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 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. around language, 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 everchanging political landscape.

Other class information:

**NYU Brightspace:** You will need to have access to NYU Brightspace. All announcements and class-related documents will be posted there.

**Attendance:** Please let me know 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.

NYU BrightSpace: You will need to have access to NYU BrightSpace. All announcements and class-related documents will be posted there.

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 BrightSpace 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 2024. Be prepared to advocate for that policy using the data and outcomes from your article with a small group of your classmates.

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 Brightspace.

3. **Final paper: policy proposal (50%)**

Incorporating a revised version of your memo (if you wish), 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 BrightSpace.
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. Please come to class 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 Brightspace.

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<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 23 6:45-8:25pm</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>
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<td>2</td>
<td>NCLB, RTTT, and ESSA</td>
<td>Thursday, March 30 6:45-8:25pm</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Neighborhood, vouchers, and housing policy</td>
<td>Thursday, April 6 6:45-8:25pm</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Special education and disproportionality monitoring policy</td>
<td>Thursday, April 13 6:45-8:25pm</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policy Memo!</td>
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<td>Policy Memo!</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Nutrition, health, and education</td>
<td>Thursday, April 20 6:45-8:25pm</td>
<td>Weekly Discussion Questions</td>
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*Guest Lecturer: Milan Reed (she/her), Senior Advisor, NYC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services*
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<th></th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Weekly Discussion Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Immigration, language, and schools</td>
<td>Thursday, April 27</td>
<td>6:45-8:25pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lecturer: Humberto Cruz-Chavarría (He/They), Director Second Generation Programming, Jeremiah Program</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Covid-19 and social intervention influencing policy</td>
<td>Thursday, May 4</td>
<td>6:45-8:25pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What’s next for U.S. education?</td>
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**Policy proposal due via email by May 18th, 2023 11:59PM**

**Week 1:** What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?


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


Ladd, H. F. 2008. School policies and the test score gap. In K. Magnuson & J. Waldfogel (Eds.)
Steady gains and stalled progress: Inequality in the black white test score gap.

Optional

Simon, N. S., & Evans, G. W. 2014. Poverty and child development: Beyond the schoolyard gate. In J.
Hall (Ed.) Underprivileged school children and the assault on dignity: Policy challenges and

Sociological Association. DOI: 10.1177/0003122415598764

**Week 3: Neighborhoods, Vouchers, and Housing Policy**


Chang, A. 2018 We can draw school zones to make classrooms less segregated. Vox. Found at:

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

(Eds.) Choosing homes, choosing schools.

Moving Away from the Dichotomous Understanding of Neighborhood Effects. Annual Review of

Optional

new evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment.” American Economic Review, 
106(4), 855-902.

Jacob, B. A. 2004. “Public housing, housing vouchers, and student achievement: Evidence from public

Evidence from a randomized housing lottery.” Working Paper, University of Michigan
**Week 4: Special Education and Disproportionality Monitoring Policy**


**Optional**


**Week 5: Immigration, Language, and Schools (Guest Lecture)**


New York City Department of Education. 2022. Policy and Reference Guide for Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners for the 2022-2023 School Year.

**Optional**


**Week 6: Nutrition and Education (Guest Lecture)**


**Optional**


**Week 7: Covid-19 and Schools**


Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by Wagner’s Academic Code. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website and click the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

NYU’s Wellness Exchange

NYU’s Wellness Exchange has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.