CAPSTONE IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION
ED 976: Spring 2012
Tuesdays 12:40-3:30pm
133E Erickson Hall

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Course Description
This course outlines fundamental issues in the analysis and evaluation of education-related policies, examines prominent evaluations that have been conducted on a national, state, or local scale, and engages students in learning how to approach policy evaluation. Its goal is to equip students with an understanding of what it takes to design an effective educational policy evaluation. By understanding statistical and substantive principles guiding evaluations, students will learn how to assess the impact of existing policies and develop research designs to assess the impact of proposed policies. Students will gain an awareness of how intended and unintended consequences can result from policies in their implementation. The goals of the evaluation, data requirements, sample design (including sources of bias), and various analytic approaches will be discussed in detail. Knowledge of these issues will provide students with the ability to design educational interventions and evaluate their effectiveness.

The class includes three major goals. The first will be to understand the theoretical perspectives used in educational policy evaluations and the types of methodological approaches of evaluation including experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs and in-depth case studies. The second goal of the course is for students to continue to develop analytical techniques to effectively evaluate policy. The third goal is for students to be able to design an effective educational policy evaluation. This capstone course is structured as a dialogue between the students, the instructor, and the content, and built on the expectation that all members have read the posted readings and are able to fully engage in all discussions and material.

Requirements and Grading
1. Class Participation (25 percent): All students are expected to fully prepare and participate in each class. The assigned material should be thoughtfully read and students are highly encouraged to come to each class session with questions or ideas for the discussion. How much students are able to gain from this course is dependent on the work and preparation that each individual contributes. As this course largely built on class dialogue, excessive tardiness or absences will impact student’s participation grade.

2. Essay on the theoretical perspectives on educational research (10 percent): This assignment will be a 4 to 5 page written response to the first two class meetings, which introduce the theory behind educational policy research and evaluation. Students are encouraged to build on their own field of study and to incorporate their theoretical perspectives of their own research areas. Outside readings are allowed (but not necessary), but this essay should build largely on the readings covered in classes one and two and demonstrate an understanding of the content.
3. **Review of a policy (25 percent):** This assignment will serve as the midterm for the course and the expectation is that students will review a book or technical report that was written to evaluate a specific policy. Application of course content presented thus far is expected in the analysis of how an existing policy was evaluated. The main focus of the review should be on the evaluation of the policy, not the policy itself. More details about this assignment and examples or scholarly reviews will be discussed during class three.

4. **Proposal of a policy evaluation (40 percent):** Students will work in groups of two or three (based on common areas of research) to write a proposal of how to evaluate an existing policy. Application of course material and content is expected. The format of the proposal will be similar that of a research grant proposal and groups will present their work during the final class period.

**Other Details**

**Students with disabilities:** MSU seeks to ensure that its programs are accessible to all persons. Reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities will be made available. Please feel free to speak with the instructor if there are issues of which need to be made aware. Confidentiality will be maintained regarding student’s special needs.

**Course Material**

There is one required text for this course with the remaining readings for coming from a variety of sources. Available articles and readings will be posted on ANGEL for each week.


Course Schedule

Class 1 (01/10/12) Overview of education policy and research


Class 2 (01/17/12) Social science theory and educational research


Class 3 (01/24/12) Experimental design and evaluation techniques—Assignment #1 due


**Class 4 (01/31/2012) Learning from randomized experiments/Sean Kelly Lecture**


**Class 5 (02/07/12) School choice in policy**


**Class 6 (02/14/12) Class Size Policy**


Class 7 (02/21/2012) Early childhood education


Class 8 (02/28/2012) Regression discontinuity in policy evaluation-BOOK REVIEW DUE


Additional Readings:


SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS (03/06/2012)

Class 9 (03/13/2012)- Achievement gaps and the federal role in education


**Class 10 (03/20/2012)- Policy evaluation at the state level**


The Michigan Consortium for Educational Research, MCER (http://michiganconsortium.org)

**Class 11 (03/27/2012)- Evaluating teacher policy**


**Class 12 (04/03/2012)- More on teacher policy—teacher quality**


**Class 13 (04/10/2012)- Evaluating Higher Education**


**Class 14 (04/17/2012)- AERA: Online discussion post/synthesis**


What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/)

**Class 15 (04/24/2012)- Final presentations**

*Final papers due the following week*