**Seminar in Education Policy I**

**PLCY 830-001**

**Fall Semester, 2011**

**Wednesday 10:00-12:50**

**Douglas Lee Lauen (lead faculty)**

Assistant Professor of Public Policy

**Ashu Handa**

Professor of Public Policy

**Gary T. Henry**

Duncan and Rebecca Kyle MacRae Professor of Public Policy

**The Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Education Policy Research**

The study of education policy involves examining student learning, teaching, the formal and informal organization of schooling, the political and institutional environment in which schools are embedded, and the costs and benefits of reform, to mention just a few important aspects. Due to the complexity of the educational process, policymakers often seek guidance from academic and policy researchers about policy design and effectiveness. By the end of this two-semester sequence of coursework, the goal is for students to have some answers ready should the occasion arise when a policymaker asks: “What Works?”

A key presumption of this course is that there is value to studying education from a disciplinary perspective. In order to build scientific knowledge, one needs a base of theory to build hypotheses and methods to objectively evaluate empirical evidence, both of which take time and strong disciplinary norms to develop. Therefore, this course will expose students to a variety of perspectives from three disciplines: sociology, economics, and political science.

Because the study of education policy problems are by their very nature complex and cut across the domains of several academic disciplines, however, they often require interdisciplinary approaches to understand and solve them. This presents an important puzzle: how can we maintain the benefits of the theoretical and methodological rigor that comes from examining education from one disciplinary perspective, while avoiding the costs of academic insularity? These costs come in many forms including the inability to communicate with policymakers; privileging research with theoretical implications, but no policy implications; and ignoring how perspectives from other disciplines could enrich the analysis of our own. We will return to this puzzle repeatedly during the semester in an attempt to understand how we can enrich our study of education while not losing the benefits of a particular disciplinary perspective.

**Goal**

To create insightful, knowledgeable, and effective education policy researchers

**Objectives**

For students to develop

* Knowledge about sociological, economic, and political perspectives on education
* Ability to critique existing theoretical perspectives and empirical research about education
* Capacity to draw policy implications from academic research
* Skills in posing and researching important education policy research questions

**Course Expectations**

* Produce a cogent synthesis of existing literature on an education policy problem and propose a research project that has a high potential to shed light on important gaps in our understanding of this problem (40%)
* Work constructively in a group and present the results of a school value added data project (20%)
* Summarize and critique theoretical and empirical work in a seminar presentation (20%)
* Participate regularly and constructively in class discussion (20%)

**Schedule**

15 classes meetings on the following dates and with the following instructors:

1. 8/24 – Lauen
2. 8/31 – Lauen
3. 9/7 – Lauen
4. 9/14 – Lauen
5. 9/21 – Lauen
6. 9/28 – Handa
7. 10/5 – Handa
8. 10/12 – Lauen
9. 10/19 – Lauen
10. 10/26 – Lauen
11. 11/2 – Henry
12. 11/9 – Lauen
13. 11/16 – Henry
14. 11/30 – Lauen
15. 12/7 – Lauen

**Preliminary schedule of topics (subject to instructor availability)**

* Note: this schedule includes 14 topics for 15 slots, which leaves the option of some flexibility and perhaps one additional topic.
* PDFs of all articles and book chapters will be provided.
* It is your responsibility to purchase two books: Henig’s *Spin Cycle*, and Bryk et al’s *Lessons from Chicago* (see below for full citations)

**Course Introduction**

Gamoran, Adam “Disciplinary foundations of education policy research” in Sykes, Gary, Barbara L. Schneider, David Nathan Plank, and Timothy G. Ford. 2009. *Handbook of education policy research*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 9.

Labaree, David F. 1997. "Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals." *American Educational Research Journal* 34:39-81.

**Sociology**

1. *Social mobility and social reproduction – theory & research*

Davis, K., & Moore, W. E. (1945). Some principles of stratification. *American Sociological Review, 10*(2), 242-249.

Collins, R. 1971. "Functional And Conflict Theories Of Educational Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 36:1002-&.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1983. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, edited by John G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press. [Also reprinted in Granovetter & Swedberg, *The Sociology of Economic Life*.]

Hout, M., & Beller, E. (2006). Intergenerational social mobility: the United States in comparative perspective. *The Future of Children, 16*(2), 19-36.

*Optional*

DiMaggio, Paul J. 1979. "Review Essay: On Pierre Bourdieu." *American Journal of Sociology* 84:1460-1474.

1. *Social organization of schooling – what do schools do, how do they distribute learning?*

Bidwell, Charles E, and John D Kasarda. 1980. "Conceptualizing and Measuring the Effects of School and Schooling." *American Journal of Education* 88:401-430.

Lee, V. E., & Bryk, A. S. (1989). A Multilevel Model of the Social Distribution of High-School Achievement. *Sociology of Education, 62*(3), 172-192.

Gamoran, A. (1992). The variable effects of high school tracking. *American Sociological Review, 57*(6), 812-828.

Tyson, Karolyn, William Jr. Darity, and Domini Castellino. 2005. "It's Not "A Black Thing": Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement." *American Sociological Review* 70:582-605.

1. *Contextual effects – theory*

Dreeben, Robert. 2000. "Structural Effects in Education: A History of an Idea." in *Handbook of the Sociology of Education*, edited by Maureen Hallinan. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Raudenbush, S. W., & Bryk, A. S. (2002). *Hierarchical Linear Models* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Chapters 1 (pp 3-9 only), 2, and 5.

1. *Contextual effects – applications – school value added*

Data project presentations – teams of students will present results from school value added models. Data and programming code will be provided by the instructor.

**Economics**

1. *The household economic model of school decisions: Inputs, outputs, and the demand for education (Handa)*

Theory

Becker, Gary. 1965. “A Theory of the Allocation of Time.” *Economic Journal* 75:493-517.

Strauss, John and Duncan Thomas. 1995. “Human Resources: Empirical Modeling of Household and Family Decisions.” In J. Behrman and T.N. Srinivasan (eds) *Handbook of Development Economics* Vol.3A, Amsterdam: North-Holland Press., chapter 34.

Example

Andrew Houtenville & Karen Conway. 2008. “Parental Effort, School Resources & Student Achievement.” *Journal of Human Resources* 43: 437-453.

1. *Production and demand for cognitive achievement: Dynamics, estimation and identification (Handa)*

Background

Hanushek, Eric. 1986. “The Economics of Schooling: Production and Efficiency in Public Schools.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 24: 1142-1177.

Todd, P. & K.Wolpin. 2003. “On the Specification and Estimation of the Production Function for Cognitive Achievement.” *Economic Journal* 113:F3-F33.

Applications

Petra Todd & K. Wolpin. 2007. “The Production of Cognitive Achievement in Children: Home, School, and Racial Test Score Gaps.” *Journal of Human Capital* 1:91-136.

Angrist, J. and Victor Lavy. 1997. “Using Maimonides’ Rule to Estimate the Effect of Class Size on Scholastic Achievement.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 114: 533-575.

Alderman, Harold, Hans Hoogeveen & Mariacristina Rossi. 2009. “Preschool Nutrition and Subsequent Schooling Attainment: Longitudinal Evidence from Tanzania.” *Economic Development & Cultural Change*. 57: 239-260.

1. *Teacher value added*

Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica, 73*(2), 417-458.

Rothstein, J. (2010). Teacher Quality in Educational Production: Tracking, Decay, and Student Achievement. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 125*(1), 175-214.

Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2008). Estimating teacher impacts on student achievement: An experimental evaluation: National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge, Mass., USA.

1. *Performance incentives for teachers – wise policy?*

Koretz, D. M. (2002). Limitations in the use of achievement tests as measures of educators' productivity. *Journal of Human Resources, 37*(4), 752-777.

Harris, D. N. (2009). Would accountability based on teacher value added be smart policy? An examination of the statistical properties and policy alternatives. *Education Finance and Policy, 4*(4), 319-350.

Harris, D. N. and Hill, H.(2009) point-counterpoint on “Should Value Added Models be Used to Evaluate Teachers?” Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 28(4), 692-712.

1. *Performance incentives for teachers – evidence*

Podgursky, M. J., & Springer, M. G. (2007). Teacher performance pay: A review. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 26*(4), 909-950.

Glewwe, P., Ilias, N., & Kremer, M. (2010). Teacher Incentives. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, 2*(3), 205-227.

Springer, M. G., Hamilton, L., McCaffrey, D. F., Ballou, D., Le, V. N., Pepper, M., et al. (2010). *Teacher Pay for Performance: Experimental Evidence from the Project on Incentives in Teaching*. Nashville, TN: National Center on Performance Incentives, Vanderbilt University.

Lauen, D. (2011) “Cash or Credit? The Effects of Teacher Performance Pay and Public Accountability. Working paper.”

**Political Science**

1. *Education Politics – school choice (Henry)*

Witte, J. F. 1998. "The Milwaukee voucher experiment." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 20:229-251.

Schneider, M., P. Teske, M. Marschall, and C. Roch. 1998. "Shopping for schools: In the land of the blind, the one-eyed parent may be enough." *American Journal of Political Science* 42:769-793.

Chubb, J. E., and T. M. Moe. 1988. "Politics, Markets, and the Organization of Schools." *American Political Science Review* 82:1065-1087.

1. *Charter school politics*

Henig, J. R. (2008). Spin cycle: How research is used in policy debates: The case of charter schools: Russell Sage Foundation Publications.

1. *The politics of education reform – policy diffusion (Henry)*

Doyle, W. R. 2006. "Adoption of merit-based student grant programs: An event history analysis." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28:259-285.

McLendon, M. K., J. C. Hearn, and R. Deaton. 2006. "Called to account: Analyzing the origins and spread of state performance-accountability policies for higher education." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28:1-24.

Bali, V. A., D. Anagnostopoulos, and R. Roberts. 2005. "Toward a political explanation of grade retention." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 27:133-155.

Mintrom, M. 1997. "Policy entrepreneurs and the diffusion of innovation." *American Journal of Political Science* 41:738-770.

**School Reform**

1. *Lessons from Chicago*

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2009). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*: University of Chicago Press.