

**TE 920 – Social Analysis of Educational Policy**  
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The persistent achievement gaps between majority and minority students and between middle income and lower income students have been the subject of much debate and educational research. Recent policies, such as *No Child Left Behind*, have pledged that schools alone will close the achievement gaps through “no excuses” policies. Can these policies be effective?

This course will examine the achievement gap policy debates as well as the social science research on the multiple causes and possible solutions for achievement gaps. This course will consider the following questions:

- \* How has the achievement gap debate been framed by policy makers and the media?
- \* What gaps should we, as a nation, be concerned about?
- \* When we speak of a gap, between which groups are we talking?
- \* How do gaps vary between different groups?
- \* How might these differences require different policy solutions?

Opportunities to customize the course to meet individual interests and needs will be provided.

Further, students will be able to use course assignments to investigate their own interests related to the achievement gap. For example, students may consider:

- The achievement gaps for special populations such as ELL students, 1<sup>st</sup> generation vs 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants, or children born addicted to illegal substances
- How different efforts to narrow the achievement gap have impacted the work of teachers
- Policies that have been targeted at closing the gaps for particular content areas such as math, literacy or science
- Describing the gap in an area besides academics. For example, what does the social and emotional development gap look like? What is the gap for civic and political participation?
- The way teachers have been framed in the media with respect to the achievement gap
- Whether schools that “beat the odds” are replicable