

## EDUC 551-001: School Organizations & The Policy Environment

University of Michigan School of Education  
Tuesdays, 5-8pm, Jan. 11-Apr. 19  
Instructor: Maren Oberman, [mareneo@umich.edu](mailto:mareneo@umich.edu)

Winter 2022, Room 2218 SEB  
No Class on March 1  
Office hours: by email

### Course Description

This course seeks to introduce educators to policy making at all levels of the education sector, from the classroom to the country. Students will explore many issues in educational policy drawing on a critical policy analysis framework. Students will deepen their experience and proficiency with collaboration in distributed leadership teams, while developing conceptual understandings of contemporary policy issues and their impact on school environments. Objectives of the course include:

- To study policy with a critical lens and with self-determination
- To develop an understanding of the federal role in education policy
- To build a knowledge base around key issues in education policy
- To practice writing for policy audiences

### Course Ethics

- Ethic of Care
  - It has always been important to me to approach my students with care and compassion and to develop a caring community in classroom spaces. In this extraordinary time, it is all the more important that we practice caring for ourselves and for each other. Taking care of the self – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually enables us to work and strive intellectually, civically, and ethically. When we discuss “Invitations to Engagement” please come prepared to share what it means to you to care for yourself, to care for others and to care for a learning community of which you are a part.
  - One specific element of care that merits naming is to acknowledge that some of the material in this course is painful to read, watch, or listen to; although for whom it’s painful and why varies along many lines. Given that, I will not offer specific “content warnings” for specific resources, because to do so is actually an imposition of my own positionality and perspective onto yours. What I will say is that you need to prepare yourself for reading about and discussing difficult topics that relate to White supremacy, systemic racism, inequities and injustice. Please think about what you need to manage your own self-care when faced with difficult material and please reach out if you need support or need to step back.
  - Everyone in our learning community will have a range of reactions to our material. Some things may deeply trouble you, and yet be unacknowledged by someone else. Other things may come as a complete surprise to you, and yet be a commonplace part of someone else’s lived experience. Please be mindful to regard the reactions of others and also to realize that your very reaction may embody an element of your own privilege. We are all sparked in different ways. Part of the experience of this course will be to learn about what sparks us and the ensuing impact on ourselves and others. I will invite all of us to share on these matters; and likewise will invite us to be patient and compassionate with ourselves and others; and at the same time brave enough to recognize the ways in which we may (intentionally and unintentionally) cause others to feel pain.

- Ethic of Responsibility
  - As you'll see in reviewing this syllabus and engaging with the introductory materials, this class requires initiative, organization, and self-determination on the part of the students, as well as the instructor. I am intentionally practicing what bell hooks calls "engaged pedagogy," and that inherently involves the student in their own learning and teaching. Additionally, my desire to encourage a diversity of groupings and learning modalities means that you will be learning in many ways and spaces – at times - without the instructor present. You will be responsible not only for the typical reading and completion of assignments, but also for managing your time, collaborating with your groupmates, showing up when you say you will, and keeping pace with the class. My role is to facilitate and push, respond and assist, listen and grow; but you will find that much of the accountability in this class will rest with you.
  
- Ethic of Respect<sup>1</sup>
  - We must respect and value the efforts, identities, capacities, and ideas that each person brings into the space. We call people their chosen names and preferred pronouns and we make the effort to learn and to say their names as they wish them said.
  - We must all be open to alternative views, experiences, and perspectives, and curious to learn about and from one another. Freedom to express ourselves, a fundamental civil and human right, *excludes* expressions that commit or encourage violence or trauma toward others. I do not invite racist, sexist, classist, and, generally, bigoted, xenophobic, or hateful ideas, nor am I inviting tolerance or respect for such ideas. Judgments about this are part of the responsibility that a free and just society entails.
  - We stand for the goals of diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity expressed in our school community's [statement of institutional commitments](#). Acting on these commitments in our day-to-day work together means that we each must cultivate awareness of our own biases and perspectives. Actively advancing diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity requires that we are cognizant of our own biases and perspectives; and mindful of our ways of being, listening, talking. Furthermore, we must critically interrogate the materials, ideas, structures, and contexts we study and the environments in which we exist.

Early in the semester, we will discuss "invitations to engagement," ways that we can agree as a community that we want to be with one another. Sometimes these are referred to as "norms," and I'm happy to discuss with you why I have chosen a different moniker. In the meantime, please consider the following group norms offered by the [Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan](#):

1. Take the learning, leave the stories	7. Do not freeze people in time.
2. Be present and engaged. Avoid technology distractions.	8. Expect discomfort and joy; we are on our learning edge.
3. Share airtime.	9. Anticipate unfinished business.
4. Speak from your own experience.	
5. Be aware of intent and impact.	
6. Listen to learn, not to respond; listen harder when you disagree.	- Kaplowitz, Griffin, and Seyka. (2019). Race dialogues: a facilitator's guide to tackling the elephant in the classroom. p. 32.

<sup>1</sup> With gratitude to Deborah Ball for composing and sharing the language in this section

## Course Calendar

Our class is scheduled to meet on Tuesdays from 5:00-8:00pm during the Winter semester of 2022. This course will meet in person (room 2218) unless we shift to remote instruction for public health and safety needs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccinations (with limited exceptions) and masking are required.

There are three days on the course calendar marked as “asynchronous,” meaning that we will NOT meet in person or all together: **January 25, March 22, and April 12**. The expectation is that you will use class time on these days to work on your Policy Research Memo (January) and your Policy Team final project (March & April). Specifically, on the March and April days you should plan to be meeting with your policy team. More on this below under “assignments.”

This table includes the topics in the course and dues dates for major assignments. Please consult the topics pages on Canvas for the links to the readings as well as reminders and guidance for your work each week.

Week / Date	Topic	Due Dates
1 / Jan. 11	Introduction & Critical Policy Analysis	
2 / Jan 18	Critical Policy Analysis cont. & Purpose of School	
3 / Jan 25	<b>ASYNCHRONOUS</b> , time to work on Policy Research Memo	Policy Research Memo due January 30
4/ Feb 1	Purpose of School cont. & Intro to <i>A Nation at Risk</i>	
5/ Feb 8	<i>A Nation at Risk</i> cont.	
6/ Feb 15	Intro to Elementary & Secondary Education Act Policy Team Launch Day	
7/ Feb 22	Elementary & Secondary Education Act cont.	
March 1	NO CLASS	
8/ Mar 8	School Segregation	
9/ Mar 15	School Segregation	
10/ Mar 22	<b>ASYNCHRONOUS</b> , Policy Team Working Day	
11/ Mar 29	Punishment in Schools	
12/ Apr 5	Punishment in Schools	
13/ Apr 12	<b>ASYNCHRONOUS</b> , Policy Team Working Day	
14/ Apr 19	Final Policy Team Presentations	Policy Team Presentations due in class
April 24		Policy Team final brief due

## Assignments/Assessment

### **Attendance (22%)**

- Students who arrive on time and attend the whole class session earn two attendance points per session (one point deduction for late arrival or early departure). If you are unable to be in class **due to an illness or an emergency**, you will be able to earn points by submitting a make-up assignment (applicable for up to 2 class sessions). If, for any reason, students miss 3 or more classes, they will schedule a meeting with the instructor to discuss the feasibility of remaining enrolled in the course.
- The make-up assignment is as follows: Please post a 400-700 word reflection using the Canvas Discussion tool *within* 10 days of your absence or missed class time. The reflection should reference all of the assigned readings for the class you missed and should represent the substantive contributions you might have made to class discussion.
- Please contact me *before* class if you will be absent, with exceptions being made for extreme emergency situations. For purposes of self-care, and especially in light of public health concerns surrounding Covid-19, I encourage students who are not feeling well to stay home. If a need arises for us to meet remotely, we will shift the entire class to Zoom; however, we will not be holding hybrid sessions with some folks in the room and others on zoom.

### **Research Policy Memo (30%)**

- Self-Assessment using memo instructions (10 points)/Instructor Assessment using memo instructions (20 points)
- Your task for this assignment is to write a 1500-word memo that explores a policy topic of interest to you. The assignment is intentionally scaffolded and prescriptive with regard to organization and word limits as there are frequently such limits in the world of "policy writing." As stated in the objectives of the course, one of our goals is to become familiar with contemporary policy issues. Obviously, these are infinite, and ones that matter to you most may or may not be touched upon in the course. This memo is an opportunity for you to identify a pressing concern regarding education policy. You can find more information about this assignment on the Research Policy Memo Canvas page.

### **Final Policy Brief & Presentation (30%)**

- Instructor Assessment using rubric
- The final project for this course is to work with a group to co-write a policy brief on a topic of interest and co-present the substance of your brief in a live presentation in class on April 19th. Policy teams will be structured based on thematic interests determined early in the semester. With your team (see information on page 3 above), you will identify a policy recommendation in response to a specific need in your policy area. The areas will be complex and broad in scope, so part of your work will be to narrow down the possibilities and focus on a manageable and targeted recommendation. For example, if your topic is teacher evaluation, select a specific issue related to evaluation - procedures for observing instruction, for example - rather than creating a sweeping report on reforming the teacher evaluation process across the country. We will launch the teams on February 15th and you will see that there are 2 asynchronous sessions on the course calendar with time allotted for you to work with your policy team. You will likely have to find other times as a group to meet to get your work done as well. More information on the final assignment will be forthcoming.

### Final Reflection (18%)

- Self-Assessment (9 points) / Instructor Assessment (9 points)
- At the end of the course, you will write short (500-700 words) memo reflecting on your work throughout the semester. Topics for the memo will include assessing your role on your policy team, answering some reading reflection questions, and articulating any shifts or evolution in your thinking. More specific questions will be forthcoming.

### Grading Scale

The numerical equivalents for letter grades will be as follows, with students eligible to earn up to 100 points throughout the semester (see percentage breakdowns above).

A	94-100		B	84-86.99		C	74-76.99		D	64-66.99
A-	90-93.99		B-	80-83.99		C-	70-73.99		D-	61-63.99
B+	87-89.99		C+	77-79.99		D+	67-69.99		F	0-60.99

A note on your work in the course: Participation in this class is of the utmost importance. Your engagement in talking and working with partners, small groups, and the whole group is crucial to your success. Completion of assigned readings is key to the exchange of ideas and new ways of thinking that lead to an engaging and stimulating course. You are expected to carefully read and consider the guiding questions before each class if they are provided. You are encouraged to take notes on the main ideas and arguments, as well as your evolving understandings. I am interested in the quality of your participation and expect you to be mindful of our learning environment in addition to your own contributions. That is, are your contributions relevant to the discussion at hand and aimed at helping us delve more deeply into our learning? Do you listen to what others have to say and are you able to incorporate responses to others into your contributions? Do you ask questions as often as you make comments? Do you build on what other people say? Do you step back when you have participated a great deal? Do you step up when you have been especially quiet? Your participation in this course has strong potential to influence not only your experience, but also our collective learning community. I am looking forward to getting to know you through your participation and vice versa.

**Course Resources: Chronological by Course Topic, Subject to Change**

This list is meant to provide you with an at-a-glance list of the items we'll be reading throughout the semester (subject to modification). Canvas pages are organized thematically, according to the topics in the right-hand column and include guidance for reading and any activities associated with the reading. Readings are either hyperlinked or will be uploaded onto Canvas. Please note that several times in this table you'll see the instruction, "Review & begin Canvas Page." This instruction is directing you to the corresponding "Topic Page" with reading guidance and supplemental resources that accompany this list. Sometimes there will be an additional short video or web-page linked there and you will find questions to prompt your thinking, scaffold your reading, and prepare you for class discussion.

Date	Resources	Topic
Jan. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diem, Young, Welton, Cumings Mansfield, &amp; Lee (2014). <i>The intellectual landscape of critical policy analysis</i>. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27:9, 1068-1090</li> <li>• Review and begin Purpose of School Canvas Page, up to where the readings are linked</li> </ul>	Critical Policy Analysis & Purpose of School
Jan 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asynchronous, work on Policy Research Memo, due Jan 30</li> </ul>	
Feb 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayers, W., Quinn, T.; &amp; Stovall, D. (Eds). (2009). "<b>Preface</b>" in <b>Handbook of social justice in education</b>. New York, NY: Routledge.</li> <li>• Dewey, J. (1907). "<b>The school and social progress.</b>" <b>Chapter 1 in <i>The School and Society</i></b>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</li> <li>• Love, Bettina. (2019). <i>We want to do more than survive: abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom</i>. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. <b>Chapter 5: Abolitionist teaching, freedom dreaming, and black joy.</b></li> <li>• Labaree, D.F. (1997). <b>Public goods, private goods: the American struggle over educational goals.</b> <i>American Educational Research Journal</i>, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), <b>39-58.</b></li> </ul>	Purpose of School & intro to <i>A Nation at Risk</i>
Feb 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and begin Nation at Risk Canvas Page</li> <li>• The National Commission on Excellence in Education. (April, 1983). <b><i>A Nation at risk: the imperative for educational reform - a report to the nation and the Secretary of Education United States Department of Education</i></b>. Washington, D.C.</li> <li>• Mehta, J. (2013). <i>The Allure of order</i>. New York: Oxford Press. Chap. 5 <b>pp. 84-117</b></li> </ul>	<i>A Nation at Risk</i>

Feb 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and begin ESEA Canvas Page</li> <li>Cohen, D.K. &amp; Moffit, S.L. (2009). <i>The ordeal of equality: did federal regulation fix the schools?</i> Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. <b>Chapter 1: The transformation of Title I?</b> and <b>Chapter 7: Title I: past and present.</b></li> <li>Kahn, W. A. (2009). <i>The student's guide to successful project teams.</i> New York, NY: Psychology Press. <b>Chapter 1: Dimensions of the student project team &amp; Chapter 4: Team Roles &amp; Responsibilities.</b></li> </ul>	ESEA &  Policy Team Launch Day
Feb 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue ESEA Canvas Page</li> <li>Welner, K. and Burris, C. (2014). <b>NCLB's intensifying makeover: Race to the Top's troubling changes to rules, incentives, and practice.</b> Chapter 2 in Wilson, C. and Horsford, S. <i>Advancing equity and achievement in America's diverse schools.</i> New York, NY: Routledge.</li> <li>Cook-Harvey, Darling-Hammond, Lam, Mercer, and Roc. (2016). <i>Equity and ESSA: Leveraging educational opportunity through the Every Student Succeeds Act.</i></li> </ul>	ESEA
Mar 1	No Class	
Mar 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and begin School Segregation Canvas Page</li> <li>Fine, M., et al. (2005) <b>Dear Zora: A letter to Zora Neale Hurston 50 years after Brown.</b> Teachers College Record. Vol. 107, No. 3. March 2005, pp.496-528.</li> <li>Dumas, M. (2016). Against the dark: antiBlackness in education policy and discourse. <i>Theory into Practice</i>, 55(1), 11-19.</li> <li>George, J. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). The federal role and school integration: Brown's promise and present challenges.</li> </ul>	School Segregation
Mar 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannah-Jones, N. (2015, July 31). <b>The problem we all live with: part I.</b> [Audio Podcast: This American Life, 58:42 min.]. Retrieved from</li> <li>Stancil, W. (2018) <b>School segregation is not a myth.</b> The Atlantic. March 14, 2018.</li> <li>Varlas, L. (2017). Lessons from Little Rock. ASCD Education Update.</li> </ul>	School Segregation
Mar 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asynchronous, Policy Team Working Day</li> </ul>	
Mar 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and begin Punishment in Schools Canvas Page</li> <li>U.S. Department of Education, <b>Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline,</b> Washington, D.C., 2014.</li> </ul>	Punishment in Schools

Apr 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue Punishment in Schools Canvas Page</li> <li>• Choose 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Equal Justice Initiative. <b>Latest data shows black students disproportionately suspended, expelled, arrested.</b></li> <li>○ Equal Justice Initiative. <b>All children are children: challenging abusive punishment of juveniles.</b></li> <li>○ Ayers, W., Dohrn, B., &amp; Ayers, R. Eds. (2001). <i>Zero tolerance: resisting the drive for punishment in our schools</i>. New York, NY: The New Press. Excerpts: the <b>Foreword</b>, the <b>Introduction</b>, pp. <b>77-85</b>, pp. <b>126-135</b>, pp. <b>230-255</b>.</li> <li>○ Shalaby, Carla. (2017) <i>Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children in school</i>. New York: New Press. <b>Preface, “Canaries in the Mine,” pp. xv – xxiv.</b></li> <li>○ Dillard, C. (2018). <b>The school to deportation pipeline.</b> <i>Teaching Tolerance</i>. Issue 60. Fall 2018.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Punishment in Schools
Apr 12	Asynchronous, Policy Team Working Day	
Apr 19	Final Policy Team Presentations in class	
Apr 24	Final Policy Team Briefs due	



## Other Information for Students

### **Additional Course Expectations**

- **COMMUNICATIONS:** All course communications will be posted on Canvas and/or sent through your U-M email address. You are responsible for everything sent to that address. I expect that you will check your U-M email regularly, as well as our Canvas site for announcements and updates. If you use another email address, you can configure your U-M account to forward all emails to that address. Please know that while I check email regularly, I am not constantly on it. I am unlikely to be checking my email the hour before class, in the evenings, and on the weekends. Please do not expect to communicate with me at the last minute.
- **ABSENCES & TARDIES FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:** Although the University of Michigan, as an institution, does not observe religious holidays, it has long been the University's policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent.
- **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** All members of our learning community are expected to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty is detrimental to an environment that promotes and supports meaningful learning experiences. Academic dishonesty includes any action that provides an individual student with an unfair advantage, such as plagiarism, cheating, or misrepresentation. Please visit the [Rackham Graduate School policy](#) website for our expectations around these matters and for consequences for any infractions. As part of engaging with the readings and the core themes of this course, I expect you to explicitly draw on ongoing conversations in academic and public discourse in our discussions and in your writing. When you draw on ideas in others' work in your written assignments, please be sure to attribute that work correctly. For guidance, please see the American Psychological Association's *Publication Manual* or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>) which has proven to be especially helpful.

## Support & Resources

- GENERAL: Resources and support are available for students through the [Dean of Students Office](#) or [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) as well as additional [Inclusive Campus Resources](#) that help students find support and community on the U-M campus.
- GENDER IDENTITY: All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this class, we will share the name we prefer to be called and, if we choose, share the pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. Students may indicate their personal pronouns via Wolverine access, using the Gender Identity tab under Student Business. As instructors, we will do our best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.
- FOOD INSECURITY: Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or other basic needs and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (734-764-7420; [deanofstudents@umich.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@umich.edu); 609 Tappan Street) for support. Additionally, the Maize and Blue Cupboard, can be found here <https://mbc.studentlife.umich.edu/>. Its mission is, "To ensure members of the University of Michigan community – whether on a tight budget or physically restrained from getting to a grocery store – received equitable access to healthy, nutritious, and nourishing food and the ability to prepare it for themselves or others."
- COVID-19:
  - From Rackham's Website: <https://rackham.umich.edu/COVID-19/>
  - For up-to-date UM info: [U-M's coronavirus site](#) (specifically this link: <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/faqs/> for support and resources)
  - From the SOE: <https://soe.umich.edu/covid19-updates>
- ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (<https://ssd.umich.edu/>) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.