PUBLIC POLICY IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
Course Number EDUC 764/PUBPOL 732/POLSCI 734
Winter Semester, 2016

Location       2334 School of Education Building
Time            Tuesdays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 pm
Instructor      Awilda Rodriguez
                 Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
                 University of Michigan
                 2117-F School of Education Building
                 telephone: 734-615-9641
e-mail: awilda@umich.edu
Office hours    By appointment, to be arranged via email.

Course Structure and Objectives: This course is designed to introduce students to the debates, research, and frameworks that shape public policy in higher education. EDUC 764 is divided into three areas. First, we will situate the public policy process in the higher education context and explore the conceptual and theoretical frameworks used to understand it. We then examine factors that influence access to higher education and the various stakeholders who finance it – both from an historical and contemporary perspective. We will then review the contemporary practices, procedures, and protocols used to evaluate the effectiveness of higher education policies. This will be followed by an examination of the policy levers that hold institutions accountable, provide transparency, and evaluate policy objectives.

This course is crafted to provide students with foundational tools to study or work in higher education public policy through the combination of the assigned readings, lectures, classroom discussion, and writing assignments. Students will increase their understanding of the various tensions and tradeoffs made in order to craft policy; use the models that describe those processes; and examine the various structures and actors. Moreover, students will gain an understanding of the historical underpinnings of some of the most important higher education policies. In addition, they will be able to clearly articulate current policy challenges and proposed solutions from a variety of perspectives. Students will also become aware of the variety of sources used to discuss, debate, evaluate, and influence higher education policy. Finally, students will be able to succinctly discuss a variety of pressing higher education issues and gain experience presenting and defending their ideas.

The readings for EDUC 764 are in a variety of formats (e.g., scholarly journal articles, book chapters, policy reports) designed to cover an array of interests. As the field of public policy lends itself to debate, the readings and in class discussions are intended to represent a variety of viewpoints and interests. The resources provided alongside the weekly readings (demarcated “[Resource]”) as well as in the classroom allow students to further probe particular interests.

Policy on Accommodating Students with Special Needs: If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and

1 Segments of this syllabus are modified from Stephen DesJardin’s Winter 2013 EDUC 764 syllabus.
progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodation through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

Policy on Diversity: The materials and activities presented throughout the course intended to be respectful of our diverse world. I encourage you to provide suggestions and feedback on how we can incorporate new materials to improve the course for all students. The University of Michigan has a number of affirmative action policies and these policies can be found at: http://www.umich.edu/~hraa/oie/

Religious Observation: This class observes University defined holidays (such as Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Fall break). Because other days may be of more significance than a University-designated holiday, please inform me as soon as possible if a class day or due date for a class assignment conflicts with your observance of a holiday important to you. I will work with you to accommodate your needs.

Academic Integrity: Operating under the highest standards of academic integrity is implied and assumed. Academic integrity includes issues of content and process. Treating the course and class participants with respect, honoring class expectations and assignments, and seeking to derive maximum learning from the experience reflect some of the process aspects of academic integrity. Claiming ownership only of your own unique work and ideas, providing appropriate attribution of others’ material and quotes, clearly indicating all paraphrasing, and providing the trail to the original source of any idea are key components to the content of academic integrity. Aspire to the spirit and highest representation of academic integrity. I would also encourage you to read the University’s General Catalogue, especially the sections that detail your rights as a student and the section that discusses the University’s expectations of you as a student. (See http://www.rackham.umich.edu/StudentInfo/Publications.)

Course Conduct: The format of this course is designed to leverage the opinions, experiences, and knowledge of classroom participants in order to produce and safe and robust learning environment. In other words, we will all learn from each other. Therefore, students are expected to adhere to the following guidelines² for classroom participation:

1. **Confidentiality.** We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange. (No live tweeting!)
2. **Respect others’ rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own.**
3. **Challenge the idea and not the person.** If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
4. **Be courteous.** Don’t interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
5. **Support your statements.** Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
6. **Tone of voice and body language** can be intimidating, can silence others, provoke others, or hurt others. (No eye rolling permitted.)

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on five different components – classroom participation, three short papers, one opinion piece, a policy brief, and a presentation, described below. Final grades will be on an A-F scale.

- **Classroom Participation (20%)**: Class attendance is required. Frequent tardiness and/or absences will negatively affect your grade. Students are expected to come prepared to class by critically reading the indicated material in the course schedule, reflecting on the material

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² Source: UM Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)
using the guided questions, and having comments or questions prepared for class. While in class, students are expected to engage in classroom discussion and be respectful of presenters. Cell phones and other noise-making devices should be silenced and stored during class time.

**Short Papers (20%)**: Students will write two short analytic papers addressing the previous week’s topic and is to be submitted by 11:59PM of class day. In other words, if a student is submitting a short paper addressing the topic on Week 6, it is due at 11:59 PM on Week 7. Students may select topics after Week 4. Students are expected to critically engage an issue that came out of the reading, lecture, and classroom discussion. Students should include a discussion of (a) a major policy challenge; (b) the stakeholders; (c) policy solutions that have been implemented or proposed to address the problem; (d) tradeoffs of each solution. This assignment should not be approached as a summary of the assigned readings or reflective piece, and is not limited to the materials assigned for class. This assignment allows (a) me to gauge students’ understanding of the content and (b) students to engage with the reading and communicate their ideas. Students may submit the papers on two topics of their choosing. These papers will be no longer than 3 pages double-spaced and formatted in APA style.

**Opinion Piece (10%)**: One common way to communicate ideas on public policy matters is through the 800-word opinion-editorial. The purpose of this assignment is to have students express and support their opinion on a complex policy issue in a brief manner. Distinct from academic writing, the persuasive op-ed format is a succinct way of advocating for an idea or position for mass audiences. Students are expected to produce an opinion piece between 750 to 800 words on a topic of their choosing (after Week 4); and are required to use evidence to support their claims. In preparation, students 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). Similar to the short papers, the deadline is 11:59PM of class day, the following week. For example, if you wanted to write your op-ed on Week 6’s topic, you must turn in your op-ed by 11:59PM on the Tuesday of Week 7.

**Policy Brief (30%)**: Students are expected to work in pairs to write a fifteen page double-spaced APA-formatted policy brief (excluding citations) addressing a pressing higher education public policy issue due on April 12th, 2016 at 11:59PM. The purpose of the policy brief is to provide students with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of a contemporary higher education issue in a format that is commonly used in the policy world. Students will identify a policy problem and either recommend a new or change to an existing higher education policy. For example, you may 1) suggest a new piece of higher education legislation, 2) recommend how higher education legislation 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. The topic must be approved by the instructor before students draft their brief.

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 February 16th, 2016 at 11:59PM.
PM. Be sure to state the problem and the intended policy solution. The final proposal (no more than one page) for the policy topic you intend to pursue is due on March 8th, 2016 at 11:59 PM. I will provide feedback in between these dates.

Some possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Performance-based funding
- Activity-based budgeting
- Federal and state financial aid issues
- National and state education goals
- Student access
- Student outcomes
- Affirmative action
- FERPA/Student privacy issues
- Title IX/College athletics
- State- or Regional Accreditation
- State Authorization
- Consumer Information
- International education issues
- Technology transfer
- Federal and state financing
- Instructional cost studies
- Student debt
- Unfunded mandates
- Private college financing
- Tax status of colleges/universities
- Program and institutional
- College Ratings Plan
- DREAM Act
- Veteran Benefits

The paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1) It should focus on a higher education policy issue that is of some importance to society.
2) It must reflect the course content.
3) It should provide a brief statement of the policy problem.
4) It should include a discussion of the procedural and political considerations/implications involved in making the policy change.
5) It should address the potential arguments that could be made against your proposal and examine and evaluate possible alternative solutions.
6) It should make appropriate use of supporting literature and evidence on the issue (drawing on at least 6-10 sources) and the student’s own scholarly reflection on the issue.
7) It should be written cognizant of the audience for whom the brief is intended and include an executive summary.
8) It must be well-written throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

Policy Brief Presentation (20%): Students are required to do a ten-minute presentation on their policy briefs in-class on April 12th, 2016. Handouts and/or visual aids are recommended. Please note that the time limit will be strictly enforced. More information about effective policy briefings will be shared with you as the semester proceeds.
Course Schedule & Weekly Assignments

I. The Public Policy Process & Theory

**Week 1**  
**January 12th**

**An introduction to the course:** This class will serve as an introduction to the course, expectations, and classroom participants.

No readings assigned.

**Week 2**  
**January 19th**

**An introduction to public policy**


**Week 3**  
**January 26th**

**Through the lens of public policy theory**


**Week 4**  
**February 2nd**

**Influencing Postsecondary Public Policy**


II. Access and Affordability

Week 5
February 9th

The Postsecondary Pipeline - The Demand-Side of Access


Week 6
February 16th
Building the system - The supply-side of access


**Week 7**  
**February 23rd**  

**College Affordability - Tuition**


**Week 8**  
**March 1st**  

**Spring Break – No Class**

**Week 9**  
**March 8th**  

**College Affordability – Financial Aid**


**Week 10  
March 15th  
Higher Education Finance**


III. Outcomes and Accountability

Week 11
March 22nd

Student Outcomes - College Completion & Learning


**Week 12**

**March 29th**

**Accountability & Consumer Information**

Dougherty, K., Natow, R.S., Bork, R.H., Jones, S.M., Vega, B.E. (2013). Accounting for Higher Education Accountability: Political origins of State Performance Funding for Higher Education. Teacher's College Record, 115(January), pp 1-50


**Week 13**

**April 5th**

**Evaluation of higher education policies**


**Week 14**  Policy Brief Presentations

April 12th

No assigned reading.