UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
Department of Public Policy

PP 290 Topics in Public Policy:
Workshop on Education Policy and Politics in Los Angeles

Professor: Meredith Phillips
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Class Meetings: Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:30-3:50 p.m., Public Affairs 6362

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m. and 4-5 p.m. (sign up sheet on office door)

Description: This project-oriented, seminar-style class provides a focused, in-depth, hands-on opportunity for students to further develop the applied research, analysis, and communication skills they will need to participate successfully in the education policymaking process. Using policy problems and debates in Los Angeles as a focus, students will select from among projects that vary in their topics and methodologies. Students will then refine these projects in close consultation with the professor, work on them intensely by collecting and/or analyzing primary information/data, produce a polished written product and presentation, and communicate their findings to education policymakers in Los Angeles.

Format: The professor will provide a list of possible projects during Week 2. Students will self-select into projects and project groups. Some projects will be appropriate for groups of 2-4 students; other projects will be appropriate for groups of 1. Class periods will be structured as opportunities for students to obtain guidance on their projects, work together with their project group, critique classmates’ work, and report intermediate and final results.

Purpose: This course aims to help students:
1. acquire a general understanding of education policy debates in the second-largest school district in the country;
2. develop deep expertise about a narrow education policy topic; and
3. refine the analytical and communication skills they will need to work effectively in the education policy arena.

Prerequisites: This class is designed for MPP students with strong interests in education policy who have already taken required courses in the MPP statistics sequence. Graduate students from other departments must receive permission from the instructor to enroll and will only be admitted if the course is under-enrolled. Before requesting permission to enroll, graduate students from other departments should confer with the professor about whether they have the appropriate preparation to benefit from the class.
**Expectations:** This course requires that students produce a professional-quality product and presentation by the end of the course. Students who enroll **must:**

- be able to work independently;
- be highly motivated;
- be detailed oriented;
- be open to receiving feedback and able to respond to it; and
- be discrete (because some projects may require that all students in the class sign non-disclosure/confidentiality agreements).

**Required materials:** You will need to read the following book:


If you choose a project involving statistical analysis, you should have ready access to Stata.

Read frequently: http://laschoolreport.com

I recommend that you subscribe to *Education Week* for at least the first two weeks of the course (they have a 14-day free trial; if you call them before day 14 to cancel, you will not be charged, but if you forget to call, you will be charged $9.95 a month indefinitely until you cancel).

Throughout the quarter, I will recommend readings related to each of your projects, which you should read. (When possible, I will post these on the class website.)

**Requirements:**

**Nondisclosure and Other Possible Project Requirements:** Depending on the nature of the projects, all students in the class may be required to sign non-disclosure agreements to ensure that results and findings are not shared beyond the class. Students working with sensitive data may be asked to sign additional agreements and adhere to strict data security standards. Students spending time in schools may need to have a current TB test and undergo fingerprinting/background checks.

**Weekly Progress Reports:** Students will report weekly on their progress during weeks 3 through 7. These progress reports must include an update on the week’s accomplishments, any results/findings, and written questions for me. Each progress report is due electronically by noon on Monday.

**Report drafts:** Students will be required to turn in an annotated outline, first, second, and third drafts (see course schedule for dates).

**Presentation:** Students will assemble a polished presentation, present to the class, receive feedback and then revise the presentation for an external audience. Your group will have X
minutes to present, followed by Y minutes for questions/critiques, with X and Y determined once
the class size and group sizes are known. Your group’s presentation will be judged on its content,
clarity, organization, and professionalism.

Class participation: Attendance during the first two weeks is required (though see the schedule
for an exception). During the next five weeks, your project team is required to meet with the
professor during one of the weekly class meeting slots. Attendance during class presentations is
required, as is attendance at the final seminar.

Academic Dishonesty: Please familiarize yourself with UCLA’s rules on academic conduct
(http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html) because I will not hesitate to enforce those
rules. I assume students will hold themselves to high standards of academic honesty in this class
(and always). When you use other people’s ideas, data, or words in your projects, I expect you to
cite them appropriately. If you have any questions about whether your citations are sufficiently
detailed, please do not hesitate to ask. I expect you to turn in original work for this class. If you
would like to turn in a report that bears any resemblance to one you have written (or plan to
write) for another class, you must clear it with me first.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1

Mon: April 1: LA’s Education Policy History

□ Read Critically, by Today’s Class: Learning from LA, pp. 1-126 (through chapter 6)

Wed: April 3: LA’s Education Policy History

□ Read Critically, by Today’s Class: Learning from LA, pp. 127- end (chapter 7 through end)

Week 2

Mon, April 8: Examples of Applied Education Policy Research

□ Read Critically, by Today’s Class:
  o SDP LAUSD Human Capital Diagnostic
  o CCSR and CPS: A research partnership in Chicago based on the search for
    solutions of school reform.

□ Class cancelled—students encouraged to attend the SDP briefing at CSU LA, which
  Superintendent Deasy will open.

Wed, April 10: Examples of Applied Education Policy Research & Choosing Projects

□ Review project list. (You will receive it over email before Wednesday’s class.)
□  Read Critically, by Today’s Class:
  ○ SDP LAUSD College Going Diagnostic
  ○ Gwynn et al. What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools

Week 3:

Mon, April 15: Project consultation

Wed, April 17: Project consultation

Week 4:

Mon, April 22: Project consultation

Wed, April 24: Project consultation

Week 5:

Mon, April 29: Class cancelled because I’m at AERA

  □  Turn in Progress Report #1 by noon before class
  □  Turn in Annotated Outline by noon before class

Wed, May 1: Project consultation (optional—if you want to skip your slot, please let me know so that I can give it to another group)

Week 6:

Mon, May 6: Project consultation

  □  Turn in Progress Report #2 by noon before class

Wed, May 8: Project consultation

Week 7:

Mon, May 13: Project consultation

  □  Turn in Progress Report #3 by noon before class
  □  Turn in Revised Outline by noon before class

Wed, May 15: Project consultation
Week 8:

Mon, May 20: Project consultation

Wed, May 22: Project consultation

Turn in First Draft of report by noon before class

Week 9:

Mon, May 27: Holiday

Wed, May 29: Presentations

Week 10:

Mon, June 3: Project consultation

☐ Turn in Second Draft by noon before class

Wed, June 5: Project consultation

Exam week:

☐ Turn in Third Draft by Wed at 5pm
☐ Date TBD (could also occur week 10, if students prefer): Students present at LAUSD