Social Contexts of Educational Policy, Politics & Practice
EDST 577, Section 081 (SCPE core course)

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Course Description

Welcome to EDST 577. In this seminar we will examine such questions as: What is educational policy? Can research help solve social problems? If so, how: Through finding technical solutions to social problems or advocacy? Should policy analysts take social problems as given, or should they study the social construction of these problems? Which voices are dominant and which ones absent in the educational policy process? Who benefits from educational policy and who loses? What are the intended and unintended consequences of educational policy? In the course, we will examine the process of policy making as well as some persistent themes in educational policy (such as equalizing opportunity, providing more choice) through case studies of specific policy issues and the social contexts from which they emerge.

Course Objectives

EDST 577 is designed to provide learning opportunities that will assist participants to:

- Explore the everyday of policy in your lives;
- Examine educators as policy actors;
- Understand policy and policy activism;
- Explore current educational policy debates;
- Examine alternative framing of educational policy;
- Understand the connection between politics and policy and the competing interests involved in the educational policy arena;
- Analyze global policies within local contexts;
- Be familiar with different approaches to educational policy research, including from indigenous perspectives.
## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND DUE DATES

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<th></th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tues. Sept. 6</td>
<td>Introduction; metaphors of policy</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Tues. Sept. 13</td>
<td>What is policy? Who makes policy? Different approaches to understanding and researching policy <strong>learning contracts due via Connect Grade Center by class time</strong> **</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tues. Sept. 20</td>
<td>The construction of public problems; discourse analysis</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Tues. Sept. 27</td>
<td>Governance frameworks; policy settlements; neoliberalism</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tues. Oct. 4</td>
<td>Democracy, culture, and the politics of difference <strong>policy comparison (website) assignment due by class time</strong> **</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tues. Oct. 11</td>
<td>Dimensions of social justice in education</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Tues. Oct. 18</td>
<td>Participation, recognition, redistribution—plus joy in education</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tues. Oct. 25</td>
<td>Aboriginal education policy</td>
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<td>Tues. Nov. 1</td>
<td>Gender equality policy in education</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Tues. Nov. 8</td>
<td>Policy alternatives: <em>Prefigurative practice, real utopias</em></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Tues. Nov. 15</td>
<td>Framing and counter-framing</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Tues. Nov. 22</td>
<td>Policy activism</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Tues. Nov. 29</td>
<td>Student presentations (format TBD; maybe gallery walk) <strong>final assignment/s due no later than Friday, Dec. 2 by 9 a.m.</strong> **</td>
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### Course Requirements & Evaluation

NOTE: I encourage you to work together with other members of the class on any assignment. If you elect to do this, you will receive a group mark.

NOTE: Your learning contract and all assignments should be posted to the Grade Center within Connect.

**Policy Comparison Assignment, 20% of the final mark**

5 typed, double-spaced pages, due on October 4.

Either from the list of suggested websites provided or ones you locate, choose two and explore their policy fields:

1. Clarify why you have chosen these two websites and how you intend to compare them.
2. Discuss in a meaningful way the discourses in use and the intended audiences.
3. Look at, and discuss, the condensation symbols that are used.
4. Consider whether you can identify discursive frames that limit what can be discussed (e.g., unheard voices, missing policy alternatives), hidden assumptions, one or more of Thompson’s modes of operation of ideology, contradictions, or suspicious numbers.

5. Most importantly, base your discussion on readings from the course and class discussions; support your ideas with the relevant concepts and theories (citing where appropriate).

6. Reflect on the potential contribution of these policies/ websites to your own work.

7. Reflect on the limitations of these websites.

**Evaluation criteria:**

- Readable (well organized, concise, proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors)
- Makes a clear argument (e.g., supports claims, makes clear transitions)
- Attends to social context and power
- Demonstrates understanding of, and makes meaningful connections to, concepts, arguments, and examples learned through reading, class discussion, or practice
- Includes your insights and conclusions

**Suggestions for the Other Assignment(s) to Comprise 80% of the Final Mark:**

What follows are some suggested assignments, evaluation criteria, and sample outlines of learning contracts, with suggested weights for various assignments. Students should think about the type of assignment(s) that would best suit their needs and then indicate in a short learning contract how much they would like to weight each assignment and its due date. Learning contracts should be posted to the Connect Grade Center no later than Tuesday, September 13, 4:30 p.m.

**Suggestion #1:**

An assignment that allows you to **apply** what you have learned

**Short Essay (5 typed, double-spaced pages)**

Option A: Choose a specific policy or prominent policy commentary from a website of any school district (e.g., a school district’s safe schools policy, special education/inclusion, an Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement), federal, provincial or territorial government, or the website of the World Bank ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)), UNESCO, or the OECD. Download the entire policy document. Examine this policy based on the readings assigned for the course.

1. In your analysis, refer to the gender, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, (dis)ability, sexuality, and political underpinnings of the policy.
2. Analyze the implications of the policy for different social groups.
3. Point to the ethical issues involved.

Option B: Choose a policy document from your workplace and analyze the policy as well as the responses to it from internal and external interest groups.


**Evaluation criteria:**
- Readable (well organized, concise, proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors)
- Demonstrates an understanding of a policy from multiple perspectives
- Uses concepts, arguments, and examples learned through reading, class discussion, or practice
- Includes your insights and conclusions

**Suggestion #2:**

An assignment that allows you to do an in-depth, focused inquiry into an educational policy of your choosing

**Research Paper (15 typed, double-spaced pages)**

**Evaluation criteria:**
- Readable (well organized, concise, proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors)
- Demonstrates an understanding of the pertinent literature
- Draws from multiple sources and perspectives, including those that may question the “official story”
- Discusses aspects of the social context relevant to the policy issue under scrutiny
- Uses concepts, arguments, and examples learned through reading, class discussion, or practice
- Includes your insights and conclusions

**Suggestion #3:**

An assignment that allows you to analyze and reflect upon a set of readings, experiences, concepts, and beliefs

**Short Essay (5 typed, double-spaced pages)**

Option A: How does a set of reading(s) we have discussed enlarge your understanding of a personal experience?
Option B: Use one or more of the concepts presented in class to analyze something you care about.

Option C: Review your first two assignments:
1. Reflect on their contributions to your understanding of policy.
2. How will these contributions inform your practice?
3. Relate your discussion to the literature we reviewed in class.

Evaluation criteria:
- Readable (well organized, concise, proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors)
- Demonstrates an understanding of the pertinent literature and uses it to analyze a particular policy or policy setting
- Uses concepts, arguments, and examples learned through reading, class discussion, or practice to derive analytic insight into a policy or policy setting
- Includes your insights and conclusions

Suggestion #4:
An assignment that involves an Education Policy Autobiography

Short Essay (5 typed, double-spaced pages)

Option A: For this assignment feel free to use visuals to accompany your writing. Visuals could include a photo collage, a video, or a single photo that is particularly meaningful and that you explain in writing. Consider the following questions:

1. What is a policy that had impact on your life as a student or educator?
2. Did you see it as a “good” or “bad” policy?
3. Why did this policy exist? (e.g., was in reaction to a tragedy? If you don’t know, feel free to speculate)
4. Who was involved in creating the policy?
5. Who benefitted from the policy? Who did not?
6. What assumptions were made in the policy?
7. How did you come to learn about the policy? (e.g., family, friends, media)
8. What alternative policies could have been introduced?
9. How do your subject positions or social locations influence how the policy affected you and your thoughts about it?

Option B: Show how your professional practice is framed by various, often conflicting, policies.

Option C: Think about a policy you would like to do research on. How is it connected to your policy autobiography? How might you use your policy autobiography to frame your
policy study? How do you maintain a dialogue with people who have a similar policy autobiography, but a different viewpoint on the problem and the solution?

**Suggestion #5:**
Negotiate an alternative assignment

**Suggested Weights for Various Assignments**

*(Some Abbreviated Examples of Learning Contracts)*

Please note: include proposed due date/s for all but the policy comparison (website) assignment in your learning contract.

**Option 1:**
20%  Policy comparison (website) assignment  
40%  Application essay (Suggestion #1)  
40%  Analysis essay (Suggestion #3)

**Option 2:**
20%  Policy comparison (website) assignment  
80%  Research paper (Suggestion #2)

**Option 3:**
20%  Policy comparison (website) assignment  
40%  Analysis essay (Suggestion #3, Option C)  
40%  Education policy autobiography (Suggestion #4, Option A)

**Option 4:**
Negotiable

**Participation**

Everyone should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Class members will learn as much from the exchange of views inside the classroom as we will from analyzing the readings on our own. To enrich class discussion, students will be responsible for one **Synthesis-Response-Question (SRQ) piece.** The SRQ should be written as a narrative rather than a bulleted summary. Be sure to: (1) synthesize the reading in approximately one paragraph; (2) provide your response to the reading in one-half page (e.g., add a new idea or example, discuss a point you agree or disagree with and why, take up an idea that relates to your experience, discuss the implications for teaching, etc.); (3) pose critical questions about the reading that will enhance our understanding of course themes. Strong SRQs will illuminate the arguments being made by the author/s by drawing connections to previous class readings. The SRQ should fit on one page of paper (font size 12; maximum 500 words). Please email your SRQ to me no later than the Sunday before the Tuesday that your reading is to be discussed in
Normally, I will expect you to help to get going a small-group or class discussion based on your SRQ. Name your SRQ as: \texttt{SRQ\_Author last name.Your Name.doc} (e.g., \texttt{SRQ\_Levinson.Deirdre Kelly.doc}).

During the last week of the course, students will also briefly (maximum 10 minutes) present to the class an assignment for feedback and revision before turning in final drafts.

\textit{Course Readings}

The readings are available free of charge as e-journal articles or e-book chapters through UBC library. I have embedded direct links in the course outline to many electronic items. Some book chapters will only be available through the Library Course Reserve section of the course shell in Connect; available at: \url{http://elearning.ubc.ca/connect/}

Note: for the doi links to work, you will need to be logged in to UBC library via your CWL.

\textit{Detailed Schedule of Topics, Readings, & Activities}

\textbf{September 6:} Introduction. Metaphors of policy

Optional:


\textbf{September 13:} What is policy? Who makes policy? Different approaches to understanding and researching policy


Available: \url{http://epx.sagepub.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/content/23/6/767.full.pdf+html}


Available:

Optional further readings:
http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://her.hepg.org/content/g1q5k721220ku176/fulltext.pdf

http://edr.sagepub.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/content/41/5/157.full.pdf+html


**September 20:**  
The construction of public problems.  
Discourse analysis as a tool for social policy analysis


Excerpts from:

Grammar Interlude #6: “The topics and themes tool” (pp. 71-75)  
3.12: “The politics building tool” (pp. 124-129)  
3.13: “Working with the politics building tool,” Problem 28 (pp. 129-131)  
3.16: “Sign systems and knowledge building tool” (pp. 141-144)  
3:17: “Working with the sign systems ... tool,” Problem 34 (pp. 146-148)  
Available:

http://ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596300500040078


Optional further readings:


October 4: Democracy, culture, and the politics of difference


Optional further readings:


**October 11:**

**Dimensions of social justice in education:**
**Participation, recognition, redistribution**


Young, S. (2014, April). Stella Young: I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much [Video file]. Retrieved from [link](http://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_you_inspiration_thank_you_very_much)

Tom, A. (2015, October 7). Response to Stella Young's TED talk. Video posted on Connect under Course Content/Video of Dr Allison Tom on Disability < 9 min.>

Romanek, Mark. (Director). (2010). *Never let me go.* USA: DNA Films Film4. <film we will watch in class; 103 minutes>

Optional further reading:

**October 18:**

**Dimensions of social justice in education (continued):**
**Participation, recognition, redistribution—plus joy in education**


**October 25:** Aboriginal education policy


**November 1:** Gender equality policy in education


**November 8:** Policy alternatives: “Prefigurative practice,” “real utopias”


Optional further reading:

**November 15:** Framing and counter-framing


Optional further reading:

**November 22:**  
**Policy activism: Who, what, where, how?**

*Everyone reads:*  


*Also, read one of the following for a jigsaw activity (to be assigned in class):*


Optional further reading:

**November 29:** Student presentations

Details on format to be discussed in class.
**Suggested Online Resources for Policy Comparison Assignment**

Please note: Websites are usually updated often; links therefore change and sites are sometimes reorganized. So take the following merely as possible starting points.

**Indigenous Peoples and Policy**

Assembly of First Nations  
http://www.afn.ca/

United Nations Indigenous Social and Policy development  

Canadian Institute of Health Research: Aboriginal Ethics Policy Development  
http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29339.html

**NGO Affiliated Policy Studies Centres**

http://www.centerwomenpolicy.org/  
Networks: http://www.disabilitypolicycenter.org/index.htm

**Higher Education**

BC Ministry of Advanced Education  
http://www.gov.bc.ca/aved/

Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training (CHET)  
http://www.chet.educ.ubc.ca/

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), policy issues  
http://www.aucc.ca

Association of Canadian Community Colleges  
http://www.accc.ca/

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)  
http://www.caut.ca/

UNESCO Higher Education  
http://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education

OECD Higher Education and Adult Learning  
http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,3373,en_2649_39263238_1_1_1_1_37455,00.html

World Bank Tertiary Education
K-12 Education [ongoing issues: school choice; professional standards; accountability; diversity or inclusion]

British Columbia Ministry of Education
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/

BCTF
http://www.bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx

CCPA = Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [Education Project; reports]
http://www.policyalternatives.ca/

Fraser Institute
http://www.fraserinstitute.org/

BC Ministry of Education, Teacher Regulation Branch
www.bcteacherregulation.ca
[links to “standards”, “teacher education”, “professional conduct”]

BCPAC = British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
http://www.bccpac.bc.ca/resources

Teacher Qualification Service
[main site with links to full policy documents and press releases]
http://www.tqs.bc.ca/index.html

BCSTA = BC School Trustees Association
http://www.bcsta.org

Inclusion BC (formerly BCACL = BC Association for Community Living)
http://www.inclusionbc.org/

First Nations Education Steering Committee
http://www.fnesc.ca/

BC Ministry of Education list of Education Advisory Council Member and Other websites:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/relatedsites.htm#eac
**Pertinent UBC, EDST & Course Policies**

**EDST Graduate Course Grading Policy**

*Marking Standards.* ([http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/policies_forms/grading.html](http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/policies_forms/grading.html))

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>A+ (90-100%)</td>
<td>Reserved for exceptional work that greatly exceeds course expectations. In addition, achievement must satisfy all the conditions below.</td>
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<td>A (85-89%)</td>
<td>A mark of this order suggests a very high level of performance on all criteria used for evaluation. Contributions deserving an A are distinguished in virtually every aspect. They show that the individual significantly shows initiative, creativity, insight, and probing analysis where appropriate. Further, the achievement must show careful attention to course requirements as established by the instructor.</td>
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<td>A- (80-84%)</td>
<td>An A is awarded for generally high quality of performance, no problems of any significance, and fulfillment of all course requirements. However, the achievement does not demonstrate the level of quality that is clearly distinguished relative to that of peers in class and in related courses.</td>
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<td>B (68-79%)</td>
<td>This category of achievement is typified by adequate but unexceptional performance when the criteria of assessment are considered. It is distinguished from A level work by problems such as: one or more significant errors in understanding, superficial representation or analysis of key concepts, absence of any special initiatives, or lack of coherent organization or explication of ideas.</td>
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<td>C (60-67%)</td>
<td>C level work is that which exhibits several of the problems mentioned in the description of B grades. The Faculty of Graduate Studies considers 60% as a minimum passing grade for graduate students.</td>
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**Academic Honesty**

The integrity of academic work depends on the honesty of all those who work in this environment and the observance of accepted conventions, such as acknowledging the work of others. Please make sure that you acknowledge and cite the oral and written work of others in all your assignments. Not citing sources is considered plagiarism. You should be aware of the sections of the University Calendar that address policies and regulations related to academic honesty and standards -- [http://students.ubc.ca/calendar/](http://students.ubc.ca/calendar/) -- and academic misconduct and plagiarism -- [http://vpacademic.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/](http://vpacademic.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/). The UBC library also has a useful web-based Plagiarism Resource Centre that explains what plagiarism is and how to avoid it; see [www.library.ubc.ca/home/plagiarism/](http://www.library.ubc.ca/home/plagiarism/). If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies or conventions in relation to how they apply to the work you do in this course, please discuss them with me.

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, before or at the start of the term, you should arrange to meet with an Access & Diversity Office advisor to determine what services or accommodations you are eligible for. If you have a letter from the Access & Diversity Office indicating that you have a disability that requires specific accommodations, please present the letter to me so that we can discuss the accommodations that you might need for class. You can find more information at: [http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/disability-services/](http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/disability-services/).

**Religious Observances**

Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Whenever possible, students will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is
missed due to participation in a religious observance. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances in advance.

Copyright:

Students should familiarize themselves with, and comply with, UBC’s Copyright Guidelines and applicable copyright laws. See: http://copyright.ubc.ca.