ELPS 405: Introduction to Educational Policy and Practice  
International Higher Education Program  
School of Education  
Loyola University – Chicago  
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Sakai entry page: https://sakai.luc.edu/

PART I: INTRODUCTION, GOALS, AND EXPECTATIONS

Course Description
This course is intended to help you think critically about debates, research, and frameworks in contemporary higher education policy, with an emphasis on the interplay between domestic and international policy contexts. Throughout the semester, we will explore the tensions between key policy goals such as access and inclusion, accountability, and financing, as well as the consequences (intended and unintended) of those tensions. The course is not intended to provide an in-depth examination of these issues, but rather to help you become an informed and sophisticated consumer of higher education policy through two main strategies:

1. To explore the diversity that makes up the field of higher education policy. The readings for this class are intended to expose you to a variety of policy strategies, discursive styles, and purposes. In some sessions we will focus predominantly on the academic research and critiques of various policy topics. However, we will also examine different types of policy documents used in domestic and international policymaking, such as issue briefs, white papers, reports, legislation, and measurement instruments.

2. To reflect on how different policy logics and truth regimes have shaped and continue to shape policymaking across institutional, state, national, and international contexts. This requires you to become familiar with leading research in the field, the different positions taken by influential policymakers (such as international organizations like the World Bank), and the repertoire of analytical frameworks at your disposal.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Articulate current trends in higher education policy in the US and worldwide, including salient critiques of such trends;
2. Reflect on how different approaches to policy may impact issues like student access and success, governance, and the financing of higher education institutions;
3. Conduct nuanced comparisons of higher education policies in a variety of domestic and international contexts;
4. Compose well-argued, empirically-supported assessments of policy issues in higher education.
Course Expectations
This class is structured as a student-centered, collaborative course. As such, the class will be focused around the following learning tenets:

- Shared responsibility among all learners (both instructor and students) for constructing and making sense of knowledge within a community of practice;
- An emphasis on the critical role that peers play in the learning process, especially as it relates to helping one another decode, make meaning, and promote understanding of course content.

With this in mind, I expect each of you to take an active role in your learning both inside and outside our virtual classroom. Likewise, an important aspect of a Jesuit education is learning to respect the rights and opinions of others. Please respect others by (1) allowing all classmates the right to voice their opinions without fear of ridicule, and (2) not using profanity or making objectionable (e.g. gendered, racial or ethnic) comments, especially comments directed at a classmate.

Course Demands
Graduate courses are demanding; adding the asynchronous online element adds further challenges. It is imperative that students keep up with the readings and assignments. It is a good idea to schedule specific times to devote to completing the course readings and assignments. Some works are considerable longer than others, so check the syllabus each week and be certain you have allotted enough time to adequately cover the assigned readings.

Course Feedback and Special Circumstances
Students are urged to contact me should they have questions concerning course materials and procedures. If you have any special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work, please let me know so we can establish a plan for assignment completion. If you require assignment accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that arrangements can be made with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) (http://www.luc.edu/sswd/).

Throughout the semester, I welcome your input about course-related issues. If you have comments or suggestions about the class and how it might be improved, please do let me know—do not wait until the end of the semester. I take student feedback seriously and am open to make adjustments as far as circumstances allow.

Statement of Intent
By remaining in this course, students are agreeing to accept this syllabus as a contract and to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.
PART II: LUC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DISPOSITIONS

A conceptual framework that emphasizes “Social Action through Education” guides instructional, extracurricular, and professional activities at Loyola’s School of Education. The Loyola School of Education faculty are dedicated to promoting professionalism in service of social justice by developing students’ knowledge, skills, ethics, and service to improve educational opportunities for all members of society.

This course houses a core assessment for the following Conceptual Framework Standard:

*CFS4: Candidates engage with local and/or global communities in ethical and socially just practices.*

Loyola’s School of Education is committed to the value of diversity in all of its courses. In our examination of policy issues in higher education, we will consider many issues related to social justice, such as equity, diversity, affirmative action, funding patterns, and access to higher education. Examining these issues illustrates how educational institutions both shape and are shaped by wider communities through their accommodation of and resistance to the ideas and values of those groups. This course addresses these issues and invites students to critically reflect on them for their own current and future professional practice in higher education.

**Diversity**

Loyola’s School of Education is committed to the value of diversity in all its courses. This course presents and encourages diverse perspectives on higher education policy, with a special focus on critical perspectives that promote social justice imperatives in analyses of and for policy. The course content is intended to provide a broad perspective on some of the most pressing policy concerns in higher education in the US and in the world, including equitable access and success, higher education as a public good, and the equitable distribution of knowledge. This course addresses these issues and invites students to critically reflect on them for their own current and future professional practice in higher education.

**IDEA Course Evaluation Link for Students**

Each course you take in the School of Education is evaluated through the IDEA Campus Labs system. We ask that when you receive an email alerting you that the evaluation is available that you promptly complete it. To learn more about IDEA or to access the website directly to complete your course evaluation go to: [http://luc.edu/idea/](http://luc.edu/idea/) and click on **STUDENT IDEA LOGIN** on the left hand side of the page.

**IDEA Objectives**

The following outcomes are deemed **ESSENTIAL** to this course:

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories)
2. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
3. Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing

**Dispositions**

All students are assessed on one or more dispositional areas of growth across our programs: **Professionalism, Inquiry, and Social Justice.** The instructor in your course will identify the dispositions assessed in this course and you can find the rubrics related to these dispositions in LiveText. For those
students in non-degree programs, the rubric for dispositions may be available through Sakai, TaskStream or another platform. Disposition data is reviewed by program faculty on a regular basis. This allows faculty to work with students to develop throughout their program and address any issues as they arise. The rubric for assessing dispositional behaviors can be found in Appendix A in this syllabus.

**LiveText**

All students, except those who are non-degree, must have access to LiveText to complete the benchmark assessments aligned to the Conceptual Framework Standards and all other accreditation, school-wide and/or program-wide related assessments. You can access more information on LiveText here: LiveText.

**Syllabus Addendum Link**

- [www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/](www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/)

This link directs students to statements on essential policies regarding academic honesty, accessibility, ethics line reporting and electronic communication policies and guidelines. We ask that you read each policy carefully.

This link will also bring you to the full text of our conceptual framework that guides the work of the School of Education – *Social Action through Education*. 
PART III: PARTICIPATION AND EVALUATION POLICY

Grading Policy

1. Participation on VoiceThread and related activities 30% of final grade
2. State or country background paper 25% of final grade
3. Policy/issue brief 25% of final grade
4. Op-ed 20% of final grade

Total points for an A: 96-100
Total points for an A-: 90-95
Total points for a B+: 87-89
Total points for a B: 84-86
Total points for a B-: 80-83
Total points for a C+: 77-79
Total points for a C: 74-76
Total points for a C-: 70-73

Late Assignments/Participation Policy
Unless otherwise announced, all assignments must be posted in Sakai by the end of the day (midnight) of the due date. Sakai provides a date and time stamp for all posted materials. Each assignment is graded on a scale of 1-100; you will be penalized three points per day for assignments posted after the due date. If there is an unavoidable problem getting an assignment in on time, please notify me ahead of time to make alternate arrangements.

Late participation on VoiceThread: The richness of online discussions is heavily dependent on all students participating in a timely manner. Each late participation (on either the initial response to the readings or to the small group discussion) will result in a 3 point penalty on your final participation grade. A no-show will result in a 5 point penalty on your final participation grade. That being said, I understand that life happens: If you know ahead of time that you might be late or will be unable to participate, let me know ahead of time so we can make alternate arrangements.

Communications and Technology Policy
Email will be used as the primary mode of correspondence for this course. As such, it is imperative that you activate your Loyola University account and check it often. Please also check your Loyola spam mail and mail foundry to ensure course related messages are not misdirected.

Additionally, Sakai will be used as a source of continual updates about course material. You can expect that all emails to the instructor will be responded to within 48 hours (if not sooner), not including weekends.

Given the emphasis on email and Sakai communications, please make sure you:

- Check your email frequently.
- Be patient. I am typically able to respond within 48 hours (not including weekends) and will do my best to get back to you as soon as possible.
• Include subject headings.
• Make every effort to be clear. Online communication lacks the nonverbal cues that fill in much of the meaning in face-to-face communication.
• Be courteous and considerate. This includes observing adequate forms of address and signing off your message with your name. This is an important aspect of professional conduct in our field and it makes a difference! I prefer being addressed as Blanca, Dr. Torres-Olave, or Prof. Torres-Olave, based on your comfort level. Miss/Ms./Mrs. Torres-Olave are not appropriate in this context.

Required Texts
There is no required textbook. All required readings are available on the Sakai course website. While most readings should be immediately available, I may adapt some of the content for later sessions based on class needs. If this is the case, I’ll let you know ahead of time.

Course Assignments
You will be expected to complete the following assignments:

1. Participation (30% of final grade)
Participation is essential in an online asynchronous class environment. You are expected to participate through questions, critiques, illustrations, suggestions, and other forms of constructive feedback. I will assess your participation both by the “quality” and the frequency of comments. In this case, quality is defined as thoughtful, respectful, and insightful questions and comments that serve to strengthen the class discussion.

• All weekly course readings are available on Sakai under the “Lessons” tab. For each session, you will find an introduction to the week’s readings as well as prompt questions to help guide your responses. On certain weeks there will also be a “Comments” box for a number of tasks.
• Each week you will be assigned to a small discussion group. You will find the group roster for that week under the corresponding Sakai Lesson tab.
• For this course the week begins on Monday. Each week, you will be expected to post a minimum of two responses on VoiceThread, as follows:
  o On Mondays, you will post an initial response to that week’s readings. A late posting is considered any posting made after 11:59 pm on Monday CST.
  o On Tuesdays, you are expected to respond to the posts by the members of your assigned small group for that week. The goal is to provide the opportunity for more in-depth discussion in a small group setting, as well as ensuring that all students benefit from interaction with their peers. A late response is considered any posting made after 11:59 pm on Tuesday CST.
  o The VoiceThread for each small group will be available on the Friday prior to each class, in case you want to post your initial response ahead of time.
• I will make comments on the group discussions on Wednesday-Thursday.
2. **State or country background paper (25% of final grade – Due March 18th, by 11:59pm CST/CDT)**

**Note:** Assignments 2 and 3 can be completed individually or in pairs. See guidelines for group work [in green brackets].

For this assignment, you will write a document that provides a clear and concise overview of the current state of higher education in a state (US) or country of your choice. Background papers (or background sections in broader reports) are an essential part of many policy documents. The purpose of this assignment is to help you develop skills in a) analyzing a higher education system as a whole; b) making difficult decisions about what information to include and what information to leave out when working within strict space limitations (a must in policy writing); and clearly and effectively condensing information from a variety of sources intended for a broad audience.

In writing this paper, keep in mind an audience that is unfamiliar with a) higher education systems in general; and b) the target country/state. In other words, your paper should be written in such a way that a lay person could learn about higher education in general and how higher education plays out in your target country/state.

**The paper should be 5-7 [8-9] pages (excluding citations), double-spaced, and APA-formatted.**  
The background paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1) It should clearly identify the geopolitical entity under consideration (e.g., Kansas, Mexico, Oman);
2) It should discuss key facets of the higher education system in the entity (e.g., number and types of institutions, enrollments, student composition, main financing strategies, governance, main challenges);
3) It should make appropriate use of supporting literature and evidence on the issue (e.g. higher education reports, national/international data, academic research);
4) It should include an abstract and an introduction.
5) It must be well-written throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

**Note:** Under the “Session 3” in Sakai Lessons tab you will find a comment section. You’re expected to list the state or country you will focus on for this paper, and provide a brief explanation of why you’re choosing it. [If you’re working in pairs, indicate so as part of this task and identify your writing partner.] This task is not graded, but it must be submitted to move forward with your background paper.

3. **Policy/issue brief (25% - Due April 15th, by 11:59pm CST/CDT)**

**Note:** Assignments 2 and 3 can be completed individually or in pairs. See guidelines for group work [in brackets].

You will write a policy brief addressing a pressing policy issue, topic, or problem, in the higher education context identified in the first assignment (e.g. Arizona; China). The purpose of the policy brief is to help you deepen your understanding of a contemporary higher education issue in a format that is commonly used in the policy world.
Your brief should be between 5-7 pages (excluding citations), double-spaced, and APA-formatted. It should provide a concise yet thorough overview of the topic at hand and its main facets in your chosen context.

Some possible topics include, but are not limited to: Performance-based funding, financial aid, governance, student access, retention, academic freedom, affirmative action, internationalization, academic mobility, student debt, accreditation, and quality assurance. Feel free to contact me ahead of time if you want to discuss it your topic of interest.

The policy brief will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1) It should focus on a higher education policy issue that is relevant to the society in your target context.
2) It should include an abstract and an introduction briefly stating the policy problem and the focus of the paper.
3) It should include a discussion of the different facets of the policy issue, with appropriate subheadings.
4) It must reflect the course content. (This doesn’t mean citing specific course readings, but rather making use of course topical content and discussions to make sense of the policy issue.)
5) It should make appropriate use of supporting literature and evidence on the issue (drawing on at least 6-10 sources) and you own scholarly reflection on the issue.
6) It must be well-written throughout, and in an appropriate formal style and format.

Note: Under “Session 7” in Sakai you will find a comment section. You’re expected to name the topic of your policy brief, and provide a one paragraph explanation of why you’re picking that topic. [If you’re working in pairs, indicate so as part of this task and identify your writing partner.] This task is not graded, but it must be submitted to move forward with your policy brief.

4. Consolidating Op-ed Essay (20% - Due May 1st by 11:59 pm CST)

An important venue to discuss policy matters is the 800-word opinion-editorial. Distinct from academic writing, the persuasive op-ed format is a succinct way of advocating for an idea or position for mass audiences. Your assignment is to write an op-ed essay on the main higher education policy issue/context identified in the previous two assignments. Notice the important difference in style and content between these documents! While the policy brief takes a more detached, scholarly approach to presenting information, the op-ed demands that you take a stand in relation to a particular policy issue, and try to convince people to embrace a given viewpoint on the issue.

The purpose of this assignment is for you to express and support your opinion on a complex policy issue in a brief, persuasive manner. For example, for your chosen topic, you may: 1) suggest a new piece of higher education legislation; 2) recommend how higher education policies currently being considered could be improved upon; 3) recommend a change in existing rules or regulations that impact higher education, or 4) recommend a change in procedures that affect the conduct of higher education policy.

In preparing for this assignment, consider where you would want to see your op-ed published and select and attach a copy of an editorial you admire from that publication. Use the selected editorial as a model for your own. Likewise, you are encouraged to read op-eds from the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, Diverse Issues in Higher Education, and Dr. Marybeth Gasman’s How to write an

Because the op-ed is meant to highlight your unique voice and insights, this is a strictly individual assignment. The op-ed piece will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. **700-800 words** (strict limit)
2. 12-point font and double space
3. APA style
4. Take care with crafting your opening hook, placement of thesis statement, length of sentences and closing punch line.
5. Tone and word choice matters: Remember you are writing for a broad audience, so avoid academic jargon to the extent possible.
6. You are encouraged to rely on the two previous assignments as background information in composing your op-ed piece.
7. Take a stand: make a specific recommendation.
8. An “A” op-ed does the following:
   - Style: Writing is engaging and effective for its intended purpose and audience; reflects attention to strategic and varied use of syntax and diction.
   - Language Conventions: Smoothly integrates sources using a variety of methods (quote, paraphrase, summary); contains very few or no errors with respect to language conventions.
# PART IV: COURSE OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Readings/Tasks</th>
<th>Tasks/Due</th>
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|         |         | Week prior to class start | - View introductory video on Sakai/VoiceThread  
- Familiarize yourself with syllabus  
- Post a brief response to question, “What does policy mean to you?” under the Sakai Lessons> Welcome tab. |         |
| 2/12    | 1       | Types of policy documents | - Watch mini-lecture on types of policy documents (VoiceThread)  
- Browse policy documents posted on Sakai | Respond to prompt questions by 2/14; respond to classmates by 2/15* |
|         |         | Frameworks to understand policy | Readings  
- Simons, Olssen, and Peters (2009), Chapter 1  
- Simons, Olssen, and Peters (2009), Chapter 2 (pp. 54-70 only). | Respond to prompt questions by 2/19; respond to classmates by 2/18 |
| 2/19    | 2       | Policy Environments | Readings  
- Bracco et al. (1999)  
- Fielden (2008), pp. 1 – 44  
- Perna and Finney (2014) Ch. 2  
- Capt (2013) | Respond to prompt questions by 2/26; respond to classmates by 2/27 |
| 3/5     | 4       | Spring Break (No Class) |         | |
- Pasque (2010), Ch. 2  
- Peercy & Svenson (2016)  
- Carlson (2016) | Respond to prompt questions by 3/12; respond to classmates by 3/13 |
- Callan (2002)  
- Perna and Finney (2014) Ch. 5 | Respond to prompt questions by 3/19; respond to classmates by 3/20 |

*Note: To accommodate the beginning of the semester, this week your VoiceThread posts are due on Wednesday/Thursday, respectively.

Post chosen state/country for Background Paper. (If working in pairs, identify writing partner.)

Background Paper due March 18th.
### References


### Appendix A: Student Dispositions

The SOE unit-wide dispositions, *Commitment to professionalism, social justice, and inquiry* will be evaluated per a 4-level rubric that indicates the degree to which the student meets the dispositional expectation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2 Partially Meets Expectation</th>
<th>Level 3 Meets Expectation</th>
<th>Level 4 Exceeds Expectation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROFESSIONALISM</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Candidate fails to demonstrate acceptable professional and ethical behavior in scholarship, coursework, or other program-related activities.</td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates an emerging ability to meet expectations for professional and ethical behavior (i.e. appropriate communication, academic integrity, timeliness and follow-through, collegiality) in scholarship, coursework, and other program-related activities.</td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates professional and ethical behavior when faced with challenges (i.e. appropriate communication, academic integrity, timeliness and follow through, collegiality) in scholarship, coursework, and other program-related activities. AND Candidate demonstrates a basic understanding of expected professional and ethical behavior in his or her field.</td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates exceptional professional and ethical behavior when faced with challenges (i.e. appropriate communication, academic integrity, timeliness and follow through, collegiality) in scholarship, coursework, and other program-related activities. AND Candidate demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of expected professional and ethical behavior in his or her field.</td>
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| **SOCIAL JUSTICE** | | | |
| In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates a lack of reasoning about the complexity of social justice within educational settings. | In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates an emerging ability to articulate a framework for reasoning about the historical, philosophical, sociological and political complexities of social justice within educational settings. | In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates a coherent framework for reasoning about the historical, philosophical, sociological and political complexities of social justice within educational settings. | In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates and persuasively articulates a robust framework for reasoning about the historical, philosophical, sociological and political complexities of social justice within educational settings. |

| **INQUIRY** | | | |
| In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates a lack of interest in inquiry. | In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates an emerging willingness to challenge existing knowledge, and a | In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates curiosity, a willingness to challenging existing knowledge, and a | In written work and class participation candidate demonstrates risk-taking curiosity, a willingness to challenging existing knowledge, and a |
| commitment to collaborative problem solving and construct new knowledge within the humanities and/or social sciences. | commitment to collaborative problem solving and constructing new knowledge within the humanities and/or social sciences. | knowledge, and a robust commitment to collaborative problem solving and to constructing new knowledge within the humanities and/or social sciences. |