly complex context.

Other class information:
NYU Classes: You will need to have access to NYU Classes. All announcements and class-related documents will be posted there.
Attendance: Please see me immediately if you have any conflicts with scheduled classes or assignments, as attendance is required in this course.
Academic integrity: NYU Wagner policies on academic integrity will be strictly enforced in this class. You can find the school’s official statement on academic integrity here. Please contact me if you have any questions about these policies.
Accommodations: Any student requiring an accommodation due to a psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing, should register with and consult with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, 726 Broadway, 2nd floor (www.nyu.edu/csd). I am happy to provide any accommodations recommended by the Moses Center.
Course Requirements and Grading

1. **Critical summary (35%)**
   Each week students are responsible for reading one of the assigned articles in depth and writing a critical summary. Guidelines for these reviews are available on NYU classes>Resources>Assignments>Critical Summary. Copies of the summaries should be handed in after class in hard copy or emailed prior to class if the student will be absent that week.

2. **Policy memo (25%)**
   Based on the New York Times article assigned for class 5. Write a policy memo describing the policy problem, outlining a set of alternatives, analyzing their merits, and making a policy recommendation. This is an individual assignment. Guidelines for this assignment are available on NYU Classes>Resources>Assignments>Policy Memo

3. **Policy proposal (35%)**
   On a topic of your choosing (broadly related to schools and social policy) describe the policy debate around this topic (issue), discuss relevant empirical evidence in favor (or against), develop an argument in support of a policy recommendation, and discuss feasibility of implementation taking into account the prevailing social/political context around your specific topic. This assignment can be individual or completed in teams of two. Guidelines available on NYU Classes>Resources>Assignments>Policy Proposal

4. **Attendance and participation (5%)**
   Active student participation is important to keep each class engaging. Every student is expected to make at least one contribution each class. In addition, while I only require a critical summary of one of the readings, it is expected that students will be prepared to discuss all required readings for the week.

**Course text**
There is no required text for the course. If you would like background reading I recommend:


All required readings will be posted on NYU Classes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Item due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is there a problem with U.S. public education?</td>
<td>March 23</td>
<td>Critical summary (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What are schools supposed to do? How do we measure that?</td>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Critical summary (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What factors matter for kids’ outcomes?</td>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>Critical summary (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Neighborhoods, crime, and housing policy</td>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Critical summary (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Child health and education: access to healthcare and environmental stressors</td>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>Policy Memo (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Child nutrition and food assistance programs</td>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>Critical summary (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Special populations: students in special education, English language learners, and immigrant students</td>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>Critical summary (hard copy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy proposal due via email THURSDAY MAY 11 BY 11:59PM
**Week 1: Is there a problem with U.S. public education? [** = Required]**


** Reardon, S. F. 2011. “The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: new evidence and possible explanations.” Wither Opportunity, ch 5.**


Reardon, S.F., Robinson-Cimpian, J.P. & Weathers, E.S. 2015. “Patterns and trends in racial/ethnic and socioeconomic academic achievement gaps.” Handbook ch. 28.

**Week 2: What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works? [** = Required]**

**What are schools supposed to do?**


Rouse, C. E. 2007. “Consequences for the labor market.” In Belfield & Levin (eds.) The price we pay: economic and social consequences of inadequate education, ch. 5.


Education research and program evaluation


Week 3: What factors matter for kids’ outcomes? [** = Required]


School inputs


**Non-school inputs**


**Week 4: Neighborhoods and Housing policy [** = Required]**

**Neighborhoods and crime**


**Housing**


**Week 5: Child health and education [** Required**]


Access to healthcare


Environmental stressors and schools: pollution


Week 6: Nutrition and Food Assistance Programs [** Required]


Rumberger, R.W. & Gándara, P. 2015. “Resource needs for educateing linguistic minority students.” Handbook Ch. 33

