George Mason University
Graduate Course Approval/Inventory Form

Please complete this form and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses. Forward it as an email attachment to the Secretary of the Graduate Council. A printed copy of the form with signatures should be brought to the Graduate Council Meeting. Complete the Coordinator Form on page 2, if changes in this course will affect other units.

**Please indicate:**
- **X** NEW
- ____ MODIFY
- ____ DELETE

**Local Unit:** Graduate School of Education  
**Graduate Council Approval Date:**

**Course Abbreviation:** EDUC  
**Course Number:** 872

**Full Course Title:** Social Science Research and Education Policy

**Abbreviated Course Title (24 characters max.):** SOC SCI RES & ED PLCY

**Credit hours:** 3  
**Program of Record:** Ph.D.

**Repeatable for Credit?**
- D=Yes, not within same term  
- T=Yes, within the same term  
- X N=Cannot be repeated for credit

**Activity Code** (please indicate):
- X Lecture (LEC)  
- Lab (LAB)  
- Recitation (RCT)  
- Studio (STU)  
- Internship (INT)  
- Independent Study (IND)

**Catalog Credit Format** 3 : 3 : 0  
**Course Level:** GF(500-600)  
**GA(700+) X**

**Maximum Enrollment:** 20  
**For NEW courses, first term to be offered:** Spring ’04

**Prerequisites or corequisites:** Admission to the Ph.D. program; EDUC 870 and 871 or equivalent doctoral-level policy course work.

**Catalog Description** (35 words or less)
Please use catalog format and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses:
**EDUC 872 Social Science Research and Education Policy (3:3:0). Prerequisite: Admission to the Ph.D. program; EDUC 870 and 871 or equivalent doctoral-level policy course work.** Focuses on the research base used to support education policy actions. Attention is given to analyzing the strength of this research.

**For MODIFIED or DELETED courses as appropriate:**

Last term offered:  
**Previous Course Abbreviation:**  
**Previous number:**

**Description of modification:**

**APPROVAL SIGNATURES:**

Submitted by:  
Penelope M. Earley ________________  
email: pearley@gmu.edu

Department/Program:  
_____________________________  
Date: __________________

College Committee:  
_____________________________  
Date: __________________

Graduate Council Representative:  
_____________________________  
Date: __________________
EDUC 872 Social Science Research and Education Policy (3:3:0). Prerequisite: Admission to the Ph.D. program; EDUC 870 and 871 or equivalent doctoral-level policy course work. Focuses on the research base used to support education policy actions. Attention is given to analyzing the strength of this research.

Approval from other units:

Please list those units outside of your own who may be affected by this new, modified, or deleted course. Each of these units must approve this change prior to its being submitted to the Graduate Council for approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit: School of Public Policy (please see attached e-mail)</th>
<th>Head of Unit’s Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
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Graduate Council approval: ___________________________________________ Date: __________

Graduate Council representative: ______________________________________ Date: __________

Provost Office representative: _______________________________ Date: __________
Course Title:  *Social Science Research and Education Policy*

EDUC 872 Sec:

Spring, 2004

Instructor: Dr. Penelope M. Earley
Class Date & Time:
Class Location:
Contact Information:
  Room 441A, Robinson B
  E-mail: pearley@gmu.edu
  P: (703) 993-3361
  F: (703) 993-2013
Office Hours: By Appointment: MTWRF 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on the research base used to support education policy actions. Students will identify and critically review research for selected K-12 and higher education policy issues and through their analysis determine the strength of the undergirding evidence. Prerequisite: Admission to the Ph.D. program and completion of EDUC 870 and 871 or equivalent doctoral-level policy coursework.

**STUDENT OUTCOMES**

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate ability to critique education research articles.
2. Analyze policy options and determine what research would be necessary to support their claims.
3. Identify gaps in the evidence undergirding education policy options.
4. Understand and explain why certain education policy decisions have not had the desired outcome.

**RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

There are no specialized standards specific to education policy studies. The conceptual framework for this course is linked to the mission of the Center for Education Policy as outlined in its Charter: (1) Translate education research into policy options and recommendations for a variety of audiences (decision makers, practitioners, and the public); (2) Conduct timely, sound, evidence-based analysis; and (3) Develop interdisciplinary and cross-sector policy networks. The student outcomes are linked to this mission, in particular to the importance of evidence-based analysis.

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

This course is taught using lectures and discussions supplemented with outside speakers.
TEXTS AND READINGS


Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA), available on-line: [http://www.epaa.asu.edu](http://www.epaa.asu.edu)

*Educational Researcher*, available on-line: [http://www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students, working in teams of two or more, will find and be prepared to present to the class a summary and critique of four to six research articles confirming or challenging two of the 10 education policy topics listed on the syllabus (see class sessions 04 – 13). Each presentation should be approximately 45 minutes long (not including time for Q&A). Students are expected to be creative in their presentations through the use of PowerPoint or other instructional tools and must provide handouts to supplement their presentation. Following the team presentation, all students will constitute a consensus panel and (a) decide if the evidence supports a particular policy, or (b) if there are significant gaps in the research (approximately 45 minutes). If the research base is weak, the panel will offer alternative policy recommendations (approximately 30 minutes). Students are expected to: (1) lead two presentations (25 points each); and (2) make themselves familiar with the topics under discussion when they are not leading the presentation so they can participate appropriately as members of the class consensus panel (five points for each of the 10 consensus panel exercises).

EVALUATION

An evaluation rubric for this class is attached.

Grading Scale:

A = 96-100  
A- = 92-95  
B+ = 89-91  
B = 85-88  
B- = 80-84  
C = 75-79  
F = 74 and below

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<tr>
<th>Week-Class</th>
<th>Topic and Readings</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Course Introduction: Critiquing Educational Research. Basic concepts for reading and critiquing a research article will be presented. Students will be introduced to on-line sources of policy evidence. Students will critique a sample article offered by the instructor. Students sign-up for two of the education policy issues listed below (class #s 4-13). Assignment – Class #2: Read McEwan, Chapters 1-4 and Girdin, Chapters 1, 5, 6, 9, and 10.</td>
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2. Critiquing Educational Research: What are the important questions? Addressing validity and reliability. Reading and analyzing quantitative research. Assignment – Class #3: Read McEwan, Chapters 5-6 and Girdin, Chapters 2, 3, 4.

3. Critiquing Educational Research: Critiquing survey research. Reading and analyzing quantitative research. Team Assignment – Class #4: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that support or do not support the assertion that reducing K-12 class size results in higher student achievement. (Do not rely solely on evidence from Tennessee.)

4. Policy Issue: Does Reducing Class Size Improve Student Learning? Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? Team Assignment – Class #5: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that support or do not support the assertion that students perform better in small rather than large high schools. (Begin with but go beyond studies supported by the Gates Foundation.)

5. Policy Issue: School Size – What’s too Big and What’s Too Small? Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? Team Assignment – Class #6: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that endorse a particular method of preparing teachers. (One side of this issue is presented in The Secretary’s Second Annual Report on Teacher Quality, Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge available on the U.S. Department of Education’s web site. Look also at research done by Linda Darling-Hammond and the work she cites.)

6. Policy Issue: Are Certain Models of Preparing Teachers Better than Others? Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? Team Assignment – Class #7: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that compare the United States’ education system favorably or unfavorably with other nations. (Gerald Bracey’s work will provide one perspective, but also look for others.)

7. Policy Issue: How Does the United States’ Education System Compare with Other Nations? Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? Team Assignment – Class #8: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that provide evidence on strategies to address school violence. (Journals for school administrators and counselors are a good place to begin.)

8. Policy Issue: What Strategies Have Been Found to Reduce or Curtail School Violence? Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? Team Assignment – Class #9: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that provide evidence for or against grouping students. (The special education literature presents one perspective on this, however other research should be reviewed. The body of literature on this topic is large – be selective.)

9. Policy Issue: What Are the Benefits or Liabilities of Grouping Students for Instructional Purposes (tracking, grouping within classes, gifted and
talented programs, special education)? Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? **Team Assignment – Class #10: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that address policy strategies to promote diverse learning environments. (Look at literature pertaining to both K-12 and higher education settings. Don’t forget the Supreme Court.)**

10. **Policy Issue: What Are Effective Models to Achieve Diversity in Educational Institutions (K-16)?** Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? **Team Assignment – Class #11: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that suggest certain learning incentive strategies are good or poor ways to promote student learning.**

11. **Policy Issue: What Policies Provide Incentives for Learning (rewards & punishments; intrinsic vs. extrinsic rewards)?** Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? **Team Assignment: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that offer evidence for an against the practice of licensing (or certifying) teachers and/or school administrators. (Fredrick Hess at the American Enterprise Institute opposes teacher licensure while Linda Darling-Hammond at Stanford University thinks licenses are a good idea. What evidence do they rely on?)**

12. **Policy Issue: Should K-12 Teachers and Administrators be Required to Hold a State License?** Students team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps? **Team Assignment – Class #13: Find and be prepared to discuss articles that offer evidence for or against one of the many forms of school choice. (Paul Peterson at Harvard has written extensively in this area, but his work is not without its critics. Also look at studies of Milwaukee and Cleveland programs.)**

13. **Policy Issue: Does School Choice Improve Student Achievement (vouchers, charter schools, magnet schools, etc.)?** Student team presents and critiques evidence. Class activity: Is there sufficient evidence to reach consensus on this matter? If not, what evidence is missing and what research might be done to fill the gaps?

14. **Wrap-Up. Discussion of strategies to promote evidence-based policy.**

**HONOR CODE**

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University, have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarizing, or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the event that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. For further information, please refer to the University Catalog or Website at: [http://www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu).

This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class and/or weather interruptions. The American with Disabilities act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs,
or activities of all State and local Governments. Under ADA a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as: learning, working, walking, speaking, hearing, breathing, and/or taking care of oneself. If a student has a disability and needs course adaptations or accommodations because of that disability, it must be established with the faculty, in writing, at the beginning of the semester so arrangements can be made. Please call the Disability Resource Center for required documentation (703) 993-2474.
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<tr>
<th>Grade/Points</th>
<th>Timeliness</th>
<th>Team Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>A 96 – 100</td>
<td>100% on time</td>
<td>Outstanding; facilitates and promotes conversation focused on the topic; questions &amp; comments reveal thoughtful reaction. Evidence of strong analytic skills. Good team participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>A- 92 – 95</td>
<td>Almost always on time; rare but forgivable tardiness (such as serious personal or family illness). Instructor is notified in advance that the assignment will not be completed. Make up work is done by the next class.</td>
<td>Well above average doctoral student; actively helps move group toward goal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+ 89 –91</td>
<td>Assignments late more than once or without prior conversation with instructor; not necessarily chronic.</td>
<td>Reliable and steady worker; questions and comments reveal some thought and reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B 85 – 88</td>
<td>More than half the assignments are late, but none are excessively late.</td>
<td>Doesn’t contribute often, but generally reveals some thought and reflection. Follows rather than leads group activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B- 80 – 84</td>
<td>Excessively or repeatedly late.</td>
<td>Few meaningful contributions to class discussions. Little evidence of participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 79 and below</td>
<td>Excessively or repeatedly late.</td>
<td>Weak or minimal participation; passive; often sidetracks group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Missed or not submitted. Incompletes not made up.</td>
<td>No constructive participation; destructive; demeaning toward other points of view.</td>
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Penny: The syllabus looks fine. If the material submitted by your School to the Grad Council reflects, as your syllabus does, that the focus of the course is educational policy as opposed to policy in general, you will have our concurrence. Thank you for your thoughtfulness in passing this by us.

David

David J. Armor, Professor of Public Policy
Director, PhD Program
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 993-2260 GMU office
(540) 987-9712 Home office

----- Original Message -----  
From: "Penelope M. Earley" <pearley@gmu.edu>
To: <darmor@gmu.edu>
Sent: Monday, August 18, 2003 11:58 AM
Subject: Another education policy syllabus

> Hello David,
>
> I trust you had a pleasant summer. I have developed a syllabus for what
> will be the third course in GSE's three-course education policy
> sequence. This one focuses on helping students learn how to evaluate
> evidence used to inform policy options. Could you review it and e-mail
> your comments to me? I would like to send it through GSE's evaluation
> process the end of this month.
>
> Incidentally, I have asked David Goslin to co-teach this class with me. He
> asked that I pass along his greetings to you and his hope that the two
> of you can reconnect sometime in the near future.
>
> Thanks for your assistance.
>
> Penny
>
> Penelope M. Earley
> Professor, Graduate School of Education
> Director, Center for Education Policy