

*The Pennsylvania State University
College of Education*

ECE 572 (547024) and CI ED 597C (665554)

Childhood Policy & Critical Advocacy

Spring 2011

Wednesdays, 6:30 – 9:30 PM

Room 210 Chambers

Contact Information

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Course Overview¹

This seminar focuses on policy and “critical” advocacy as it relates to children, families and schooling in Pennsylvania, the U.S., and globally. We will focus on global and national discourses and policies, including those affecting child care, family definitions and support, and education policy trends in various neoliberal and neoconservative contexts. Seminar participants will pursue a specific issue of relevance to them throughout the seminar, and will monitor both the popular media (including online sources) and the professional literature on this topic. Possible topics include disability policies, welfare reform, Head Start policies, environmental racism, NCLB and other education policies, homeless families and street youth, immigration and language policies, global HIV/AIDS and education, violence and children, health care, language policy, children of incarcerated parents, and cross-national comparisons of child care and early education policies. As individual topics are identified, additional readings will be added to support your work. Other readings will focus on policy analysis with child and family emphasis, advocacy discourse analysis, critical case studies, and international comparative research.

Much of our seminar will be spent discussing readings, current policy issues, and discussing questions such as “What does it mean to advocate for children, families?” “How does the state govern children, families and schooling?” “What metaphors are used in public policy discourse?” and “How can we better involve young people in policy-making?”. We will discuss cross-national examples of family support and education, including neoliberal/globalizing policy trends, and examine strategies used in grassroots lobbying and more critical advocacy approaches. We will also discuss issues of power, privilege, pathologizing of poverty, and surveillance as they relate to policy discourse.

¹ *This seminar is based on a course developed by Dr. Beth Blue Swadener at Arizona State University.*

Most class meetings will offer a balance of theory, application, and concrete strategies for advocacy. Possible guest speakers, including legislators and grassroots advocates, will assist us in making connections between the often more abstract or theoretical readings and local/global issues and in better understanding the importance of framing and citizen action in working for social justice.

Required Readings

All required readings (except books) are posted on the course Angel site.

Bloch, M.N., Hulqvist, K. & Popkewitz, T. (eds.) (2003). *Restructuring the governing patterns of the child, education and the welfare state*. New York/London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cannella, G. S., & Soto, L. D. (2010). *Childhoods: A handbook*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kumashiro, K.K. (2008). *The seduction of common sense: How the Right has framed the debate on America's schools*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Lakoff, G. (2006). *Thinking points: Communicating our American values and vision*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Polakow, V. (2007). *Who cares for our children?: The child care crisis in the other America*. NY: Teachers College Press.

Sinema, K. (2009). *Unite and conquer: How to build coalition that win and last*. San Francisco: Barrett- Koehler Publishers.

Spring, J. (2005). *Political agendas for education: From the religious right to the Green Party. (Third Edition)*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Recommended Readings

Depending on your topic(s) of interest, you may find one or more of these publications helpful.

Cheney, K.E. (2007). *Pillars of the nation: Child citizens and Ugandan national development*. The University of Chicago Press.

Eisler, R. (2007). *The real wealth of nations: Creating a caring economics*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Smith, M.L. (2003). *Political spectacle and the fate of American schools*. New York:

RoutledgeFalmer.

Rigby, B. (2008). *Mobilizing generation 2.0: A practical guide to using web 2.0 – Technologies to recruit, organize and engage youth.* (Rock the Vote) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody: The power of organizing without organizations.* New York: Penguin Press.

Staples, L. (2004). *Roots to power: A manual for grassroots organizing (Second Edition).* Westport, CN: Praeger.

UNICEF (2007). *The State of the World's Children 2008* New York: United Nations Children's Fund. <http://unicef.org/sowc08/>

Requirements

Preparation and participation in discussion (25 points)

This includes completing all readings and taking an active part in discussions and activities. You will also be signing up in class to facilitate discussions of particular readings. Each class will begin with a sharing of media (including blog/online) coverage of social policy issues - come prepared! We will be monitoring the state budget process, initiatives of the new Obama administration, and issues of particular relevance to students in the seminar.

Letters to Editor and Legislator(s)/Teachers College Record commentary (15 points)

In order to gain practice and confidence in communicating through public channels to constituents and policymakers, everyone will write at least one letter to the editor of a local paper and to an elected official on any topic related to early childhood education/children and families. These should be **completed by 3/23**. (Writing a *Teachers College Record* commentary or meeting with an elected official or participation in a rally or other advocacy action event may be substituted.)

Book Reviews (30 points)

You will write three (3) critical reflections on required books, taking the form of a publishable book review. We will also divide up responsibility for leading discussions of particular chapters, articles, or other readings – this will be clarified in class. A guide to writing your book critiques, in the style of published book reviews, is found at the end of this syllabus. The required books for review are: Polakow (2007), Kumashiro (2008) and your choice of other books listed under “required readings” on previous page. Due dates are listed in the class schedule.

Individual (or small group) Project/Policy Analysis (30 points)

This final project involves pursuing a policy issue of particular relevance and interest to you. Examples of potential projects include: (a) comparing a specific policy issues such as parental leave/family support or early education across national contexts, (b) critically analyzing the history of a controversial social policy or program (e.g., TANF, Head Start, NCLB, full inclusion, immigration or language policies), or (c) conducting an informal

survey on a policy-related issues (e.g., school funding, proficiency testing). You may work with a partner/small group or on your own. **Projects will be discussed in class on 1/12 & 1/19; due 4/20 or 4/27** [provide stamped, self-addressed envelope if you would like it mailed back with feedback].

Grades

Letter grades will be given for all assignments.

Grading Policy

A	=	95 percent and above	95-100 points
A-	=	90 to 94 percent.	90-94 points
B+	=	85 to 89 percent	85-89 points
B	=	80 to 84 percent	80-84 points
B-	=	75 to 79 percent	75-79 points
C+	=	70 to 74 percent	70-74 points
C	=	65 to 69 percent	65-69 points

Course Evaluation

In a doctoral seminar, my assumption is that you are professionals who are taking this course because you have goals and purposes that are important to you. I further assume that you will take seriously the opportunities this course offers to further your own important purposes. Put as blatantly as possible, the things that I most want to see are signs that you are making strong efforts to make this course work for you. I measure this through the following:

- Coming to each class and on-time
- Completing readings carefully and on-time
- Responding thoughtfully and collegially in postings
- Responding thoughtfully and collegially in class discussions
- Engaging with course authors and issues in your speaking and writing
- Engaging privately with me to further develop your academic and professional knowledge and skills, including theoretical thinking, writing, and leadership
- High quality leadership of seminar discussions
- Competent completion of your final project

I reserve the right to assign a grade other than “A” in the event that I have reservations about your performance in the class (as outlined above) throughout the semester or in your final project. If I have reservations about your course involvement, I will email or talk to you. You will also have my feedback to your work. If you have any questions about my assessment of your performance in the class, it is your responsibility to talk to me.

Course Expectations

1. Weekly, on-time attendance. PSU Policy: *It is the policy of the University that class attendance by students be encouraged and that all instructors organize and conduct their courses with this policy in mind. A student should attend every class for which the student is scheduled and should be held responsible for all work covered in the courses taken. In each case, the instructor should decide when the class absence constitutes a danger to the student's scholastic attainment and should make this fact known to the student. A student whose irregular attendance causes him or her, in the judgment of the instructor, to become deficient scholastically, is at risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured had the student been in regular attendance.* You are expected to be in communication with me about absences. All students have one excused absence, no questions asked. After that, we need to talk.
2. This is a seminar class, heavily dependent upon discussion. You must complete the reading prior to class and be prepared to participate. If you feel that the classroom dynamics are not giving you a structure that allows you to participate effectively, please discuss it with me. This is information I want to receive.

Diversity Statement

Within our classroom, there is tremendous diversity of life, cultural and emotional experience, some that might seem obvious and some that might be subtler. I expect each member of the class to demonstrate respect for persons from shared and different backgrounds and perspectives. I intend that all students will be well served by this course, that each students' reasonable learning needs will be addressed in and out of class, and I will treat the diversity of experiences and strengths each person brings to class as a resource, strength, and benefit. Having said this, I know that it not possible to know ahead of time how to serve each person and I am resistant to making assumptions about anyone's experiences, interests, or needs. Therefore, it is important that 1) each member of the class accepts responsibility for the creation of an environment that addresses our diverse interests and need; and 2) that anyone who feels that personal or general diversity concerns are not being adequately addressed by me or by any members of the class makes those concerns known to me. If you require special accommodation, please make this known to me.

Statement of Compliance with ADA

In order to address the special request to facilitate learning of any students with disabilities, including those with hearing and sight loss, it is necessary for those students to inform the course instructor who will bring these requests to the attention of the Administrative Assistant.

Penn State Academic Integrity Policy (Senate policy 49-20)

Plagiarism, cheating, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, tampering with the academic work of others and other forms of academic dishonesty may lead to lowered grades, failure of the course or more severe measures, depending on judgments of the gravity of the individual case.

College of Education Academic Integrity Policy

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/current-students/academic-integrity/>

The Academic Integrity Committee addresses unresolved cases of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of examination, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, and tampering with the academic work of other students.

Tentative Schedule (Instructor reserves right to make changes)

The following “proposed schedule” gives us some basic structure for covering a wide range of social policy topics in theoretical context; it is typically amended to better address issues of particular relevance to the seminar participants! Your suggestions for guest speakers & other readings are welcome.

Date	Topics & Assignments
1/12	<p>Getting acquainted Policy issues, framings and seminar overview Examples of policy-based graduate research (Nancy Remy, Ph.D. candidate) and PAFCO Project</p>
1/19	<p>Theoretical Framing of Childhood Policy Issues Readings: All of Section 1 PDF Class Discussion on Project/Policy Analysis</p>
1/26	<p>Early Childhood Policy Special Issue by <i>Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood</i> Readings: Selected readings on Section 2 PDF Suggested Reading: UNICEF (2010). <i>The State of the World's Children</i> Special Edition: Celebrating Twenty Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: United Nations Children's Fund. http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_51772.html</p>
2/2	<p>Global Welfare and Educational Policies (The Family and Child as an Object of Governing) Readings: Selected readings from <i>Governing Children, Families, and Education</i> – Sections 1 and 2 (pp. 1-113)</p>

- 2/9 **Global Welfare and Educational Policies
(The Embodied Social and Welfare State)**
Readings: Selected readings from *Governing Children, Families,
and Education* – Section 3 (pp. 117-257)
- 2/16 **Global Welfare and Educational Policies
(New Possibilities/Impossibilities)**
Readings: Selected readings from *Governing Children, Families,
and Education* – Section 4 (pp. 261-333)
- 2/23 **Corporatized Childhoods, Neoliberalism, and Critical Policy
Perspectives**
Readings: Selected readings from *Childhoods: A Handbook* –
Section 2 (pp. 119-214)
- 3/2 **Unquestioned Discourse and Universalization of Childhoods**
Readings: Selected readings from *Childhoods: A Handbook* –
Section 3 (pp. 215-308) and choose two chapters from Section 4
- 3/9 SPRING BREAK
- 3/16 **Public Education & Policy**
Readings: *The Seduction of Common Sense*
Due: Letter to the Editor or *TCR* commentary
- 3/23 **Childcare Crisis and Welfare Policy**
Readings: *Who Cares for Our Children?*
Due: Book Review
- 3/30 **Community Organizing**
Readings: *Unite and Conquer*
Due: Letter to Editor or *TCR* commentary
- 4/6 *Annual meeting of AERA (New Orleans)*
Advocating & Sharing individual/Group Projects
Readings: *Thinking Points*
- 4/13 **Politics, Legislation & Education**
Readings: *Political Agendas for Education*
- 4/20 **Equity & Inclusion Issues in Special Education**
Readings: Collins and Valente articles & Valle and Connor
Share your “laser talk” on your social policy issue/project and
involve class in a mini workshop on your topic

4/27

Sharing individual/group projects (complete presentations)
Final projects due

Book Review Guidelines

The purpose of the four book reviews is to assist you in critically reading and reflecting on various texts and also to gain experience in completing a scholarly book review. Getting a book review published is often one of the first ways that graduate students get their work “in print” and we will discuss some ideas for getting published. The following is not meant to be prescriptive, but offers suggested elements of a scholarly book review. Book reviews can also be short essay-reviews on a particular topic that situate two or more books in relation to a particular issue. Journals that offer this type of review include *Harvard Educational Review*, *Multicultural Perspectives*, *Education Researcher*, & *Teachers College Quarterly*.

- Include the full reference for the book, including ISBN # and price in paperback and hardback
- Provide an overview of the book and the likely intended audiences or those for whom the book might have particular relevance – situate it in a particular genre if possible (and clarify whether it is authored or edited)
- Discuss the book’s strengths, unique perspectives, and any new contributions to the literature on this topic that you may be aware of – what spoke to you or engaged you as a reader/scholar?
- Critique the book – what were its shortcomings? What could strengthen it?
- If the book is edited (as two of ours are), which chapters were particularly strong and why? Are the chapters woven together in ways that make sense, have flow from one chapter to another, and all (or most) directly address major themes of the book?
- Who should read this book? Why? (this is similar to the intended audience but can be more of your personal opinion about those you think would benefit from this book)
- What other books have been written on similar topics and how does this volume compare (if you have this information – not required for our class)

Anything else you would like to say in terms of criticism, reflection, and how the book related to your experience or issues of interest to you.