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POLITICS OF EDUCATION

EAD 943 (3 credits)

COURSE MEETS: Wednesday, 4:10 – 7:00 PM
222 Erickson Hall

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment only

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The education sector is among the largest employers in the national economy, and educational institutions typically command the largest share of public budgets at state and local levels. Educational attainment is a critically important variable in the allocation of adult statuses and their associated rewards, for individuals and groups. The experience of schooling contributes to the socialization of the young; the curriculum incorporates and affirms some forms of knowledge while depreciating or excluding others. Education is consequently an intensely political activity, and the educational system is the arena for intense political conflict.

This course examines the intersection between education and politics. The primary focus will be on the politics of education in the United States, but examples and illustrations will be drawn from countries around the world. Most of the material in the course will deal with the basic education system (K-12) but some attention will also be given to university politics. The implications of theoretical and analytical work in the field for contemporary policy debates in Michigan and beyond will be emphasized throughout the course.

ASSIGNED READINGS

There are six assigned books for this course:

Tinkering Toward Utopia (Tyack and Cuban)
The New Institutionalism (Powell and DiMaggio)
Government Failure (Tullock, Seldon, and Brady)
Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (Hirschmann)
The Evolution of Cooperation (Axelrod)
The Policy Making Process (Lindblom and Woodhouse)

All of these books are available in the MSU Bookstore. Additional readings have been compiled on a CD-ROM, which will be distributed in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course will be conducted primarily by means of class discussion, and completion of all assigned readings prior to the class meeting in which they will be discussed is therefore essential.

Additional requirements include three brief (2 pp.) essays on assigned readings, a short (8-10 pp.) analytical paper based on field observation conducted by the student, and a major (25-30 pp.) term paper based on library research. The short paper might for example provide a political analysis of a board of education meeting, a debate in the legislature, or a PTO election. The term paper may address any subject of relevance to the course. The instructor must approve the topics of both papers in advance.

Grades will be determined on the basis of class participation (20 percent), essay reviews (20 percent), short paper (20 percent), and term paper (40 percent). **No late work will be accepted,** except by prior arrangement with the instructor.

COURSE OUTLINE

Jan	12	Introduction and overview
	19	Why Paradigms Matter
		Readings: Meyer, “Types of Explanation in the Sociology of Education” Finn, “The Politics of Change”
	26	Interests and institutions
		Readings: Tyack and Cuban (all) Plank, “Why School Reform Doesn’t Change Schools”
Feb	2	Neo-institutional theory
		Readings: DiMaggio and Powell, Chapters 1 - 8
	9	Public Choice Theory
		Readings: Tullock, Seldon, and Brady, Part I
	16	Interest conflict and game theory
		Readings: Axelrod (all) Boyd, Plank, and Sykes, “Teachers’ Unions...”
	23	Exit, Voice, and Loyalty
		Readings: Hirschmann (all)
Mar	2	Decentralization and community values
		Readings: Post, “Through Joshua Gap” Plank, “Dreams of Community”
	9	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

16 **Choice and charter schools**

SHORT PAPERS DUE IN CLASS!

Readings: **TBA**

23 **Accountability and Accreditation**

Readings: **TBA**

30 **Curriculum wars**

Readings: **TBA**

Apr 6 **Policy and the politics of education**

Readings: Lindblom and Woodhouse (all)
 Plank and Boyd, "Anti-politics..."

13 **AERA – NO CLASS**

20 **Student presentations**

26 **Student presentations**

TERM PAPERS DUE IN CLASS!