School Choice and Privatization
TE 982 Section 004
Spring 2008
Michigan State University
Monday, 4:10 – 7:00pm
313 Ernst Bessey Hall
(last updated 2/22/08)

Professor Cassie Guarino      Professor Rebecca Jacobsen
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Office Hours:  Tues 2-4       Office Hours:  Wed 2-4

Course Description
Cassie Guarino, an economist, and Rebecca Jacobsen, politics and education, will collaborate on this new seminar, which will be uniquely strengthened by their distinctive perspectives and prior research in school choice. The class will explore issues relating to school choice and privatization. It will discuss the market-based rationale underlying choice policies and the various forms that school choice can take. It will focus on the choice movement in the US, but will also address choice in the international context. Given the importance of the charter school movement in the US, the course will focus on charter schools in depth. Students will thoroughly understand school choice issues and policies as well as the empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of choice-based reforms. Students will learn to understand and evaluate the methodologies used by researchers to judge choice programs.

In particular, the seminar will explore: market influences on education; historical forms of school choice; public versus private schools; the politics of choice, voucher programs; the charter school movement; choice and sorting - who attends charter schools; choice and governance - who organizes, oversees, and leads charter schools; choice and staffing - who teaches in charter schools; choice and democratic education; and the impact of choice on student outcomes.

There are no prerequisites for the class, but some background in statistics and the economic theory of markets will be helpful.

Requirements and Grading

Students are expected to prepare carefully for class and read all assigned papers. Readings will be assigned each week appropriate to the scheduled topic. Students will be asked to present structured summaries of a selection of assigned readings. Students will also be expected to lead a portion of the class discussion on more than one assigned paper during the term. When leading the discussion of a paper, students should prepare a short summary handout (1-2 pages) for the class. The format of the handout will be discussed in the first class meeting.

Students will be required to prepare a final presentation and paper evaluating an existing or proposed school choice policy along dimensions discussed in class. During the final two classes,
students are expected to make a full Power Point presentation on their topic and the paper will be due during Finals Week.

One-fourth of the grade will be based on the paper discussions each student leads. One-fourth will be based on the final presentation, and one-fourth on the final paper. The final fourth of the grade will be based on the quality of general contributions to class discussions of papers and projects.

**Other Details**

**Students with disabilities:** We will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Please feel free to speak with us if there are issues of which we should be aware.

**Academic Honesty and Integrity:** We assume that students are honest and that all course work represents the student’s own work. Violations of the academic integrity policy such as cheating, plagiarism, selling course assignments or academic fraud are grounds for academic action and/or disciplinary sanction as described in the University’s student conduct code.

**Incidents of Plagiarism:** They will be taken very seriously and will be pursued. Students are strongly cautioned not to copy any text verbatim without appropriate quotations and source citations.

For University regulations on academic dishonesty and plagiarism, please refer to:

http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html

**Notes**

Syllabus is subject to change and will be updated throughout the course.

**Instructors**

Rebecca Jacobsen is an assistant professor of education policy who studies politics and education with a particular emphasis on public opinion and educational issues. She is a co-author on the book *The Charter School Dust Up: Examining the Evidence on Enrollment and Achievement*.

Cassie Guarino is an assistant professor of education policy and former RAND economist who studies teacher quality, teacher labor markets, school choice, and the connection between health and education. Her work on school choice has included the study of the charter school movement in California and charter schools in the nation of Qatar. In a RAND evaluation of charters schools in California sponsored by the State Legislative Analyst’s Office, she led the investigations of staffing and special education policies in charter schools. She also led a follow-on study of non-classroom based charter schools in California. For the government of Qatar, she led an evaluation of the school finance system supporting the charter school reform.

**Week 1 (January 7) – Introduction**

Types of Choice in History
• Private Schools
• Open Enrollment Programs
• Magnet Schools
• Vouchers
• Charters
• Controlled Choice (NCLB – failing schools)

Overview of charter schools

Week 2 (January 14) – Theories of School Choice


Week 3 (January 28) - Early Forms of Choice

Public vs. Private


Residential sorting

Week 4 & 5 – (Feb 4 and 11) Politics of Choice (2 weeks)

PART 1 – WEEK 4
Chapters 1, 2, 4, 8 and 9

PART 2 – WEEK 5

**Week 6 – (February 18) Choice in Michigan**


**Week 7 – (February 25) Voucher Programs**

Chapter 1 – The Politics of Vouchers (pp. 15-42).


OPTIONAL:


Week 8 – (March 10) Charter Schools – Types of charters and governance


Week 9 – (March 17) Charter Schools - Student and Family Sorting


Week 10 – (March 24 – WILL BE RESCHEDULED DUE TO AREA) Charter Schools Staffing


**Week 11 – (March 31) Charter Schools – Achievement**
This class and the following will discuss studies aimed at finding a “charter school effect” on student achievement both through a direct effect on charter school students and through an indirect—or “competitive” effect—on traditional public school students.


**Week 12 – (April 7) Charter Schools – Achievement Continued**


**Week 13 (April 14) International Choice and Privatization**


**Week 14 – (April 21) Student Presentations**