

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Education
Department of Educational Organization and Leadership

EOL 548 — Political and Cultural Context of Education
Fall 2008

5:30 PM Fridays; 8:00 AM Saturdays

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Catalog Course Description

(4 – EOL 548) The political and social environment of public education in the United States; analysis of the power structure and its influence on educational policy making at the district level; examination of the evolving roles of state and federal agencies, the courts, private organizations, and interest groups in school governance. Studies the tension between the ideal of a democratically controlled public school system and the growing power of educational experts. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in the College of Education or consent of instructor.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Bracey, G. W. (2002). *The war against America's public schools: privatizing schools, commercializing education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Henig, J. R. (2007). *Spin cycle: How research is used in policy debates — The case of charter schools*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kaestle, C. F., & Lodewick, A. E. (Eds.). (2007). *To educate a nation: Federal and national strategies of school reform*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools: Using social, economic, and educational reform to close the black-white achievement gap*. Washington, DC & New York: Economic Policy Institute & Teachers College.
- Walberg, H. J., & Bast, J. L. (2003). *Education and capitalism: How overcoming our fear of markets and economies can improve America's schools*. Stanford: Hoover Inst. (free download at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/books/2995211.html>).

RECOMMENDED TEXT

- Bracey, G.W. (2006). *Reading educational research: How to avoid getting statistically snookered*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

CLASS NOTES

- 1) This is a discussion-oriented course that depends upon the free-flow of ideas. All students are expected to contribute to discussions. All members of the seminar need to show respect for others.
- 2) All reading and written assignments should be completed on time. In the event of any tragic and unavoidable circumstances, I will be unable to make accommodations for missing assignments or absences unless notified in advance. Late assignments and multiple absences will be assessed a commensurate grade reduction during final grade calculations.
- 3) Students should be familiar with the University's policies on academic dishonesty, and avoid even the appearance of such. See <http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/index.html>.
- 4) Students with documented disabilities that affect participation are encouraged to speak with the instructor regarding special accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1) Participation (10%)

Because this class is designed as a seminar, your presence and active and informed participation in the class discussion are essential. Failure in this regard will have a detrimental impact not only on your grade, but, more importantly, on your learning experience, and that of your classmates. You should come prepared with a specific question or issue that you have about the reading for that class meeting.

2) Project Prospectus (10%)

Individual students or groups (of no more than 2) will compile a prospectus consisting of (1) one paragraph on the significance of an issue, and (2) an annotated bibliography or literature review on a topic that will be dealt with further for the final project. The paper must be between 2 and 5 pages, citing primarily scholarly articles or books. This is due no later than the beginning of class, **October 10**. You should select topics and resources based on your interests, class discussions, *and in consultation with the instructor*. This assignment will serve as the starting point for your research project.

3) Research Project (50%)

The course project is a research paper (and presentation) around a specific topic. Individuals or groups (of no more than 2) may choose a more traditional term paper around a particular issue, or a small project that applies themes or issues from the course to the study of a particular school or setting. (Educational Administration students seeking a General Administration Endorsement should consider the "Reflection on Content Area Standards" (see below) when formulating their project.) Drafts are due via email **November 7**. (Please make sure to get a copy to your reviewers as well.) Final papers are due at the beginning of the final class meeting.

4) Peer Reviews (10%)

Students will be responsible for providing comprehensive, written reviews for at least one other project. These are expected to offer substantive feedback to the authors as the projects are completed, and will also be used as the basis for in-class discussions during the final presentations of the projects. Reviews are due **November 14**.

5) Class Presentation (10%)

The final class meeting(s) will be used for students to present and discuss their projects. Each presentation should take approximately 20-30 minutes.

6) Reflection on Content Area Standards (10%)

See below. Due by the end of the semester.

PLEASE NOTE: All written assignments should be typed (double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins), using the citation style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). See: <http://www.apastyle.org/>.

Reflection on Content Area Standards #4 Collaboration with Families and Communities and #6 Political, Social, Economic, Legal, and Cultural Context

Students will work in small groups to analyze the political processes of public schools, incorporating in their study the contemporary literature on critical issues, the components of a political system model, and relevant societal trend data. Students will investigate the political processes of selected schools and prepare and present an analysis of their findings, including individual reflective writings on their development as future school leaders.

In preparing this assignment for inclusion in the Professional Program Portfolio, each student also must add a reflective statement on how this assignment improved his or her understanding of an administrator's role in collaboration with families and communities and with the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of public schools.