Education 764: Public Policy and Postsecondary Education (Winter 2006)

Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan School of Education

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Class: Tuesdays, 1-4pm, SEB

Course Description:

Intended primarily for graduate students in higher education and public policy, this course will enable students to describe and interrogate contemporary public policy issues confronting American higher education. Selected policy issues will be probed in depth, drawing upon scholarly sources as well as public reports.

This course is cross-listed as Public Policy 732 and Political Science 734.

Objectives:

The primary aim of the seminar is to increase student understanding of contemporary public policy issues in higher education and the processes of policy advocacy and adoption. Students will gain a comprehension of the interaction and tension between and among higher education leaders, the media, and state and federal policymakers.

Upon completion of the seminar, students will be able to:

1. Understand some basic theories of policy making in the United States.
2. Understand the methods used to study policy, and to be a literate reader of policy analysis papers in higher education.
3. Articulate the political processes that constrain and facilitate policymaking.
4. Discuss the difficulties of policy implementation and various strategies for avoiding pitfalls.
5. Demonstrate expertise in at least one contemporary policy issue in higher education.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation. As in any doctoral course, students and faculty need to be co-owners of the class and collectively responsible for its quality and outcomes. I will take responsibility for the overall design and direction of the course and for the academic requirements, but the course will be facilitated as a seminar or inquiry in which all
participants hold themselves and each other accountable for a strong and rich intellectual enterprise and dialogue.

Your attendance is essential to a successful collective experience. The format of the class requires that each person come prepared to take an active role in class. This means not only having read the assigned materials, but also being prepared to discuss the salient issues, questions, and problems emerging from the readings, to utilize your knowledge and professional experiences in addressing the readings and any class activities, case problems, etc. Class participation also involves opening oneself to challenge and to be challenged by the ideas and topics of the session. The quality of your class participation is worth 20% of your final grade.

Research Paper. The intent of this assignment is to give you a chance to prepare your own analysis of a policy issue in postsecondary education. There are a number of possibilities of this paper, including a policy evaluation, empirical research project, literature review, case study (analytical or pedagogical), or analysis of media coverage. This paper will be approximately 25 pages of text (double-spaced, not including appendices or bibliography). I will provide you with feedback throughout the process. This paper can be written by individual students or in groups up to three.

1. A brief description of the topic will be due in class on February 14.

2. Students should seek out the instructor as needed through the paper-writing process.

3. The final paper will be due by March 31. Copies will be provided in class for all students in the course to read prior to the presentations.

4. The final portion of this project is a written critique of another student’s paper, to be provided to both the student and the instructor. You will also be responsible for leading off the Q&A session after the presentation. This is due April 18 (60% of grade).

Presentation. Each student group will make a presentation to the class about the policy paper they have written and the major analytical issues that the paper addresses. These will be approximately 15 minutes each, with 10-15 minutes for questions, similar to an academic conference. These will be April 4 and 18 (20% of grade).

Policies on Late Papers and Missed Classes

Late papers are accepted for up to one week, with a penalty of half a grade, regardless of reason. The grade penalty is non-negotiable, because the instructor’s shriveled little heart is made of tar. Missed classes will also reduce the class participation grade, also regardless of reason, but missing one class will not do irreparable harm. Students who miss four class sessions, for any reason, will need to withdraw from the course.
Course Text:


Additional Readings

The remainder of the course readings are available electronically through University Reserves. They are also available for purchase in an Excel coursepack. Please download and print out these articles at your own convenience. If you choose to use reserves, you may find it useful to have the readings bound or otherwise organized for the course. Starred readings are optional.

The URL for electronic reserves is here:


Course Schedule

*Part I: Understanding Policy*

January 10: Introduction to the Course

January 17: Introduction to Policy Issues


January 24: Understanding Governance & Political Context

Special Guest: Cynthia Wilbanks


January 31: Political Context & Policymaking

Stone, Policy Paradox, whole book.

Part II: Analyzing Policy Issues in Higher Education

February 7: College Access


Read one:

**February 14: State & Federal Finance and Implications**


**February 21: Financial Aid: Merit & Need-Based**


March 7: Understanding College Costs


March 14: College Admissions


March 28: Remedial Education


April 4: Emerging Developments: Policy and the Social Contract


AERA WEEK

April 18: Final Class Presentations

Student papers as assigned.

Revised: January 4, 2006