

Education policy modeling workshop

Course #90-862 (12 units), Spring 2015, Semester 2

Wednesdays 1:30 - 4:20pm

Hamburg Hall Room 236

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Course description

Many believe education reforms are essential to retaining U.S. competitiveness in the world. Schools and school systems are under great pressure to improve student outcomes and align them to the demands of a global, knowledge driven economy. Some even view education as "the civil rights issue of our time".

Yet there is serious disagreement about what actually needs to be done, how best to do it, and even what problem(s) really need to be solved. Contentious debates continue about accountability, funding, curriculum, school design, educator effectiveness, and even the aims of public education - debates fueled by related questions of power, money, government, economics, race, class and gender.

This workshop offers an engaging taste of the real-world of education policy reform. Participants will dig deeply into the topic of school design and turnaround - what to do about the lowest performing schools in the country. This topic is central in the federal effort to update the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and is an intersection point for many other relevant education policy debates - from school funding to educator effectiveness.

Exploring this area, participants will consult with real leaders in the field, review secondary sources, and analyze existing and proposed policies to build their expertise. Then, working collaboratively, they will develop recommendations, and create tools to communicate and advance them.

A group presentation and collaboratively developed supporting artifacts will assess students' ability to develop and defend policy recommendations. The presentation and artifacts will be the primary basis for students' grades. Class participation and a reflection journal also contribute, with the journal providing each student an opportunity to apply their learning to education reform and policy change more broadly.

Course objectives

Objective	Assessed Through...
1. Describe and discuss a specific education policy issue with depth and accuracy , including the views of various leaders and stakeholders, groups that may be helped or harmed by various policy approaches, and its historical context and underlying tensions.	Presentation, Class participation, Journal
2. Develop and defend policy recommendations , addressing how these recommendations account for the nature of the political systems in which policy change occurs, potential barriers to effective implementation, and relationships to other relevant education policy debates.	Presentation and supporting artifacts, Class participation
3. Create tools that effectively explain and advance policy recommendation(s) , including 1) communicating what is being recommended and why, 2) establishing how it should be achieved and implemented, and 3) laying out a communications strategy.	Presentation and supporting artifacts, Class participation
4. Generalize learning from one policy focus area to education reform and policy change more broadly , including understanding the education system in the U.S., its political context, and the process, barriers associated with changing it, as well as the process of leading/managing change in the public sector.	Presentation, Class participation, Journal
5. Establish and leverage new relationships in the education reform community.	Class participation

Expectations

1. **Student participation and leadership.** Students will have a role in guiding the learning, and achieving the vision of the course. Students are expected to demonstrate initiative and leadership to maximize the value of the experience for themselves and others.
2. **Collaboration.** Students are expected to build and maintain productive relationships with colleagues as well as with external partners engaged in the modeling process.
3. **Effective process and project management.** Students will complete assignments on time, come to class prepared, utilize class time productively, and meet expectations for established checkpoints in order to complete high quality end-of-course deliverables.
4. **Professionalism throughout the modeling exercise.** Communicate respectfully and professionally with colleagues and partners, be on time for classes and appointments. Let the professor know if you need to leave early.

Evaluation/Grading

Grading for this course is based on:

1. Participation
2. Presentation (Group and individual component)
3. Final deliverables (Three artifacts supporting the policy presentation)

1. **Participation** – 150 points, $\frac{1}{3}$ of course grade (each class is 10 points maximum)

All full group sessions (15 meetings projected not including presentation dates) are graded for a total of 150 points for the entire semester. Attendance is taken at all classes (including the first class) and participation will be graded using the following scale:

- 0 points – Absent from class.
- 5 points – In attendance, minimal contribution, limited evidence of preparation, initiative.
- 10 points – In attendance, contributes, adequate evidence of preparation and initiative.

This point system rewards coming to class prepared, demonstrating initiative and leadership, actively participating, exhibiting professionalism and collaborating effectively with colleagues.

2. **Presentation** - 150 points, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the course grade

- a. **Group presentation (100 points):** A summary of the policy recommendations, process plan, and communications strategy will be delivered to a panel of external experts and partners at the end of the course. Points will be awarded for the content as well as the logistics and delivery/facilitation of the presentation.
- b. **Individual component (50 points)** The individual portion of the end-of-course presentation requires minimal preparation if students have participated throughout the course and completed at least 4 independent journal entries (see page 8). Students will discuss their journal entries, offering each student a forum for summarizing what they have learned about the education system in the U.S., its political context, and the process and barriers associated with changing it as well as the process of leading/managing change in the public sector.

3. **Final deliverables** (Three artifacts supporting presentation) – 150 points, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the course grade.

There are three final deliverables that will be created collaboratively over the entire semester, with the group ultimately earning one grade for each. Deliverables will be graded using a rubric, with a maximum of 50 points will be awarded for each, for a total of up to 150 points for this portion of the course.

During the course, real examples of these types of documents will be reviewed by the group, templates will be developed together, and there will be collaborative creation and refinement of these tools during and in-between classes throughout the semester. Checkpoints along the way will help to ensure these artifacts are on track with regards to quality and timing.

The deliverables are:

- A. **Summary of recommendations (50 points):** A written summary of the group's policy recommendations and rationale will support the final presentation. It will articulate *what* is being recommended and *why* in a coherent and accessible document.
- B. **Process plan (50 points):** The process plan complements the recommendations summary, focusing on the *how*. From cost to capacity, dependencies, obstacles and implications it lays out a path for delivering the vision described in the policy recommendations.
- C. **Engagement and communications strategy (50 points):** The engagement and communications strategy document considers the key audiences who will need to contribute to the successful implementation of the policy recommendations. It maps out how they will be engaged, what information they will need and when, and draft content for key engagement and communications materials.

Academic Statement

You are responsible to know and adhere to all University policies on academic integrity. The Heinz School provides a booklet on Plagiarism and Cheating and the University lists all policies on the web at www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html. Please acquaint yourself with their contents. Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failure in the course and your case will be referred to the Associate Dean, who may decide to take further action.

Course progression

Introduction	Analysis	Integration	Presentation	Reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dig in and get excited about the issue of school design and turnaround. • Present project plan, initial summary of issue area, outline of final deliverables. • Form and engage expert panel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep dive into policy focus area including interviews, secondary source review, policy analysis. • Groups present findings. • Groups preview recommendations, receive feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise, strengthen recommendations, draft and refine final deliverables. • Plan presentation logistics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send content to panelists. • 1:1/small group conversations with panelists • Complete presentation and final deliverables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief feedback from experts. • Make any agreed upon revisions to final products. • Prep for and complete end-of-course exam.

Class Schedule

Date	Content/Session Overview	Preparation/Assignments Due
1/13/2016 (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce goals, objectives ● Look ahead to final deliverables including structure and rationale ● Form groups (if necessary) ● Set expectations for process, timing ● Establish priorities for week 1 ● Introduce, dig into policy focus area 	N/A
1/20/2016 (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present and refine project plan ● Overview and further narrow scope of the policy focus area 	Checkpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selected “client” scenario ● Draft project plan ● Initial summary of focus area
1/27/2016 (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present and refine outline of final deliverables, status and approach to engaging panelists and subject matter experts 	Checkpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outline/template for final deliverables ● Report on status of engagement with potential panelists and other subject matter experts ● Summary of secondary sources included in review
2/3/2016 (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on the “what” - developing and sharing a vision for policy change 	Checkpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft of policy recommendations deliverable ● Scan of various tools for presenting recommendations to similar clients ● First journal entry should be complete
2/10/2016 (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on the “how” - developing and sharing a process plan supporting the vision 	Checkpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft of the process plan ● Scan of various tools for presenting how to take policy recommendations through implementation.
2/17/2016 (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on engagement and communications - developing and sharing an engagement and communications plan 	Checkpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft of the engagement and communications plan ● Scan of various tools for organizing an engagement and communications strategy.
2/24/2016 (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on the presentation - developing and facilitating an effective policy presentation 	Checkpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be prepared with a more developed draft of the policy presentation,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scan of various tools for presenting and facilitating a policy presentation.
3/2/2016 (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present first full draft of four final deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due date for first full draft of final deliverables to provide adequate time for engagement and revision. Includes 1) group presentation, 2) summary of recommendations, 3) process plan, 4) communications and engagement strategy. Checkpoint for second reflection journal entry.
3/9/2016 (9)	Spring break - no class	
3/16/2016 (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss feedback on suite of final deliverables, status of project. Build plan for needed revisions and adjustments. Assign responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due date for presentation logistics and any related communications. Checkpoint TBD based on project status as of 3/2.
3/23/2016 (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on preparation for policy presentation 	Checkpoint TBD based on project status as of 3/2.
3/30/2016 (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on preparation for policy presentation 	Checkpoint TBD based on project status as of 3/2.
4/6/2016 (13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present final deliverables, prepare to share them in advance of group presentation, walk through a preview of the presentation 	Due date for second full draft of final deliverables in order to send out to panelists in advance. Includes Includes 1) group presentation, 2) summary of recommendations, 3) process plan, 4) communications and engagement strategy.
4/13/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due date for final draft of deliverables including 1) group presentation, 2) summary of recommendations, 3) process plan, 4) communications and engagement strategy.
4/20/2016 (14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group reflection/revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due date for reflection journals Checkpoint TBD based on presentation and feedback
4/27/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual component of presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checkpoint for discussing reflection journals, concluding individual portion of final presentation
5/4/2016 (15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap and closing 	

Policy Focus Area

The policy focus area for the 2016 modeling workshop will be **school design and turnaround**.

Significant investments and major policy initiatives have been dedicated to “turning around” failing schools, encouraging innovative school designs, and “rethinking” the traditional school model. As they continue, there is contentious debate about how schools should be designed, how students and teachers should spend their time at school, how technology should change the way schools operate, and what should be done to “fix” the lowest performing schools (or offer alternative options for students growing up in these school communities). In this year’s policy modeling workshop we will dig into this rich area of policy requiring us to unpack big questions like:

What should be done with the nation’s lowest performing schools? What should schools look like in 2016? 2020? 2025? How should these reforms be implemented, and who is accountable for their redesign and results?

Students will develop a perspective on what the goals of these efforts should be, and what policy changes are most likely to achieve them. This policy focus area has been selected because it is:

1. **Important.** School design and turnaround policy affects millions of students and families, especially the poor and communities of color. The lowest performing schools in the U.S. are characterized by persistently low academic achievement, poor graduation rates, low student attendance, limited family engagement, and disproportionate student suspensions and disciplinary infractions. Disproportionately, these schools are concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and serve students of color.
2. **Relevant.** School design and turnaround is currently central in the federal effort to update the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), is the subject of much ongoing debate at the state level in Pennsylvania, and includes potential case studies right here in Pittsburgh and its surrounding districts.
3. **Connected.** School design and turnaround is deeply connected to other central issues in education policy and politics including school funding, “common core” curriculum, charter school authorization, and educator effectiveness. It is deeply influenced by power, money, philosophy about the role of government in society, economics, race, class and gender.
4. **Useful** for learning the details of school reform. This policy area requires a depth of understanding about the details of school design - from school schedules and graduation requirements to the way that facilities are designed and managed to how technology is infused and leveraged. It is a great topic to tackle for those looking to build more depth in their understanding of the details of education policy and the possibilities and limitations of how schools themselves might be redesigned for the 21st century and beyond.

Reflection Journal and Individual Presentation Component of Course Grade

Like leading change in the real world of education reform, most of this course is designed to be 1) collaborative and 2) focused on a specific issue area (in this case school design and transformation). But a key objective of the course is to:

Generalize learning from one policy focus area to education reform and policy change more broadly, including understanding the education system in the U.S., its political context, and the process, barriers associated with changing it, as well as the process of leading/managing change in the public sector.

The reflection journal, with at least four individual entries required over the course of the semester, creates a forum for achieving this objective by 1) offering each student an opportunity to develop their own individual ideas, and 2) providing a forum for students to broaden thinking beyond the narrow issue area. See suggested due dates in Class Schedule section.

At the end of the semester, students will discuss their entries, and receive a grade as the individual component of the end-of-course presentation. Up to 50 points will be awarded, with each of the 4 written entries counting for up to 8 points (up to 32 points), and the remaining portion (up to 18 points) based on the in-person discussion of the entries and the ideas they address.

The following prompts may help start the journal entries:

- Think about *alignment/conflict with other policy issues in public education*. How does what you are learning about the specific area of school design and turnaround influence your thinking about other relevant education policy areas (e.g. common core curriculum, teacher effectiveness)?
- Think about the *political context of education reform*. What have you learned about how the political process affects education reform in the U.S.? How do you think the structure of our political systems (e.g. distribution of power and responsibility, legislative processes, political power and influence) affects the way education policy evolves and influences its ultimate impact on student outcomes?
- Think about the *stakeholders involved in education reform*. What have you learned about the stakeholders engaged in changing and implementing education reform? How does this change your perspective on what needs to happen to improve student outcomes or how best to make it happen?
- Think about *barriers to effective implementation of policy change* in public education. Why do you think so many reform efforts don't achieve their intended results? What has changed about your thinking based on what you have learned through this course?
- Think about the *process of leading and/or managing policy change*. What are the most important flaws you see in how change is managed? Why are these flaws common? How would this knowledge change your own approach to leading a major change effort?
- *Think about public education in the United States at the broadest level*. How has your learning in this course changed your perspective or deepened your conviction? Overall, do you think the system is working well? Do you think it is a "broken system"? What are the most important changes that need to happen?