Instructor: Jessica Wertheim

Class Dates: Thursdays, March 25 to May 6 / Class Times: 6:45-8:15 p.m.; Zoom

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

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 theoretical perspectives in policy formation, evidence for and against various policy choices, and an evaluation of those policies.

We will first 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 framework for understanding education inputs and outcomes. We will explore the context of U.S. education and develop tools and frameworks for evaluating specific approaches to solving policy challenges. We will 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.

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. immigration, housing, regulatory landscape), 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 and ever changing political landscape.

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 email 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. Weekly Discussion Questions + Policy Search (15%)

Weekly discussion questions: To encourage class discussion, please submit two discussion questions pertaining to the assigned reading materials and centered on an education issue of interest to you. These should be submitted by midnight before each class in the NYU Classes Forum. The submitted questions will be used in our class discussion. These questions can be related to parts of the readings that you did not understand, ways that you relate the readings to education and social policies of interest to you, or ways in which the readings influenced your thinking.

Policy search: Our last week of class together, in lieu of submitting two weekly discussion questions, please come to class prepared with an article about a policy you believe should be implemented in either rural districts, urban districts, or suburban districts starting the fall of 2021. Be prepared to advocate for that policy using the data and outcomes from your article.

2. Policy Memo (25%)

On a topic of your choosing (broadly related to schools and social policy) define a policy problem and its stakeholders, provide background context and evidence of the problem, and provide policy options/alternatives for consideration (these can be bullet points).

This is an individual assignment. (5-page maximum, double spaced). Additional guidelines for this assignment will be made available on NYU Classes.

3. Policy Proposal (50%)

Incorporating a revised version of Memo #1, define a policy problem and its stakeholders, provide background context and evidence of the problem, provide one or two policy options/alternatives for consideration and define a set of criteria for evaluating the revised options. Then, project the outcomes and confront the tradeoffs of your suggested alternatives, develop an argument in support of a single policy recommendation, and discuss feasibility of implementation. This is an individual assignment. Additional guidelines for this assignment will be made available on NYU Classes.

4. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Active student participation is important to keep each class engaging. Every student is expected to make at least one contribution each class. It is expected that students will be prepared to discuss all required readings for the week.

Course text

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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The U.S. public education system</td>
<td>Thursday, March 25</td>
<td>Student Questionnaire</td>
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<td>What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?</td>
<td>6:45-8:15pm</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>NCLB, ESSA, and Factors that Contribute to Student Outcomes</td>
<td>Thursday, April 1</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>6:45-8:15pm</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Special Education and Disproportionality Monitoring Policy</td>
<td>Thursday, April 8</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>Guest Lecturer: Dr. Strassfeld (she/her), Professor of Special Education at NYU Steinhardt</td>
<td>6:45-8:15pm</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Neighborhood, Vouchers, and Housing Policy</td>
<td>Thursday, April 15</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>6:45-8:15pm</td>
<td>Policy Memo</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Immigration, Language, and Schools</td>
<td>Thursday, April 22</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>Guest Lecturer: Dr. Owen (she/her), Associate Dean of Students at Yale-NUS</td>
<td>6:45-8:15pm</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Covid-19 and k-12 public education</td>
<td>Thursday, April 29</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>6:45-8:15pm</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Social Intervention Influencing Policy</td>
<td>Thursday, May 6</td>
<td>Policy Search</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6:45-8:15 pm</td>
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Policy proposal due via email by May 20th, 2021 11:59PM, EDT
Week 1: What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?


**Week 2: NCLB, ESSA, and In-School Factors that Contribute to Student Outcomes**


Pages 154 - 158


**Optional**


**Week 3: Special Education and Disproportionality Monitoring Policy**


Optional


Week 4: Neighborhood, Vouchers, and Housing Policy


Schwartz, H. 2011. Housing Policy is School Policy. The Education Digest; Ann Arbor Vol. 76, Iss. 6, 42-48


Optional


**Week 5: Immigration, Language, and Schools**


**Optional**


**Week 6: Covid-19 and Schools**


Week 7: Social Intervention Influencing Policy

Please come to class prepared with an article about a policy you believe should be implemented in either rural districts, urban districts, or suburban districts starting the fall of 2021 in K-12 schools. Be prepared to advocate for that policy using the data and outcomes from your article.