George Mason University  
Schar School of Policy and Government & College of Education and Human Development

POGO 750-011 / EDUC 797-004 – Higher Education Policy  
3 Credits, Fall 2018  
Thursdays 4:30-7:10 p.m., Founders Hall 475, Arlington Campus

Faculty  
Name: Dr. Spiros Protopsaltis  
Office Hours: Wed. 3:30-4:30 (Fairfax), Thur. 3:00-4:30 (Arlington) & By Appointment  
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Office Phone: 703-993-2119 (Fairfax) & 703-993-8410 (Arlington)  
Email Address: sprotops@gmu.edu

Prerequisites/Corequisites

Enrollment is limited to Graduate or Non-Degree level students.

University Catalog Course Description

POGO 750 Topics in Policy and Government: Focuses on selected topics in policy and government not covered in fixed-content Schar school courses.

EDUC 797 Advanced Topics in Education: Advanced study of selected topics in education for students preparing for doctoral studies or who have been admitted to the PhD program in education. Notes: May be repeated for credit with GSED approval. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May be repeated within the term.

Course Overview

This course examines current higher education policy issues, developments, trends and debates at the federal and state level, with a focus on enabling students to understand policymaking structures and processes and think critically about the challenges and opportunities facing the field today. In particular, we will examine higher education indicators and outcomes, review policies and proposals for reform to improve postsecondary affordability, equity, quality, and accountability, and consider the role of advocacy groups, ideology and research in shaping and advancing policy agendas. The course also explores important connections between K-12 and higher education and discusses their impact. While a brief historical overview of higher education provides necessary context, the course primarily emphasizes recent trends and contemporary concerns, including federal and state policy deliberations and responses.
Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered using a seminar/lecture format.

Learning Outcomes/Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Understand the historical development of higher education policy, including landmark legislation, and the distinct roles and responsibilities of federal and state government.
2. Review critical issues and trends in federal and state higher education policy, as well as the differing perspectives and key actors involved in current debates and decision-making.
3. Explore contemporary and emerging policy approaches and proposals to improve the higher education system’s performance, including the Higher Education Act reauthorization.
4. Study in depth a higher education policy issue by examining its progress and impact.
5. Think critically and communicate effectively about higher education policy and politics.

Required Texts

Required reading assignments are listed under the Class Schedule. Most are accessible via the provided hyperlinks, while the remaining are posted in Blackboard.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time and in the manner outlined by the instructor. All assignments are due by 4:30 p.m. on the date indicated below and must be uploaded on Blackboard. Format for written assignments: Times New Roman size 12 font, 1” page margins and 1.5 line spacing. Citations/references should adhere to the APA style guide manual.

- Class Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. (10 points)

- Assignments and/or Examinations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Legislative Hearing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
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<td>Policy Memo</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
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<td>Policy Paper</td>
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<td>Nov. 29</td>
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- Legislative Hearing (due Sept. 13): Watch online and/or read the official transcript of a recent (within the past five years) federal or state legislative hearing on any higher education issue and prepare a summary that describes a) the topic and its
significance, b) legislator statements and witness testimonies and perspectives, c) the discussion among legislators and the witnesses, and d) your thoughts and commentary. (20 points)

- Master’s students: The summary should be no less than three pages.
- Doctoral Students: The summary should be no less than four pages.

**Policy Memo (due Oct. 18):** Assume that you are preparing a memo for a federal or state policymaker (legislative or executive) on a higher education issue of your choice. The memo should include a) its purpose, b) issue background and recent developments, c) description of the policy problem and/or pending decision, d) discussion of options, including pros/cons and support/opposition, and e) your recommendation, along with a rationale. (20 points)

- Master’s students: The memo should be no less than four pages.
- Doctoral Students: The memo should be no less than five pages.

**Policy Paper (due Nov. 29):** Choose a higher education issue and analyze its significance, progress and impact. The paper should a) discuss the policy issue and historical background, b) summarize the relevant research literature, c) describe recent policy developments, and d) provide your ideas and suggestions for future actions in this area. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate a student’s in-depth knowledge of a particular issue and to clearly articulate a position that is grounded in research and factual evidence. (50 points)

- Master’s students: The paper should be no less than 10 pages, excluding citations and references.
- Doctoral Students: The paper should be no less than 15 pages, excluding citations and references, with a minimum of 5 pages of literature review.

**Other Requirements**

Students are expected to arrive on time, actively participate in discussions, read assignments prior to class, and meet deadlines. Please notify the instructor in advance if you are unable to meet any of these requirements. Phone/tablet use is not allowed during class.

**Grading**

This course uses the university-wide system for grading graduate courses. See [http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/grading/](http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/grading/) Cumulative points corresponding to each grade are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>F</td>
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**Schar – Plagiarism**

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at
the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable. **Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own.** It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined. Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For international students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa. To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. [http://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/masters-advising/academic-policiesforms/](http://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/masters-advising/academic-policiesforms/)

**CEHD – Professional Dispositions**

See [https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/](https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/)

**CEHD – Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: [http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/](http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/).

**GMU Policies and Resources for Students**

**Policies**

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see [https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/)).

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/)).
• Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

• Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see https://ds.gmu.edu/).

• Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

• Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/.

• For information on student support resources on campus, see https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/

For additional information on the Schar School of Policy and Government, please visit https://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/masters-student-services

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the syllabus as necessary, with notification to students.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Aug. 30: Introduction

No required readings. Review of syllabus.

Sept. 6: Historical Overview


Kiener, R. (2013). Future of public universities. CQ Researcher, 23(3), 63 and 66-69. Available here (Just these pages)


TG Research and Analytical Services (2005). Chapter 1: Historical background. In Opening the doors to higher education: Perspectives on the Higher Education Act 40 years later (pp. 3-12). Round Rock, TX: Author. Available here (Just this chapter)

Sept. 13: Value & Inequality


Carnevale, A., Jayasundera, T., & Gulish, A. (2016). America’s divided recovery: College haves and have-nots. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce. Available here (Just skim this)


**Sept. 20: Differing Perspectives**


Cooper, P. (2017, August 18). If higher education were a public good... *Forbes*. Available [here](#).


**Sept. 27: Funding**


**Oct. 4: Pricing & Affordability**


**Oct. 11: Financial Aid**


**Oct. 18: Student Debt**


**Oct. 25: Student Outcomes**


**Nov. 1: Quality & Accreditation**


**Nov. 8: For-Profit Colleges**


**Nov. 15: Transparency & Accountability**


### Nov. 29: State Policy - Reforms, Trends and Innovations


**Dec. 6: Looking Forward**


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