Syllabus

Course information

Meeting times and location
Thursdays, 4:10-7:00pm
111 Erickson Hall

Instructor
Jeff Bale, Ph.D.
360 Erickson Hall
517.353.0750
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Office hours
Wednesdays 3:00-4:00pm
Thursdays 3:00-4:00pm
and by appointment

Course description

The purpose of this course is to understand in broad terms how education policy has been used - and more often abused - to define, explore, resolve and/or reinforce enduring dilemmas in K-12 education. The basic assumption behind this course is that education policy is not a neutral process of identifying a problem at school, creating a solution to it, implementing that solution and then seeing if it all worked out. Each step of that process - if we can even think of it in such discrete steps in the first place - is contested, politically charged and value-laden. The goal of social analysis of education policy, then, is to unpack these contested meanings and identify the implications they hold for various school stakeholders.

Throughout the course, we will read from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives on the policy process. These readings are meant to be general, that is, they are theoretical approaches that can be applied to any education policy issue or context. They include:

- policy as social practice, from anthropological perspectives
- the forms of capital (in particular, cultural and social), from sociological perspectives
- correspondence theory and other Marxist approaches to policy analysis (e.g., critical scholarship on neoliberalism and ed. policy), from a variety of disciplinary perspectives including sociology, economics and applied linguistics
- historiography

In addition, we will read exemplars of how researchers have put those theoretical perspectives into practice. Here, I have narrowed the focus to look specifically at policies impacting immigrant youth, as well as language education policies. I have tried as much as possible to strike a balance between research on K-12 schools in the US and on schooling in international contexts. These readings include studies from:

- Mexico
- Francophone Canada
I can see at least three sets of questions to guide this course and frame our learning objectives for it:

1. To what extent are education policies used as proxies to advance other sociopolitical aims for public schooling?
2. How are education policies used to define enduring dilemmas of K-12 schooling? Who benefits from and who is disadvantaged by those definitions?
3. How have various theoretical and disciplinary traditions understood the education policy process? What are our own theoretical and disciplinary inclinations for understanding the education policy process? To what extent have those inclinations developed and changed over the course of this seminar?

I encourage you to think about these guiding questions at the start of the course and propose amendments to them. Likewise, I encourage you to revisit them throughout the course to assess whether we have spent too much or not enough time on any of them, or need to amend them overall.

Assignments

The heart of this class is reading. So, read.

**Weekly responses**

(15% of grade, which includes in-class participation)

I’ve really struggled with how best to get doctoral students engaged in the reading before a given class. As a doctoral student, I experienced a number of techniques my own professors used; I thought some worked better than others. This is my third doctoral seminar I’m teaching, so I’m trying a third approach. My goal is to have you do something that isn’t too burdensome week on week, but that isn’t also just “make work.” Here it is:

- There is a page on the course site for each week's set of readings, which you'll find under "weekly meetings."
- By each Wednesday evening, please use the "comments" function of the web page to post these items:
  - 1-3 "take home messages" you got from each of the readings. By "take home" message, I mean, if you had to describe the reading to a friend or colleague over lunch or a cup of coffee, how would you do that? What would you say?
  - For weeks when we have a series of articles to read, 1 point per article is fine.
  - For weeks when we read a book, 3ish points for the book is fine.
  - 1-3 critical questions about the readings. By this I mean: what points/words/concepts did you not understand? What things did you understand but didn’t really agree with, or wondered why the author(s) framed the issue in that way?
- See the Tips for weekly responses under Resources for more information about how to approach this assignment.
- It is important to have this done by Wednesday evening so that the discussion facilitator has time to review them and integrate them into his/her presentation for that night.

**Discussion facilitator**

(35% of grade)

We will take turns leading the discussion for the night. This does NOT mean that you have to create a lecture or "run" class for 3 hours. But it does mean that:

- you review the summaries and questions your classmates posted to the course site
- you use the respective web page for a given week to organize your thoughts/questions/presentation
- you don’t have to prepare a powerpoint, but can you find a way to use visuals, media, talking points/summaries of the readings, key
questions (whether yours or your classmates’) to get a good conversation going about the readings
- I can help you with this as much or as little as you’d like. By this I mean you are welcome to make an appointment with me or stop by Wed. office hours and get some feedback from me in advance in terms of what you’ll do to lead the conversation.
- For weeks where you are the facilitator, of course you are exempt from doing the "weekly responses" assignment
- Depending on the size of the class, we might be able to pair people per week and/or you will likely be in charge of 2 weeks in the semester.
- See the Facilitating discussions page under Resources for more information about how to approach this assignment.

Policy analysis and presentation

(30% for the paper + 15% for the presentation plus 5% for the proposal = 50% of grade)

Your final project for the course is to craft your own policy analysis, write it up as a paper and present it to the class in a 10-12 minute talk. I will provide you with more specific expectations for this final project, but here are few general points:

- the topic you choose is entirely up to you; we are focusing on a specific subset of education policies in this class (i.e., those impacting immigrant youth and language learners) but you are not restricted to those topics
- the context you choose is entirely up to you - either US-based or international
- you do need to adopt a specific theoretical framework for the analysis - you may choose from those we read in class, or you may check in with me about a different one
- you need to turn in a 1-2 page proposal for this project on Thursday, March 1.
- you will present your work to the class during the final two class sessions.

I am open to alternatives to this assignment. One such alternative could include a shorter policy analysis plus a book review of a policy study, one we did not read for class. In this example, the book report and shorter paper would each count for 15%, and you would then choose which of the two you would like to present to the class (i.e., either the book you reviewed or the policy analysis). The due dates would hold as per above.

I am open to other alternatives as well, but whatever you propose to me needs to help me understand the extent to which you engaged with the course themes and readings, and how your thinking about education policy analysis has developed throughout the course.

Readings

Articles

Most of the readings are attached to the course site, on the respective pages under "weekly meetings."

Books

In addition, there are these required books:

They should be in the bookstore, but you'll probably get a better deal elsewhere.

**The language of readings**

The idea here is for you to develop your analytical skills in multiple languages, and for you to draw on other areas of expertise you may have. English is not the only language in which we can understand schooling and school policy, so I'd like you to develop your skills on this front as much as on learning to conduct social analysis of education policy. So:

- After we all meet on the first class and I know a little more about you, I will try to find additional readings in the language(s) you speak to add to the course calendar.
- You are free to replace one of the assigned readings with one in a different language if you choose.
- You may also find your own, as long as they are generally on the same topic as class that night.
- Of course, if you read a text in a different language, you'll need to give us a quick overview of what it was all about so we all benefit from it, too.

**Making the course work**

- This is a doctoral seminar, not a lecture class. As such, the success or failure of the course relies directly on the extent to which you are prepared each week. We will take turns being in charge of facilitating the discussion. But each of you will be required to contribute some reflections and questions about a given week’s readings before the start of class each week. More on both points above in the description of assignments.
- Since critical discussion is a central part of this class, let me try to describe in three different ways how you might think about engaging in discussion in this class:
  - First: in their book, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*, Brookfield and Preskill identify 9 "dispositions" that contribute to effective critical discussions. At one level, these words are self-evident enough to stand alone as a list. At another, you should read Ch. 1 of their book.
    - hospitality
    - participation
    - mindfulness
    - humility
    - mutuality
    - deliberation
    - appreciation
    - hope
    - autonomy
  - Second: if my guiding assumption about education policy is that it's political and contested, then it means we will likely have varying opinions about the topics we discuss. I welcome sharp debate, but I expect us all to raise our dissent respectfully. We talk a lot about being respectful in TE classes. Here are a few specific points to consider to "be respectful":
    - count to 5 before you speak
    - listen more than you talk
    - check in with the person you disagree with - are you sure you understood what they said?
    - make sure you try to see a point from the perspective of the person making it before you decide it’s/they're wrong
  - Third: try to avoid posturing. This is a dynamic of the academy that can be really ugly: dropping the right names, speaking in paragraph length utterances, affecting a tone that you've got it all figured out. Many of us faculty behave that way, so it’s no wonder that graduate students are socialized into that way of interacting, too. This sort of posturing is almost never helpful and almost always a block to real conversations. So:
    - If you have a question, ask it. I guarantee someone else has the same question too.
    - If you don't know something, don't pretend you do. Either figure out what it is, or simply acknowledge you don't know.
    - Keep a list of words from the readings you didn't understand. Academic English is a foreign language to all of us, whether English is our first language or not.
This website will be an integral part of the course. I encourage you to experiment with different ways of using the site to help you learn the material, record and develop your thoughts, and interact with me and each other.

The formal "policies" on these last two points are buried in the administrativa section of the syllabus - which you should read - but just to make sure you see them in a nutshell:

- if you have a specific disability, please bring it to my attention so I can best connect the course to your strengths and accommodate your needs.
- if you have questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, please ask me before you turn your work in. I am more than happy to help in advance; I’m less than happy to clean up problems after the fact.

Policies & resources

Style guidelines and conventions
I am completely indifferent as to which style guideline you observe in your writing (APA, Chicago, MLA, etc.). As these conventions vary across disciplines so greatly, I simply ask that you use and are consistent with the style guide most suitable for the type of work you’re doing and the audience you’re addressing.

In terms of academic English, your work should always be carefully crafted, proofread and edited before turning it in or sharing it with the class. If using a non-standard variety of English is essential to your work, you are welcome to write in that variety. I only ask that you argue your case for using a non-standard variety, either as part of your narrative or as a note.

Attendance
The expectations for class participation should make clear that weekly attendance is required. Attendance is not graded, which is to say one does not earn a class participation grade simply by showing up. If you miss class for whatever reason, consult the course site and/or a classmate to see what you missed.

Part of this policy is punctuality. If you have family, work or other such obligations that make a 4:10pm arrival difficult, let me know in advance. Otherwise, I expect you to observe the class meeting times.

Technology
Because we are using a Google site to organize the class, you will need a laptop during most, if not all, class sessions.

This is not, however, an invitation to multitask during class. Sending email, checking Facebook, working on other course work, grading your students’ papers, texting or IMing are not acceptable ways of using technology during class. These examples are listed here because this is what I have observed in classes, my own and in other doctoral courses, in the past.

If you perceive the specific class session as boring or unhelpful to you, contribute to the class discussion to change that. Most of you have been teachers yourselves and therefore know how distracting and disrespectful the abuse of technology in class is.

And I’m really not kidding here.

Incompletes
When special or unusual circumstances occur, the instructor may postpone assignment of the student’s final grade in a course by use of an I-Incomplete of DF-Deferred or ET-Extension marker. You may only be granted an incomplete if you are in good standing through week 12 of the course.

That first bit is standard university policy. Here’s my take: the need to take an incomplete means that something in your life has risen to the level of crisis. If that is not the case, then do not ask for an incomplete.

Writing center
You have two resources at your disposal if you need assistance with your writing. The first is university-wide: Writing Center at 300 Bessey Hall,
In addition, you can contact the College of Educations Office of Student Writing Assistance (OSWA), at 513-F Erickson Hall, 517-432-0425, or campbell@msu.edu.

**Counseling center**

MSU has an Office of Student Affairs and Services, with a Counseling Center, for which the phone number is 355-8270. The Center is at 207 Student Services Building.

**Academic honesty and integrity**

We assume that the student is honest and that all course work and examinations represent the student’s own work. Violations of the academic integrity policy such as cheating, plagiarism, selling course assignments or academic fraud are grounds for academic action and/or disciplinary sanction as described in the university’s student conduct code.

Incidents of plagiarism are taken very seriously and will be pursued. Students are strongly cautioned not to copy any text verbatim on class quizzes, tests, reports, projects, or other class assignments without using appropriate quotations and source citations. If we suspect that you have committed an act of plagiarism, we will contact you in writing (not by email) and set up a formal meeting. If our suspicions are indeed correct, you will receive no credit for that assignment. A second incident will result in zero credit for the course.

Again, those first two bits are standard university policy. Here’s my take: I have been surprised at how much time I have spent with doc students figuring out what is and isn’t plagiarism. So, while the policy listed above is punitive, please don’t let that make you shy about asking for help on this point: take advantage of class time, in drafts of your writing, of group time, etc. to be really explicit about your questions. During the process of writing, there is nothing wrong in figuring out how best to attribute ideas to the appropriate people and sources. But it is a problem to invoke “I didn’t know” or “I didn’t know how” after the work is finished/turned in.

**Accommodations for disabilities**

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY). Instructors in the course may request a VISA Form (Verified Individual Student Accommodations Form) from a student requesting services.

If you are a student with a disability, we strongly recommend that you contact the Resource Center, register with them and get your VISA Form taken care of. In addition, we strongly encourage you to speak with us about your disability and the accommodations you need. Please do not wait until there is an issue—we are more than happy to provide whatever accommodations you need to make this course successful for you. I appreciate that disclosure can be awkward or feel unnecessary. But it is far easier for me to accommodate and respond to your needs by knowing in advance what those needs are.

**Religious observance policy**

Michigan State University has long had a policy recognizing that many individuals observe religious holidays associated with their particular faiths. The MSU policy on religious observance can be found on the web at [http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/UCC/Updated/religious.pdf](http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/UCC/Updated/religious.pdf)
# Course calendar

This calendar provides an overview of course topics, readings and due dates for your work.

Besides the required books for the course, you will find the readings for a given week under "weekly meetings." Alternatively, you can click on the week number in the table below, and it will take you directly to that page.

We can revise this calendar at any time to make the course more responsive to the group's needs. Do note, however, that if you are absent from class it is your responsibility to consult the calendar for any changes or updates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week / Date</th>
<th>Topic / Readings</th>
<th>Work due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan. 12</td>
<td>Introductions and Course Overview</td>
<td>Set up your personal page <a href="https://sites.google.com/a/msu.edu/te920_ss12/course-calendar...">here</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jan. 19</td>
<td>Policy as Social Practice - Anthropological Perspectives</td>
<td>Discussion facilitator for this week: Abe + Julie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jan. 26</td>
<td>Forms of Capital - Sociological Perspectives</td>
<td>Discussion facilitator: Julie + Jamie + Eunjung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Click [here](https://sites.google.com/a/msu.edu/te920_ss12/course-calendar...) for an online version of the Bourdieu piece, if this is easier to read than the pdf.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Correspondence Principle - Marxist Perspectives</td>
<td>Discussion facilitator: Susan+Mei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. tba       | Proposals for final policy analysis are due tonight    | Abe                                                                       |
| Mar. 8     | SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS THIS WEEK                      |                                                                          |                              |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Discussion facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td><strong>Case Study 4: Arizona</strong></td>
<td>Sarifah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td><strong>Case Study 4: Arizona</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td><strong>Case Study 4: Arizona</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td><strong>Your policy analyses</strong></td>
<td>Half the group will present their policy analyses to class tonight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finals week</td>
<td><strong>Your policy analyses</strong></td>
<td>The other half will present their policy analyses to class tonight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Our final exam session is scheduled for *Tuesday, May 1 from 5:45-7:45pm*. 