ELPS 405: Introduction to Educational Policy and Practice  
Departments of Higher Education & International Higher Education  
Loyola University - Chicago

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**PART I: GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION**

**Course Description**  
This course is intended to help students think critically about debates, research, and frameworks in contemporary higher education policy, with an emphasis on the interplay between domestic and international policy contexts. Throughout the semester, we will explore the tensions between key policy goals such as access and inclusion, accountability, and financing, as well as the consequences (intended and unintended) of those tensions. The course is not intended to provide an in-depth examination of these issues, but rather to help you become an informed and sophisticated consumer of higher education policy through two main strategies:

1. To explore the diversity that makes up the field of higher education policy. The readings for this class are intended to expose you to a variety of policy strategies, discursive styles, and purposes. In some sessions we will focus predominantly on the academic research brought to bear on policy debates, and how it is used—or not used—to shape policy agendas. However, we will also examine different types of policy documents used in domestic and international policymaking, such as issue briefs, white papers, reports, legislation, and measurement instruments.

2. To reflect on how different policy logics and truth regimes have shaped and continue to shape policymaking across institutional, state, national, and international contexts. This requires you to become familiar with leading research in the field, the different positions taken by influential policymakers (such as international organizations like the World Bank), and the repertoire of thinking tools at your disposal.

**Course Objectives**  
Upon completion of this course, you are expected to:

1. Articulate current trends in higher education policy in the US and worldwide, including salient critiques of such trends;  
2. Discern how different approaches to policy impact key issues such as quality, access, relevance, and finance in a variety of domestic and international contexts;  
3. Be able to read and think critically about an array of higher education policies; and  
4. Clearly convey your thinking about policy issues in writing;
**Course Expectations**
This class is structured as a student-centered, collaborative course. I see us as a community of scholars who are both teachers and learners at varying stages of development. As such, the class will be focused around the following learning tenets:

- Shared responsibility among all learners (both teachers and students) for constructing and making sense of knowledge within a community of practice;
- An appreciation of and support for multiple perspectives on knowledge and practice;
- An emphasis on the critical role that peers play in the learning process, especially as it relates to helping one another decode, make meaning, and promote understanding of the subject.

I expect each of you to take an active role in your learning both inside and outside our virtual classroom. My hope is that you will not merely try to complete the readings and assignments for the sake of completion but that you will take the time to critically read course content, write assignments, and engage in forum discussions with your peers. Failure to participate or complete activities in a timely, professional manner will likely hinder your achievement of the objectives for this course.

**Student Feedback**
Throughout the semester, I welcome your input about course-related issues. If you have comments or suggestions about the class and how it might be improved, please do let me know—do not wait until the end of the semester. I take student feedback seriously and am open to make adjustments as far as circumstances allow.

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**PART II: CLASS RESOURCES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATIONS**

**Email/Sakai**
Email will be used as the primary mode of correspondence for this course. As such, it is imperative that you activate your Loyola University account and check it often. Please also check your Loyola spam mail and mail foundry to ensure course related messages are not misdirected.

Additionally, Sakai will be used as a source of continual updates about course material. You can expect that all emails to the instructor will be responded to within 48 hours (if not sooner), not including weekends.

**Given the emphasis on email and Sakai communications, please make sure you:**

- Check your email at least 3 times per week (more often is better).
- **Be patient.** Don’t expect an immediate response when sending a message. Generally, two days (not including weekends) is considered a reasonable amount of time to receive a reply.
- Include “subject” headings and use something that is descriptive and refers to a particular assignment or topic.
- Be courteous and considerate. Being honest and expressing yourself freely is important, but being considerate of others online is just as important as in the classroom.
• Make every effort to be clear. Online communication lacks the nonverbal cues that fill in much of the meaning in face-to-face communication.
• Do not use all caps. This makes the message hard to read and is considered “shouting.” Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation (you may want to compose in a word processor, then cut and past the message into the discussion or email).
• Break up large blocks of text into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.
• Sign your messages.

Note: When sending emails through the Sakai system, please make sure you check the “Send a copy of this message to recipient’s email address.”

Required Texts (Available at the Loyola University Bookstore)


In addition to this textbook, I have assigned a number of required readings that are available on the Sakai course website. While most readings should be immediately available, I may adapt some of the content for later sessions based on class needs. If this is the case, I’ll let you know ahead of time.

Teaching Materials
• Course readings
• Semi-moderated forum discussions on Sakai
• Written assignments to develop research skills, deepen understanding of higher education policy, and enhance written communication skills

Course Assignments
You will be expected to complete the following assignments:

1. Participation (25%)
Participation is essential in an online asynchronous class environment. You are expected to participate through questions, critiques, illustrations, suggestions, and other forms of constructive feedback. I will assess your participation by the “quality,” not the frequency of comments. In this case, quality is defined as thoughtful, respectful, and insightful questions and comments that serve to strengthen the ensuing dialogue. All Forum conversations will be reviewed to assist in determining your class participation and reading comprehension.

• For this course the week begins on Saturday. On Friday nights I will pose prompt questions about the upcoming week’s readings to help guide your responses.
• You will have Saturday through Wednesday to complete the necessary readings for the course. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you have as you are completing the reading.
• On Wednesdays you will be expected to post to the discussion board. A late posting is considered any posting made after midnight on Wednesday CST.
• On Thursday you are expected to read fellow students’ posts and respond to one another. Again, a late response is considered any posting made after midnight on Thursday CST.
• You are welcome to supplement your postings (so long as links are given via the Sakai tools) with videos, audio recordings, and/or pictures.

I will also participate in the forum conversations as needed. In addition, I will provide a summary of our weekly virtual conversations. I do this to try to wrap up each week’s work, in order to provide a unified to the various paths the conversation may take. My summaries are not intended to be definitive, but rather a provisional summary that may well lead to further conversation in the following weeks.

2. **State or country background paper (25% - Due date to be determined by student)**

For this assignment, you will write a document that provides a clear and concise overview of the current state of higher education in a given state (US) or country. In writing this paper, keep in mind an audience that is unfamiliar with a) higher education systems in general; and b) the target country/state. In other words, your paper should be written in such a way that a lay person could learn about higher education in general and how higher education plays out in your target country/state. The paper should be 6-8 pages (excluding citations), double-spaced, and APA-formatted.

Background papers (or background sections in broader reports) are an essential part of most policy documents. The purpose of this assignment is to help you develop skills in a) analyzing a higher education system as a whole; b) making difficult decisions about what information to include and what information to leave out when working within strict space limitations (a must in policy writing); and clearly and effectively condensing information from a variety of sources intended for a broad audience.

The background paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1) It should clearly identify the geopolitical entity under consideration (e.g., Kansas, Mexico, Oman);
2) It should identify key facets of the higher education system in the entity (e.g., number and types of institutions, enrollments, student composition, main financing strategies, governance, main challenges);
3) It should make appropriate use of supporting literature and evidence on the issue (e.g. higher education reports, national data, academic research);
4) It should be written cognizant of the audience for whom the brief is intended and include an executive summary or abstract;
5) It must be well-written throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

3. **Policy/issue brief (25% - Due date to be determined by student)**

You will write a policy brief addressing a pressing policy issue, topic, or problem, in the higher education context identified in the first assignment (e.g. Arizona; China). The purpose of the policy brief is to help you deepen your understanding of a contemporary higher education issue in a format that is commonly used in the policy world. Your brief should be between 8-10 pages (excluding citations), double-spaced, and APA-formatted. It should provide a concise yet thorough overview of the topic at hand and its main facets in your chosen context.

Some possible topics include, but are not limited to:

Performance-based funding
Financial aid issues
Governance
Student access, outcomes
Affirmative action, equity issues
STEM training, outcomes
Changes in financing structures
Student debt
Accreditation
Quality assurance

The policy brief will be evaluated using the following criteria:
1) It should focus on a higher education policy issue that is relevant to the society in your target context.
2) It should provide a brief statement of the policy problem.
3) It should include a discussion of the different facets of the policy issue, with appropriate subheadings.
4) It must reflect the course content.
5) It should make appropriate use of supporting literature and evidence on the issue (drawing on at least 6-10 sources) and you own scholarly reflection on the issue.
6) It should be written cognizant of the audience for whom the brief is intended and include an executive summary.
7) It must be well-written throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

In order to ensure the scope and feasibility of the policy brief is within the parameters of the assignment, a two-paragraph proposal of the brief is due at least three weeks ahead of your chosen contract date.
You are responsible for submitting your proposal to the instructor on time.

4. Consolidating Op-ed Essay (25% - Due May 29 by 7:00pm CST)

An important venue to discuss policy matters is the 800-word opinion-editorial. Distinct from academic writing, the persuasive op-ed format is a succinct way of advocating for an idea or position for mass audiences. Your assignment is to write an op-ed essay on the main higher education policy issue/context identified in the previous two assignments. Notice the important difference in style and content between these documents! While the policy brief takes a detached, scholarly approach to presenting information, the op-ed demands that you take a stand in relation to a particular policy issue, and try to convince people to embrace a given viewpoint on the issue.

The purpose of this assignment is for you to express and support your opinion on a complex policy issue in a brief, persuasive manner. For example, for your chosen topic, you may 1) suggest a new piece of higher education legislation, 2) recommend how higher education policies currently being considered could be improved upon, 3) recommend a change in existing laws, rules, or regulations that impact higher education, or 4) recommend a change in procedures that affect the conduct of higher education policy.

In preparing for this assignment, consider where you would want to see your op-ed published and select and attach a copy of an editorial you admire from that publication. Use the selected editorial as a model for your own. Likewise, you are encouraged to read op-eds from the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, Diverse Issues in Higher Education, and Dr. Marybeth Gasman’s How to write an opinion essay and why you should do it now (https://www.gse.upenn.edu/system/files/u225/Opinion%20Essay.pdf).
The op-ed piece will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. **700-800 words** (strict limit)
2. 12-point font and double space
3. APA style
4. Take care with crafting your opening hook, placement of thesis statement, length of sentences and closing punch line.
5. Keep intended audience of the publication in mind, especially regarding your use of academic jargon.
6. You are encouraged to rely on the two previous assignments as background information in composing your op-ed piece.
7. Take a stand: make a specific recommendation.
8. An “A” op-ed does the following:
   - **Style:** Writing is engaging and effective for its intended purpose and audience; reflects attention to strategic and varied use of syntax and diction.
   - **Language Conventions:** Smoothly integrates sources using a variety of methods (quote, paraphrase, summary); contains very few or no errors with respect to language conventions.

**PART III: LUC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DISPOSITIONS**

**Conceptual Framework**
A conceptual framework that emphasizes “Professionalism in Service of Social Justice” guides instructional, extracurricular, and professional activities at Loyola’s School of Education. The Loyola School of Education faculty are dedicated to promoting professionalism in service of social justice by developing students’ knowledge, skills, ethics, and service to improve educational opportunities for all members of society. This course contributes to the realization of this framework by helping students to:

- Develop an understanding of, and ability to reflect critically on, historical and contemporary issues within higher education;
- Reflect on how higher education actors can address these issues in a just society;
- Strengthen a personal and professional commitment to social justice;
- Foster an appreciation of and respect for diverse perspectives, cultures, lifestyles, ways of knowing, etc., and a commitment to serving others.

Additionally, students will demonstrate the following competencies related to analytical inquiry:

- The ability to develop and support reasonable and logically sound interpretations;
- The ability to analyze various organizational, curricular, fiscal, legal, cultural, and historical structures, models, policies, and professional practices from multiple points of view and theoretical perspectives;
- The ability to continually assess and improve one’s own analytical abilities.

**IDEA Outcomes**
The following learning outcomes are considered either essential or important based on the IDEA course rating system:

- Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods)
• Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
• Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team
• Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course

Dispositions
All students in the course will be assessed across the following dispositional areas: Professionalism, Fairness, and the Belief that all students can learn. The rubric can be found in Appendix D of the syllabus and the assessments will be conducted at the end of the semester through LiveText.

Academic Honesty
Academic honesty is an expression of interpersonal justice, responsibility and care, applicable to Loyola University faculty, students, and staff, which demands that the pursuit of knowledge in the university community be carried out with sincerity and integrity. The School of Education’s Policy on Academic Integrity can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_integrity.shtml. For additional academic policies and procedures refer to: http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_main.shtml

Diversity
Loyola’s School of Education is committed to the value of diversity in all of its courses. This course presents and encourages diverse perspectives on evaluation and assessment in higher education, as well as scholarship about how to design evaluation plans that serve diverse groups of stakeholders.

Accessibility
Students who have disabilities which they believe entitle them to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) office. To request accommodations, students must schedule an appointment with an SSWD coordinator. Students should contact SSWD at least four weeks before their first semester or term at Loyola. Returning students should schedule an appointment within the first two weeks of the semester or term. The University policy on accommodations and participation in courses is available at: http://www.luc.edu/sswd/

EthicsLine Reporting Hotline
Loyola University Chicago has implemented EthicsLine Reporting Hotline, through a third party internet & telephone hotline provider, to provide you with an automated and anonymous way to report activities that may involve misconduct or violations of Loyola University policy. You may file an anonymous report here on-line or by dialing 855-603-6988. (within the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico)

The University is committed to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct as an integral part of its mission of expanding knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith. To achieve this goal, the University relies on each community member's ethical behavior, honesty, integrity and good judgment. Each community member should demonstrate respect for the rights of others.
www.luc.edu/ethicsline

Technology
This course uses instructional technology in the classroom and encourages the use of information technology in the learning process. We will use Loyola’s Sakai course management system (CMS) as a
class communication tool and as a depository for important course documents. Additionally, we will use
the student response system as a pedagogical tool to assess learning in real-time and encourage student
participation. PowerPoint, multimedia, SPSS, and AdobeConnect will also be used throughout the course.

Electronic Communication Policies and Guidelines
The School of Education faculty, students and staff respect each other’s rights, privacy and access to
electronic resources, services, and communications while in the pursuit of academic and professional
growth, networking and research. All members of the university community are expected to demonstrate
the highest standards of integrity, communication, and responsibility while accessing and utilizing
technology, information resources, and computing facilities. A link to the Loyola University Chicago and
School of Education official policies and guidelines can be found at:
http://www.luc.edu/media/luedu/education/pdfs/SOE_Cyberbullying_Policy.pdf

PART IV: COURSE OUTLINE

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<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/8/2015</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to class</td>
<td>No assigned readings; view introductory video on Sakai/Panopto</td>
<td>Introductory blog entry by Feb 14.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/14/2015</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Foundations of Policy Analysis</td>
<td>Simons, Olssen, and Peters (2009), Ch. 1 and 2—in textbook.</td>
<td>Respond to prompt questions by 2/18; respond to classmates by 2/19</td>
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<td>2/21/2015</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intro to types of policy documents</td>
<td>Check Sakai Resources folder for most updated examples.</td>
<td>Respond to prompt questions by 2/25; respond to classmates by 2/26</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/28/2015</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spring break, no class</td>
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*Open assignment due date (Thursday) |
| 3/14/2015| 6       | Policy Shapers               | Diaz-Barriga and Torres-Olave (2009)
Bastedo (2009)
Rhoades (2014) | Respond to prompt questions by 3/18; respond to classmates by 3/19
*Open assignment due date (Thursday) |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section/Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
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<td>Deil-Amen (2014)</td>
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<td>4/4/2015</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Easter holiday, no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/23/2015</td>
<td>Final Op/Ed due 5/29/2015 by 7:00 pm CST</td>
<td><em>Open assignment due date (Thursday)</em></td>
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