

## Education and Social Policy 2024

**Instructor:** Milan Reed

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**Class location:** 70 Washington Sq S, room LL147

**Class dates:** Thursdays, Oct 24 - Dec 12

**Class times:** 6:45 - 8:25 pm

**Office hours:** By appointment

### Course Overview:

This course will explore key U.S. education and social policy issues and provide insights into policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels. 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.

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 child welfare, health, 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.

**NYU Brightspace:** You will need to have access to NYU Brightspace. All announcements, assignments, 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 in-person 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.

- This course assumes that work submitted by students – all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, final works – will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups as directed by class assignment instructions. As will any other class work generated by anyone other than the students (by other students, by a company, or by using generative AI tools), use can be a violation of Academic Integrity policy.

**Writing support:** Any student in need of writing support can make an appointment [here](#).

**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 [mosescsa@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsa@nyu.edu). 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.

**Note:** *This syllabus may be revised as the semester unfolds, but students will always have at least one week's notice of any changes to the assigned readings.*

## Course Requirements and Grading

### 1. Weekly Discussion Questions (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.

### 2. Policy memo (25%)

On a topic of your choosing (broadly related to education and social policy) define a policy problem and its stakeholders, provide background context and evidence of the problem, and provide policy recommendations 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 recommendations 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.

**Week 1 - October 24:** The U.S Public Education System: What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?

- Gordon, S. R. and N. (2023, April 25). *A Primer on elementary and secondary education in the United States*. Brookings.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-primer-on-elementary-and-secondary-education-in-the-united-states/>
- Levin, H. 2012. “[More than just test scores](#).” *Prospects*, 42(3), 269-284.
- Mayoral Control:
  - Herman, J. (2024b, February 28). *Top 5 things to know about mayoral control of Schools*. Center for American Progress.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/top-5-things-to-know-about-mayoral-control-of-schools/>
  - *Santiago, A. L. H. (2021, July 8). Understanding mayoral control. City & State NY.*  
<https://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2020/12/understanding-mayoral-control/175347/>

- *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d01/fig1.asp>
- [NCES Blog | Education at a Glance 2023: Putting U.S. Data in a Global Context](#)

**Item Due:** Student Questionnaire

**Week 2 - October 31:** NCLB, RTTT, ESSA

- Rhodes, J.H. 2014. *The Origins and Evolution of No Child Left Behind*. Cornell University Press. Pages 154 - 158
- McGuinn, P. (2016). *From No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act: Federalism and the education legacy of the Obama administration*. *The Journal of Federalism*, 46, 392-415.
- Jackson, C. K. 2020. *Does school spending matter? The new literature on an old question. Confronting inequality: How policies and practices shape children's opportunities* (p. 165–186).

**Item Due:** Weekly Discussion Questions

**Week 3 - November 7:** *Structural Issues and Education Policy Part I*

**Education, School Funding, and Place**

- Wilson, N. M., & Strassfeld, R. N. 2015. “Turnaround in reverse: Brown, School Improvement Grants, and the legacy of educational opportunity.”
- *Cleveland State Law Review*, 63(2), 373-380.
- Listen to: [The Myth That Busing Failed](#) .New York Times.
- Chang, A. 2018 . [We can Draw School Zones to Make Classrooms Less Segregated This is How Well your District Does](#). Vox.
- Structural Racism Explainer. Monarrez, Tomas. *Policies available to school districts to dismantle racial segregation in public schools*. Urban Institute. (n.d.).

**Item Due:** Weekly Discussion Questions

**Week 4 - November 14:** *Structural Issues and Education Policy Part II* (Guest Lecture)

**Education and the Child Welfare System**

- Excerpt from Desmond, M. [Poverty By America 2023](#). WBUR.org.
- Hixenbaugh, M. et al, [Mandated Reporting Was Supposed to Stop Severe Child Abuse. It Punishes Poor Families Instead](#). ProPublica and NBC, 2022.
- Chalkbeat: [NYC Revises Mandated Reporter Training](#)
- CIDI Education Outcomes of Kids in Foster Care: [Read Section 1 and Section 7](#)

**Item Dues:**

- Weekly Discussion Questions
- Policy Memo due Friday November 15

### **Week 5 - November 21: Health and Education**

- Rude, E. (2016, September 19). *School Lunch in America: An abbreviated history*. Time. <https://time.com/4496771/school-lunch-history/>
- The Case for Universal Free Meals: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20220504.114330/>
- *Universal free meals in NYC schools*. NYU Steinhardt. (2021, October 21). <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/universal-free-meals-nyc-schools>
- **Optional readings on nutritional federal programs:**
  - National School Lunch Program : <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>
  - Child and Adult Care Food Program: <https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/overview.htm>

**Items Due:** Weekly Discussion Questions

### **Week 6 - December 5: Early Childhood Education** (Guest Lecture)

**Item Due:** Weekly Discussion Questions

### **Week 7 - December 12: What Next for U.S. Public Education?**

- Education Recovery Scorecard: [The First Year of Pandemic Recovery: A District-Level Analysis](#)
- Lieberman, M. & Ujifusa, A., 2021. [Schools and COVID Relief Funds](#)
- McKinsey and Company: [COVID-19 and education: The lingering effects of unfinished learning](#)

**Item Due:** Weekly Discussion Questions

**December 17 - Final Due:** Policy proposal due via email by December 17, 2024 11:59 pm