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Education Policy and Public Service Internship

PSC/EDC 306

Course Overview:

Students at the University of Rhode Island have been serving as mentors and tutors in the public schools since 1998 as part of the Mentor/Tutor Internship Program (MTI). The MTI program since its founding has sought to give students the opportunity to learn firsthand through an internship in the public schools about the challenges and obstacles to education policy and administration. In this course students mentor or tutor children in the public schools or adult literacy/citizenship programs in Rhode Island and discuss education policy and problems. The course provides benefits for both the community, children/adults in the public schools and URI students. While URI students get experiential learning that makes them more informed citizens and enables them to think critically about education policy, the community gains needed volunteers in the schools who can serve as role models for students who would otherwise rarely (if ever) come into contact with someone pursuing a college degree. In this course students will discuss critical issues within education policy including the effectiveness and controversy over charter schools, school segregation, how best to evaluate teachers, and the challenge of educating second language learners among other topics while witnessing these issues in person through their internship.

Education makes up more than half of most local government budgets nation-wide and over a quarter of many state budgets are devoted to education. Citizens are asked to vote on education policy through referendums and through their endorsement of candidates for local, state, and national office. Citizens have also been at the heart of education policy reform as most reforms have come from parents with students in the public school system. Because of these facts and because almost everyone in the country will at some point have children or loved ones in the public schools, a thorough understanding of the challenges and politics of education policy is essential for citizen competency.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

General Education: Social and Behavioral Science (full coverage)

- Identify and recall facts, vocabulary, definitions, terms, and concepts of education policy and politics
- Recognize relevant concepts to solve problems and ask pertinent questions regarding education policy and politics.
- Use appropriate sources to collect information to address an education policy question.
- Apply relevant concepts from multiple sources to solve a problem and describe the evidence used to support the argument.
- Evaluate support for claims about education policy and justify conclusions.

General Education: Knowledge and Responsibility (full coverage)

- Recognize civic processes about education policy decisions and how different political players affect those decisions. Understand the impact of these processes.
- Complete an internship in the public schools.
- Integrate academic work with community engagement that produces a tangible product based on community needs.
- Demonstrate leadership in education policy.

Course Requirements:

- Students fulfill 44 hours of mentoring and tutoring in a public school program in Rhode Island (e.g. the internship)
- Students read about education policy controversies.
- Students reflect on their experiences and how their experience informs education policy at the internship through a weekly journal.
- Students use Sakai to view/listen to lectures using Sakai “lessons”
- Students attend a 50 minute recitation each week discussing education politics and policy in light of their experiences in the public schools.
- Students work as part of their recitation on an “action project” to help raise money and books for a school in Providence with many low income at-risk students.
- Students complete several quizzes and a final exam.

Course components

- Internship (approximately 4 hours a week) (44 hours total)
- Readings and assignments: Each week will have a reading or a podcast on a specific policy topic.
- On-line lectures and assignments: Lectures/additional videos or audio will be available on Sakai prior to the first recitation of the week. You should watch the lecture (approximately 20 minutes) prior to attending your recitation so that you have all the information you need to participate fully in the recitation discussion.

- Recitation: Your recitation will be 50 minutes. You will be assigned to a recitation based on your availability and the available recitation times.
- Quizzes and Exam. There will be several quizzes and an exam to assess your ability to identify and apply theories and concepts discussed in class.

****Ordering is important! Each week, read the material, then watch the lecture/additional info, and then go to your recitation.**

Required Readings. All readings are available online.

Grade Breakdown:

Your grade for this course is dependent upon two separate categories: the completion of your hour requirement and the completion of your assignments. In order to pass this course you need to fulfill both categories. The first category includes your time and performance at your school. In order to succeed in the class, regular attendance at the placement (equal to or in excess of 44 hours total) and satisfactory evaluation by your placement supervisor are required. If you do not complete your hours and receive a satisfactory evaluation from your supervisor, there is no way to pass the class, even if you do all of the other work. Basically, the grade calculation below takes effect only upon the successful completion of your hours.

Upon fulfilling the hour requirement the rest of your grade is dependent on the following assignments. Below is a breakdown of each assignment for this course. Like your hours, success in the course is reliant upon your effort in the remainder of the course. All in all, complete your hours and your assignments and you will pass the course with flying colors!

TASK/ ASSIGNMENT:	PERCENT:
Journals and homework assignments	15%
Action project	30%
Attendance and participation in recitation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Final exam	15%
Final Reflection: The Op Ed	15%

How grades are determined:

The instructor will be grading the action project and award the final grade for this course. The TAs will grade your journals, track your hours, keep attendance, and grade your participation in recitation--sharing this participation grade with the instructor who will factor this grade into the final grade.

Grades are assessed using a scoring rubric specifically designed for each performance task. Please refer to the specific section of the syllabus to understand each of the performance tasks and how grades are weighted. The following grading system is used to determine letter grades:

Grade	Points earned		
A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	65-69
B-	80-82	F	64 and lower

About Plagiarism:

Simply put, do not plagiarize. Feel free to approach me if you have any questions or concerns about avoiding plagiarism. Please see the University Manual for the policy on plagiarism available at: <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/8.20-8.27.html>

About Disabilities:

Any student with a disability is encouraged to contact the instructor prior to the second week of class to discuss what accommodations will help you succeed.

About Electronic Devices in Recitation: Devices such as cell phones, PDAs, etc should be turned off, not simply silenced prior to the start of class. Answering a cell phone, checking messages, or text messaging is strictly prohibited. Under special circumstances students may be allowed to keep their cell phones on (such as when a partner may deliver a baby). Please discuss the special circumstance with your TA prior to class. Using a laptop in class is NOT allowed. People with documented disabilities who need to use a laptop to take notes will be allowed (with the proper documentation) but must sit in a location mutually agreed upon by the professor and student. Students who open a technological devise (e.g. phone, PDA, laptop, etc.) in class without prior permission will be asked to leave.

Detailed Assignments:

Journals:

- Journals are to be posted in your Sakai Dropbox each week on Sunday night before midnight. No late journals will be accepted.
- Journals should be approximately 1 single spaced page, and should include your name, the topic of the week, and the date.
- The first half of your journal (1 paragraph) should discuss what you did at your placement for the week and touch upon any thoughts you may have had while there, such as: how students differ in the way they learn, an experience you had with one or multiple

students, a moment when you felt proud and/or important to an individual student or group of students, a moment when you felt at a loss and/or confused about what you may have experienced and/or witnessed, a moment when you realized a specific challenge for making policy outside the classroom, etc.

- In the second half (paragraph 2) of your journal, respond to the reading(s)/podcast/video for the week. In a paragraph, discuss what you took away from the reading(s)/podcast/video and how it applies to what you are experiencing in your placement and/or in the education system. Also reflect on the week's reading and explain why you either agree or disagree with what it is saying based on your experience at your placement.
- In weeks in which you did not go to your placement, find an additional news article on the topic of the week to reflect upon to replace paragraph 1.

“Homework”:

Some weeks, in the lecture, I will assign “homework”. For example, this will include in one week, a request that you take a picture at your placement that reflects whether the school has enough money in its budget and how students at the school feel while at school. These pictures are to be posted to the course wiki and they will be counted as homework. You must view the lecture in order to know what the homework is for that week.

Quizzes and the final exam:

There will be 3 quizzes posted to Sakai throughout the semester. There will also be one final exam. The format will be multiple choice.

The Op-Ed

If you have an interesting opinion you may have thought of writing an op-ed article for a newspaper or elsewhere. Op-eds can reach millions of readers, swaying hearts and changing minds. It can help reshape a public debate and affect policy. It also can serve as a great resume builder! Using an issue (or issues) that we read about/discussed during the semester or your action project, write a 700 word (approximate) op-ed arguing for a change in the education system or highlighting how education policy makers can learn from a successful innovation in education.

I will discuss the Op Ed more toward the end of the semester and post a rubric. You will be required to clear your thesis and your topic with me before writing your op ed. It is due on the last day of recitation. Please turn in a PRINTED version to your TA. He/she will give it to me (the professor) for grading.

Students are encouraged to submit revised versions of their op eds to local papers and blogs. If you would like to do so, ask the MTI director for help revising your op ed to make sure it is perfect before sending it in.

Good advice for writing an Op Ed can be gained at:

http://newsoffice.duke.edu/duke_resources/oped (ignore that it is for Duke faculty!). We will also go over in class how to write an op ed and there is a section of your readings devoted to it.

Here are a couple of good op-ed examples:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/opinion/sunday/the-secret-to-fixing-bad-schools.html?ref=education>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/23/opinion/grading-schools-isnt-the-answer-its-the-problem.html?ref=education>

The Action Project

Important Deadlines:

- (1). Project plan: Due during recitation the **week of Sept.21-25 (or earlier!)** in class, typed.
- (2). Project Implementation: All projects must be implemented by **Thanksgiving Recess**.
- (3). Summary Report: Due in class in the first recitation **after returning from Thanksgiving Break**
- (4) Project presentation: Due on the class Wiki cite by midnight **December 6th**

Activism is important to the political science discipline because it brings about positive social and political changes. For this project, you will work in a group to think about an issue related to education policy that you would like to make a difference in. You will develop a project plan with your classmates about an “action” related to your topic that you will all work on. You will then implement your project as a group *outside of class*, summarize on your project in writing (individually), and present a group presentation to the class via a presentation online. If your recitation has under 5 or under people in it, then one group is appropriate. If there is more than 5 people in the recitation, then groups will be formed so that no group has more than 5 members.

Step One: Identify an Issue Education Policy and Develop a Project Plan

- First, exchange e-mail address. Add each other on Facebook or use Sakai to connected. We will give you time to work on your projects in class, but you need to have a way to talk/plan outside of class in order to get this project done on time.
- As a group, think about what “action” you can take to address a problem related to your topic.
- As a group, develop a project plan and decide who will do what task in order to get the project done. What roles will each of you take? What steps need to be done to complete this project in a timely manner? (**Each student needs to submit a paragraph explaining his or her role in the project; due in recitation the week of Sept.21-25 —no e-mails accepted!**)
- Find at least 2 academic references that explain why the “problem” you are addressing is a problem to education policy makers. Explain them in your project plan as a paragraph that explains why you have chosen to undertake this project. Make sure you use **citations** (in text and a works cited page) when referencing library materials. (For example, if you use the sample project below, you need to find academic resources that discuss literacy barriers in low income populations or the correlation of books in the home with educational success, or summer reading loss.)

Step Two: Project Implementation

- Everyone in the group should contribute some ACTION, both individually and collectively (collecting items for a donation, planning a small event, etc.)
- I will give you time in class to plan, but your project will be implemented outside of class time.

Step Three: Summarize and Report on Your Project (2-3 page paper written individually)

- You are expected to submit an individual-based paper in recitation the week of 11/30-12/4.
- In the paper, describe what you did for your action project. Discuss why you identified your topic as an issue of importance that is related to Education.
- Discuss your results, thinking about both your anticipated and actual outcomes. How well do you think your project went, and why? What was successful, and what was challenging? What would you do differently if you were starting over and/or had more time? How did this project make you think in a deeper way about activism and about Education Policy?
- Include in the paper a summary of the at least 2 academic references that you found from the library that justify your choice of projects. Make sure you use **citations** (in text and a works cited page) when referencing library materials.

Step Four: Present Your Project and Outcomes to the Class (as a group)

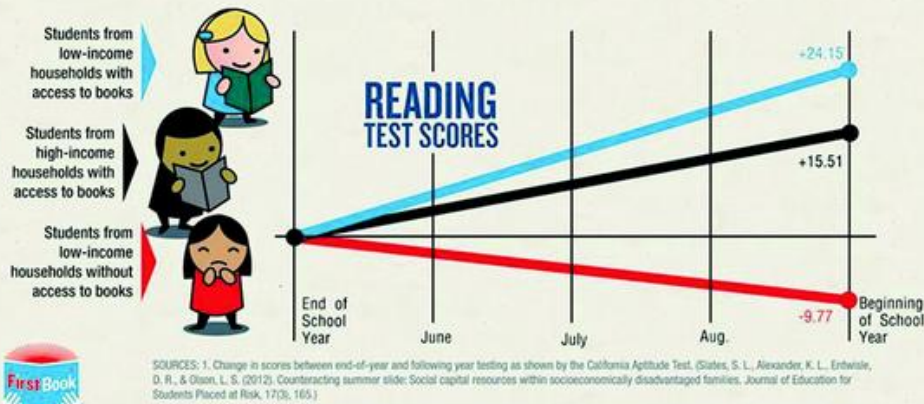
- Presentations will be posted to the class via Sakai on or before December 6th.
- You are expected to have a power point presentation, a video, or a poster that explains your project and what you achieved. Show us pictures from your project if you can. Make it interesting and engaging! *Every group member needs to do a part of the presentation.*
- Presentation should begin with a review of the literature you found that covers why the problem you have engaged is a problem to education policy makers.

EXAMPLE THAT WE DID LAST YEAR AND THAT THE TAs ARE DOING AGAIN(feel free to do it):**Summer Reading Loss in Low Income Kids**

Last Fall, the TAs of PSC/EDC 306 decided that they wanted to make sure that children in a low-income Providence school had a book to take home with them over the summer. Why? Well, there were two reasons. First, low income kids are more likely than high income kids to experience what is called “summer reading loss”. Below is a great graphic that describes this phenomenon:

KIDS WHO READ BEAT SUMMER SLIDE

Studies show that access to books during the summer prevents a drastic loss in reading skill – especially for kids in need.



This is the reading that most schools have some sort of “summer reading list” that encourages kids to read over the summer. The problem is, lots of low income kids can’t afford to purchase those books and most can’t access the library easily. So, although schools encourage kids to read over the summer, low income kids don’t always have access to books, so then end up losing proficiency in reading over the summer.

So, last fall the TAs decided to raise money to send kids at the Asa Messer Elementary School home with a summer reading book matched to their reading level. By the end of the year, they had raised about \$1600—enough money to send the 400 students in grades Pre-K through 3 home with a book for the summer. We then wrapped them and handed them out to the students as presents on the last day of school.

How did they do it? One held a book drive, another held a fundraiser at the Muse where the restaurant donated 15% of the proceeds for the night to the campaign, another held another event, and so on.

Our goal this year is to send kids home with both a book and a math workbook (or two books). We would love it if your group project also helped raise money or books toward this project! Below is a picture from when we distributed the books at Asa Messer last spring.



The Schedule:

(**all readings are available in the course packet)

To be clear: the reading listed for the day is the reading you should have done BEFORE watching the lecture for the week, posting your journal and going to recitation. It is what we will be discussing that week in recitation!

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
Week 1: 9/9-9/11 (note even students who do not have recitation this week should do this.)	Training, Orientation and Expectations	No Reading. Please watch lecture RECITATIONS DON'T MEET but everyone should have watched the orientation lecture and be in touch with NATE (mtiaturi@gmail.com) about starting their placements.	-post in the forum
Week 2: Sept 14-18	Intro	Read: Page 1-33 of Eric Hanushek, Paul Peterson, and Ludger Woessmann, <i>Endangering Prosperity: A Global View of the American School</i> . Brookings, 2013 (in Course Packet)	-Journal 1 -BCI due if it has not been attained before -Schedule for internship
Week 3: Sept 21-25	How are schools funded?	Read: Baker and Corcoran (2012) The Stealth Inequalities of School Funding." Pages 1-10 (Introduction and summary). Available at: http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/StealthInequalities.pdf	- Journal 2 --Project Plan due
Week 4: Sept 28-Oct 2	School funding and segregation	Read: http://schoolfundingfairness.org/National_Report_Card_2015.pdf and Richmond (2012) "Schools Are More Segregated Today Than During the Late 1960s" <i>The Atlantic</i> . Available at: http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/06/schools-are-more-segregated-today-than-during-the-late-	- Journal 3 -Quiz 1

		1960s/258348/ Recommended (not required): http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/historic-reversals-accelerating-resegregation-and-the-need-for-new-integration-strategies-1/orfield-historic-reversals-accelerating.pdf ***—the journal today should be a picture of your school that represents to you how much money they have.	
Week 5: Oct 5-9	Segregation continued	Listen to: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with	- Journal 4
Week 6: Oct 12-16	Educating ESL Students: English only or Bilingual Education?	Read: Room for Debate: the best way to teach newcomers. Available at: http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/11/the-best-ways-to-teach-young-newcomers/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0	-Journal 5
Week 7: Oct 19-23	Can school and teacher performance be measured fairly?	Read: Room for Debate: Can school performance be measured fairly? Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/07/29/can-school-performance-be-measured-fairly And Ravitch, <i>Death and Life</i> , pp. 93-112; 149-168.	-Journal 6 -Quiz 2
Week 8: Oct 26-30	Are charter schools the answer?	Read: Room for Debate: Push-back on Charter Schools. Available at: http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/the-push-back-on-charter-schools/	- Journal 7 -Questions for Part II interview due.

		<p>And http://www.psmag.com/education/medicare-report-card-for-charter-schools-46637/ And http://www.psmag.com/education/chicago-charter-schools-aim-to-lift-urban-education-34328/ And http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/02/opinion/more-lessons-about-charter-schools.html?_r=0</p>	
Week 9: Nov 2-6	What else matters to educational success?	<p>Listen to: This American Life Episode “Harper High School Part I”. Available at: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/487/harper-high-school-part-one</p>	- Journal 8 -Midterm Quick Checks
Week 10: Nov 9-13	What else matters to educational success? Part II.	<p>Listen to: This American Life Episode “Harper High School Part II.” Available at: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/488/harper-high-school-part-two</p>	-Journal 9
Week 11: Nov 16- Nov 20	Can we learn something from Finland? And Back to School! What’s not in the school curriculum but maybe should be.	<p>Listen to: Episode 474 of This American Life. Available at: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/474/back-to-school</p>	- Journal 10 -Quiz 3
Week 12: Nov 23-27	<p>Thanksgiving week, no recitations held.</p> <p>Civic Engagement in the classroom?</p>	<p>No Recitations: Thanksgiving week Please go to your internship if you do hours Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday.</p> <p>Read: “Schools, civic education, and political socialization” In <i>Cultivating Democracy</i> by Gimpel Lay and Schucktecht.</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p>	-Projects must be completed by the time you leave for thanksgiving break!

Week 13: Nov. 30- Dec. 4	How do I write an Op Ed? And The rise and fall of school reform	<p>Listen to: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/275/two-steps-back</p> <p>Read: http://newsoffice.duke.edu/duke_resources/oped And: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/opinion/sunday/the-secret-to-fixing-bad-schools.html?ref=education And: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/23/opinion/grading-schools-isnt-the-answer-its-the-problem.html?ref=education</p>	--Journal 11 -Project summary report due
Week 14: Dec 7-Dec. 11	Should public school be extended to age 3?	<p>Listen to:</p> <p>Why Preschool can save the world: http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/2012/10/19/163256866/episode-411-why-preschool-can-save-the-world and http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/477/getting-away-with-it?act=4</p> <p>Recommended Reading (not required): Heckman et al. "A New Cost-Benefit and Rate of Return Analysis for the Perry Preschool Program: A Summary."</p>	- Journal 12 - Hours Sheet - Final Quick Check --Project presentation must be posted by Sunday night, Dec. 6 th !!
Week 15:	N/A	Final exam will be posted to Sakai the day before the final exam week. Once you open it, you will have 1 hour to complete it.	--Op Ed due: Sunday December 13 th by midnight via Sakai --The Final exam

Guidance for Student Interns:

- Complete all of your hours by the end of the semester; Get your hour sheet signed by your internship teacher(s)/supervisor EVERY time you go to your placement(s).
- Bring your hour sheet to EVERY class.
- Complete a weekly journal by Sunday before midnight; if you do not attend your recitation for that week, you will not receive credit for your journal.
- Go to your placement(s) EVERY week; If you cannot make it to your placement(s) you must call ASAP to let your teacher(s) know you will not be arriving, as well as send an e-mail to your instructor explaining why you could not go to your placement. In addition, you must arrange for making up any missed hours as soon as possible if you expect to complete all of your hours (which is mandatory) by the end of the semester.
- Always arrive on time to your placement and always treat your school supervisor(s) and/or teacher(s) with the respect you would give to someone giving you a pay check!

Hour Tracker:

***Note:** This schedule is to give you an idea about the amount of hours you should have accumulated week-by-week throughout the semester; if you follow this schedule you should be on track with your hours. However, please note that this is a general schedule and does not account for individual school breaks (you must take breaks into consideration on your own). With that said, all interns are required to make a personal schedule that reflects the days and times they go to their placement(s) as well as showing how many hours they have accumulated throughout the semester; this schedule will be due to your TA at your first recitation meeting. The idea is that you will do some hours each week. So, if you finish your hours early, we do expect you to keep going at least an hour or so each week. Also, it is not OK to not go to your internship and then expect to make up hours at the end, unless you experience some sort of problem (serious illness, snow storm, etc.)

Helpful Hints:

- Ask for a school schedule on your first day at your placement to plan in advance for days you might have to make up due to school breaks and/or half days.
- The schedule below assumes 4 hours every week. You need to be sure that you schedule enough hours each week to finish by the end of the semester. The school is under no obligation to give you extra hours at the end of the semester.

WEEK:	TOTAL HOURS:
1.) Sep 8-12	4
2.) Sep. 15-19	8

3.) Sep. 22-26	12
4.) Sep 29 - Oct 3	16
5.) Oct 6-10	20
6.) Oct 14-17 - Columbus Day, Oct 13 - Placements have no school	24
7.) Oct 20-24	28
8.) Oct 27-31	32
9.) Nov 3-7 - Election Day, Nov. 4 - Placements have no school	36
10.) Nov 10-14 - Veterans Day, Nov 11. - Placements have no school	40
11.) Nov 17-21	44
12.) Nov 24-28 - Thanksgiving Break for Placements	
13.) Dec 1-5	48

About Your Placement:

- BEFORE YOU BEGIN:
 - a.) Obtain your BCI (background check) and make multiple copies: one for your personal records, one for your placement, and one for your instructor. Information on obtaining a BCI should have been given to you when you enrolled in the course.
 - b.) Contact your placement(s) and set up a schedule for doing your hours each week.
 - c.) Bring all your information on MTI, as well as your school schedule, to your placement(s) and explain:
 - Your responsibilities as an intern (e.g. helping out the teachers, working with students individually, etc).
 - Your schedule (e.g. how long you will be working at the school and days you cannot be there).
 - d.) Talk to your teacher(s) to get an idea of who the students are and what their main concerns are
- AT YOUR PLACEMENT:
 - a.) **Always** arrive on time

- b.) Dress appropriately:
 - Gentlemen: Please wear pants at your waist, dress shirt with collar..
 - Ladies: No revealing clothing (e.g., low cut-tops, belly-shirts, short skirts, etc.).
- c.) Be aware of your language; **DO NOT SWEAR.**
- d.) Be helpful, versatile and engaging
- e.) **Always** have your teacher(s) sign your hour sheet
Call in advance, (24 hours minimum), if you cannot make it to your placement. However, you are **NOT** allowed to call out unless there are extenuating circumstances, (i.e. death in the family, medical emergency, car trouble etc.). Do not treat your placement as a class, **treat it as a job.**
- **Note:** If you experience problems with your placement(s) let the Professor or the MTI Student director know ASAP and we will work with you to improve your placement experience(s).