



**CAPSTONE: PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES (EDUCATION POLICY)**

PUB AFRS 7910  
3 Credit Hours  
Spring 2016  
Monday 5:45-8:30  
Page Hall Rm 240

**Instructor** Professor Stéphane Lavertu, PhD  
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**Office hrs** Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 11:00am-12:00pm, or by appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this course is to provide students the opportunity to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills from the MA/MPA core curriculum to real-world problems in education. The course will promote such integration and application by 1) surveying and requiring students to critique and discuss education policy debates and research and 2) requiring students to conduct a systematic policy analysis (individually or in a small group) on an education topic of their choosing. Students will be required to follow education news, produce written critiques of policy research, and produce an original policy analysis according to the instructions and timeline in this syllabus. The substantive focus of class discussions will be determined as the semester progresses, so that the seminar is responsive to students' interests and needs.

**LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary goals of this course are for students to...

- Integrate and apply prior graduate coursework on policy analysis, public sector economics, public management, policy formulation and implementation, and empirical methods on education policy issues
- Establish or deepen their understanding of core issues in the provision of public education in the United States
- Establish or deepen their understanding of techniques of policy analysis and evaluation, particularly in the context of U.S. public education



**BASIS FOR ASSESSMENT**

*PARTICIPATION (10%)*

You are required to attend class and be active participants, which entails completing readings carefully, following current events, and contributing to class discussions.

*MEMOS (10%)*

You are required to write five memoranda critiquing an assigned policy analysis or evaluation. Memoranda must be very well written and must concisely, coherently, and clearly summarize and critique the analysis (particularly in terms of presentation and methodology). All memos should identify at least two strengths and two weaknesses of the assigned analysis.

Memos should be one single-spaced page (or less) using an 11 point font and 1 inch margins. Please include your name and date in the header field.

*CAPSTONE PROJECT: PROPOSAL (10%)*

Groups or individuals must submit a proposal for their capstone projects by the second class meeting (third week of classes). The proposals can be for a prospective policy analysis, a policy or program evaluation, or a more general research paper. The proposal should identify the audience or client (e.g., the Ohio Department of Education), clearly articulate the topic of study (a problem or question of concern to that audience or client), describe the proposed analytical strategy, outline the proposed components of the final report, and provide a timeline for the completion of those components. Groups need only submit one proposal, but the proposal should clearly articulate how responsibilities will be divided among group members. The proposal should be approximately 2 single-spaced pages using an 11 point font and 1 inch margins.

*MIDTERM EXAM (30%)*

The weeklong take-home midterm exam assesses your analytical and substantive competency in public policy and management in the context of your capstone projects. Specifically, the exam requires you to answer questions on the substantive and methodological nuances of your capstone projects. You are strictly prohibited from communicating and collaborating on any portion of the take-home exam once the questions have been distributed. Students who have been diligent and engaged in the completion of their capstone projects will not be surprised by any of the topics covered on the exam. Here are sample exam questions:

- Describe the education policy problem or issue that you are addressing in your capstone analysis. What evidence exists that this is a significant problem or issue worthy of time, attention, and resources on the part of your client?



- Identify and describe the most important stakeholders associated with your public policy problem. Who are they and what is their role in addressing the issue? What authority or influence can they wield in support or opposition to policy proposals?
- Choose one or two key (and recent) policy analyses of the policy issue or problem that you are addressing. Provide a critical assessment of the analysis or evaluation. Describe and analyze the research design (e.g., data, analytical methodology, internal and external validity, the counterfactual, etc.).
- Identify the decision criteria/objectives that are most relevant to your analysis. Describe how they should be measured or assessed and what data and methods will be necessary to undertake their measurement.

You will be graded based on the extent to which your response is well written (professional, grammatically correct, concise, coherent, etc.), logically sound, demonstrates an understanding of the public sector, references outside readings appropriately, and is well cited.

### CAPSTONE PROJECT: FINAL REPORT (30%)

The final report can be a policy analysis, a policy or program evaluation, or a more general research paper. The necessary components of the final report will differ depending on the nature of your analysis. However, all papers must have the following components:

#### *1) Title Page (5 points)*

The title page should include “The Ohio State University,” “John Glenn College of Public Affairs,” your paper title, your name, the phrase “A Policy/Management Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the Master of Public Administration Degree/Master of Arts Degree,” and the semester and year of completion.

#### *2) Executive Summary (10 points)*

The executive summary, written last, should provide the reader an overview of the various sections of the paper, including the main research questions and highlights of the conclusions. The executive summary should be no more than one single-spaced page.

#### *3) Introduction (10 points)*

The introduction provides an overview of the topic being studied and its importance/relevance within a larger political, organizational, or other applicable context. The introduction should also provide a concise statement of the particular research question and should briefly report the results or findings and the implications and conclusions of your analysis.

#### *4) Background/Literature Review (10 points)*

You must provide the reader with all background information necessary to understand the analysis. For most of you this will include a review of the research literature on your topic. For those of you analyzing solutions to a problem, this will include a section describing the problem your analysis intends to address. Resist the urge, however, to provide background for its own sake. Do not include information that does not relate directly to the analysis.



5) *Section(s) Presenting Analytical Strategy (10 points)*

Describe and justify your analytical approach. For those of you conducting a policy analysis, this section entails specifying your evaluative criteria and the manner in which you will evaluate policy options relative to those criteria. For those of you conducting empirical policy research, you should clearly state hypotheses, the data you used to test those hypotheses, and the manner in which you analyzed those data. It is important that you clearly articulate the strengths and weaknesses of your chosen analytical strategy for your purposes (e.g., internal and external validity issues).

6) *Results (10 points)*

You must present your results in both written form and visually (i.e., graphs and tables). The visual presentation should be sufficiently clear and informative that a lazy reader would be able to understand the results without reading the text. The text should reference the numbered graphs and tables directly and should be focused on helping the reader understand the results.

7) *Conclusion (10 points)*

Briefly summarize your results and discuss policy or management implications. Discuss whether there are any alternative explanations for your findings and be clear about the limitations of your analysis and note how these limitations might affect your results and conclusions. You should also discuss areas for future research. Finally, you should make recommendations that follow from your findings. Do not make recommendations that are not supported by your analysis.

8) *References and appendices (if any) (10 points)*

You must provide reputable citations to back up any claims that are not common knowledge. All of the papers in the references should be cited in the text using a common style such as APA.

You will be graded based on content (the 75 points enumerated above) and writing (25 points). The writing must be professional, grammatically sound, concise, coherent, and well organized. The reader must not ever have to work hard to understand any aspect of the report.

CAPSTONE PROJECT: PRESENTATION (10%)

On the final day of the course each student will convey the results of the paper to the class through a short oral presentation, along with a brief question-and-answer period. You will be graded based on your clarity, degree of organization and time management, quality of slides, and Q&A interactions.

**GRADING**

Transformation of numerical grades to letter grades will correspond to this schedule:

A	93-100	C+	77-79.9	E <	59.9
A-	90-92.9	C	73-76.9		
B+	87-89.9	C-	70-72.9		
B	83-86.9	D+	67-69.9		
B-	80-82.9	D	60-66.9		



## READING

I will send required readings to you as PDFs. In addition to those readings, please subscribe to at least two of the following sources of analysis or news (and please let me know of some others you might know of!):

- *Education Week (K-12)*  
Subscribe to get headlines from *Education Week* ([www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)). You can also elect to subscribe to blogs of interest to you. For example, I get daily emails from the education politics blog.
- *Education Next (K-12)*  
Subscribe to the *Education Next* blog (<http://educationnext.org/>).
- *The Ohio Education News Summary*  
Subscribe to The Ohio Education News Summary (<http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ohio-Education-Daily-News-Summary>). You can select the topics that are of greatest interest to you.
- *Chronicle of Higher Education*  
Subscribe to “Academe Today”—the Chronicle’s free daily newsletter (<http://chronicle.com/>). After creating account, you can select from a list of other newsletters.
- *StateImpact Ohio E-Newsletter*  
Subscribe to the E-Newsletter by entering your email address on this page <http://www.ideastream.org/stateimpact> (or follow them some other way).

## OPTIONAL READING/TEXTS

Sykes, G., Schneider, B., & Plank, D. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of Education Policy Research* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition). New York, NY: Routledge. (ISBN: 0415989922)

Ladd, H. F. & Goertz, M. E. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). New York, NY: Routledge. (ISBN: 0415838029)

## TEXTBOOK INFORMATION

Students can access textbook information via the Barnes & Noble bookstore website: [www.shopOhioState.com](http://www.shopOhioState.com) as well as from their BuckeyeLink Student Center. This information is disseminated by B&N to all area bookstores. You may buy from a store of your choice and/or shop for books (always use ISBN# for searches) online.



## SCHEDULE

	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>Week 1</b> (Jan. 11)	1. Introductions 2. Syllabus 3. Discussion: Role of Analysis in Policymaking and Management 4. Discussion: Salient issues in K-16 education	* Be prepared to discuss your capstone and career plans/interests.
<b>Week 2</b> (Jan. 18)	<b>MLK DAY (NO CLASS)</b>	* Work on project proposals
<b>Week 3</b> (Jan. 25)	1. Economics of Education 2. Discuss Projects	* Turn in project proposal via email by 5pm Monday, January 25.
<b>Week 4</b> (Feb. 1)	1. Discuss Projects 2. Discuss Reading 3. Introduction to Education Governance	* Response Memo 1 due in class  * Reading for Memo 1: Hanushek, Eric A. (2011). The economic value of higher teacher quality. <i>Economics of Education Review</i> 30(3): 466-479.
<b>Week 5</b> (Feb. 8)	1. Centralization (and Decentralization) in Education Governance 2. Discuss Reading 3. Discuss Projects	* Response Memo 2 due in class  * Reading for Memo 2: Policy Matters Ohio. (2014). Boosting Post-secondary and career success. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.policymattersohio.org/boosting-success">http://www.policymattersohio.org/boosting-success</a>
<b>Week 6</b> (Feb 15)	1. Privatization, Markets, and Contracting 2. Discuss Reading 3. Discuss Projects 4. Assign draft review pairs	* Response Memo 3 due in class  * Reading for Memo 3: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. (2015). State capacity to support school turnaround. (Report No. NCEE 20154012) Retrieved from <a href="http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20154012/">http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20154012/</a>  * Email a draft of your report to classmate by 5pm on February 17 (Bring hardcopy to class)
<b>Week 7</b> (Feb 22)	Report Workshop Day	* Come prepared to offer and receive feedback on draft reports sent during the previous week.



# THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

## JOHN GLENN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

<b>Week 8</b> (Feb 29)	1. Big Data, Performance Measurement and Accountability, and Evidence-Based Education Reforms 2. Discuss Reading 3. Discuss Projects	* Response Memo 4 due in class  * Reading for Memo 4: Squire, Juliet, Kelly Robson, and Andy Smarick. (2014). The road to redemption: ten policy recommendations for Ohio's charter school sector. A report by Bellwether Education Partners and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Retrieved from <a href="http://edexcellence.net/publications/the-road-to-redemption-ten-policy-recommendations-for-ohios-charter-school-sector">http://edexcellence.net/publications/the-road-to-redemption-ten-policy-recommendations-for-ohios-charter-school-sector</a>
<b>Week 9</b> (March 7)	1. Policy Topic: TBD 2. Discuss Reading 3. Discuss Projects	* Response Memo 5 due in class  * Reading for Memo 5: Darolia, Rajeev. (2015). Messengers of bad news or bad apples? Student debt and college accountability. <i>Education Finance and Policy</i> 10(2): 277-299.
<b>Week 10</b> (March 14)	<b>SPRING BREAK (No Class)</b>	
<b>Week 11</b> (March 21)	<b>EXAM WEEK (No Class)</b>	
<b>Week 12</b> (March 28)	1. Policy Topic: TBD 2. Discuss Reading 3. Discuss Projects	* Email a draft of your report to the class by 5pm on Friday, April 1.
<b>Week 13</b> (April 4)	Report Workshop Day	* Come prepared to offer and receive feedback on draft reports sent during the previous week.
<b>Week 14</b> (April 11)	Paper presentations	
<b>Week 15</b> (April 18)	Paper presentations	
<b>Week 16</b> (April 25)	Class wrap-up	* Capstone Project Reports Due by 5pm on April 25



### ***STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH***

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the **Office of Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS)** by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292- 5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 4th Floor of the PAES Building. 24 hour emergency help is also available through the National 24/7 Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

### ***ADA Statement***

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

### ***ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)***

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct may constitute "Academic Misconduct." Sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

In the Ohio State University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), Section 3335-23-04 defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct.