

**EDPP6540**  
**The Politics of Research**  
**Fall 2017**

Professor Jeffrey R. Henig

Course Description:

Among social scientists, much that we learn and strive to accomplish is oriented around the goal of producing objective, scientifically valid research. As usually formulated, this goal is seen as demanding that politics—ideology, partisanship, interest group pressures—be held at bay. Yet politics often infuses the processes of identifying research problems, funding and carrying through research studies, drawing inferences for theory and policy, and disseminating findings to policy-makers and the public. The class will consider this interaction between politics and research and the implications for researchers and the goal of collective learning for democratic decision-making. Readings and discussion will include both historical and contemporary education policy issues and will place the specific case of education research in the larger context of the use and limitations of social science more generally.

Course requirements:

Learning how to think and talk critically about ideas and evidence are central tasks for the advanced graduate student. Accordingly, it is very important that all members of the class do the required reading and do so *before* the class session at which it will be discussed. I take class participation seriously. That means having things to say (and questions to ask) that are interesting, original, and helpful to the other students.

In addition, every student in the class will be expected to write *eight* one-page single spaced papers reacting to the week's reading, along with two "questions of the week," and post them on Canvas **no later than noon on the Tuesday before class**. [There are 13 weeks with reading assignments; you get 5 "byes"]. The reaction paper should summarize what you consider to be the most important or interesting points emerging out of that week's reading. The two questions can be based on that week's reading OR the preceding week's class

Finally, each of you must submit a substantial final paper based on your interests as they intersect the material in the course and appropriate for your programs and stage within your program. These should focus on a particular study or a body of research as it relates to some important area of education research and address the question of how that study or body of research was used by a one or more political actors or within one or more government institution or agency. Written paper proposals must be submitted no later **than October 25th**. The final paper will be due at the last class session.

Grades will be based on the following weighting scheme:

*Grades will be based on the following weighting scheme:*

*Class participation: 20%*

*Reaction papers and questions: 30%*

*Paper proposal: 10%*

*Research paper: 40%*

### Accommodations

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities (OASID) for information about registering with the office. You can reach OASID by email at [oasid@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:oasid@tc.columbia.edu), stop by 163 Thorndike Hall or call 212-678-3689. Services are available only to students who are registered and submit appropriate documentation. As your instructor, I am happy to discuss specific needs with you as well. Please report any access related concerns about instructional material to OASID and to me as your instructor.

### Incomplete Grades

For the full text of the Incomplete Grade policy please refer to [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Incomplete Grades](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Incomplete%20Grades)

Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC email account – Students are expected to monitor their TC email accounts. For the full text of the Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC email account please refer to [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC Email Account](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Student%20Responsibility%20for%20Monitoring%20TC%20Email%20Account)

### UNI and Gmail Accounts:

Teachers College students have the responsibility for activating the Columbia University Network ID (UNI) and a free TC Gmail account. As official communications from the College – e.g., information on graduation, announcements of closing due to severe storm, flu epidemic, transportation disruption, etc. -- will be sent to the student's TC Gmail account, students are responsible for either reading email there, or, for utilizing the mail forwarding option to forward mail from their account to an email address which they will monitor.

### Religious Observance:

For the full text of the Religious Observance policy, please refer to <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/provost/religious-observance/>

Sexual Harassment and Violence Reporting – Teachers College is committed to maintaining a safe environment for students. Because of this commitment and because of federal and state regulations, we must advise you that if you tell any of your instructors about sexual harassment or gender-based misconduct involving a member of the campus community, your instructor is required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator, Janice Robinson. She will treat this information as private, but will need to follow up with you and possibly look into the

matter. The Ombuds officer for Gender-Based Misconduct is a confidential resource available for students, staff and faculty. "Gender-based misconduct" includes sexual assault, stalking, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and gender-based harassment. For more information, see <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/titleix>

### Academic Honesty

Students who intentionally submit work either not their own or without clear attribution to the original source, fabricate data or other information, engage in cheating, or misrepresentation of academic records may be subject to charges. Sanctions may include dismissal from the college for violation of the TC principles of academic and professional integrity fundamental to the purpose of the College.

### Required Books to Purchase

Michael J. Feuer, The Rising Price of Objectivity: Philanthropy, Government, and the Future of Education Research Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2016)

Jeffrey R. Henig, Spin Cycle: How Research is Used in Policy Debates: The Case of Charter School (NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008)

Hird, John A., Power, Knowledge, and Politics: Policy Analysis in the States

\* Additional required readings are marked by an asterisk below. For access check the course listing on **Canvas**. In almost every instance, links are included there so you can access the reading via JSTOR or other online services available to you.

## MEETING

(approx.)

### 1 INTRODUCTION and OVERVIEW

#### I. Framing Ideas

### 2 COMPETING PARADIGMS 1: The Allure of Policy Science: Research as Enlightenment

#### Readings:

Henig, *Spin Cycle* Ch. 2. "Informed Democracy: An Ideal and Its Skeptics."

(\*) R. Haskins & G. Margolis, Ch1. "Introduction: The Obama Strategy for Attacking Social Problems."

(\*) Stephan, S. A. (1935). Prospects and Possibilities: The New Deal and the New Social Research. *Social Forces*, 13.

(\*) D. Campbell, "Reforms as Experiments." *American Psychologist* (1969)

(\*) National Research Council. (2012). *Using Science as Evidence in Public Policy*. **Chs. 1-2**. Report is downloadable at :<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13460/using-science-as-evidence-in-public-policy>

### 3. COMPETING PARADIGMS 2: Power and Politics: Research as Weapon

#### Readings:

Hird, Preface; Chs. 1-2.

(\*) Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," Public Administration Review (Sept. 1959): 79-88

(\*) Weiss & Gruber, "Using Knowledge for Control in Fragmented Policy Arenas." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter, 1984), pp. 225-247

(\*) Banfield: "Policy Science as Metaphysical Madness? From R. Godwin, Bureaucrats, Policy Analysts, Statesmen: Who Leads?

(\*) D. A. Stone, "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 104, No. 2. (Summer, 1989), pp. 281-300.

(\*) Druckman et al. "How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation" American Political Science Review Vol. 107, No. 1 February 2013

**NOTE: No class Meeting on Wednesday September 27<sup>th</sup>**

#### 4. COMPETING PARADIGMS 3. Practitioner knowledge

##### Readings:

(\*) D. Cohen, S. Moffitt, and S. Goldin, "Policy and Practice: The Dilemma." American Journal of Education, Vol. 113, No. 4 (August 2007)

(\*) D. Cohen & J. Mehta, "Why Reform Sometimes Succeeds: Understanding the Conditions That Produce Reforms That Last," *American Educational Research Journal*

(\*) C. Weiss and M. Bucuvalas, "Truth Tests and Utility Tests: Decision-Makers' Frames of Reference for Social Science Research" *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), pp. 302-313

(\*) Penuel et al., "How School and District Leaders Access, Perceive, and Use Research." *AERA Open*

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2332858417705370>

(\*) T. Cook, "Sciencephobia: Why Education Researchers Reject Randomized Experiments," Education Next (Fall 2001)

#### 5. FRAMING CASE: The Politics of Charter School Research

##### Readings:

Henig, Spin Cycle, Chs. 1, 3, 4, 5

(\* ) West & Howell, “Gray Lady Wheezing: The AFT Hoodwinks the Times “ *Education Next*

(\* ) Reckhow et al., “Policy Cues and Ideology in Attitudes toward Charter Schools.” *The Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. (2014)

## II. Institutions and Actors

### 6. Government: Efforts to Promote Data Use and Evidence-Based Policy

#### Readings:

Feuer Ch 2 “Good Government Pays”

Hird, Chs. 3-6

(\* ) Haskins & Margolis, Ch. 4 “The Investing in Innovation Initiative.”

(\* ) Asen, et al. ““The Research Says: Definitions and Uses of a Key Policy Term in Federal Law and Local School-Board Deliberations.” Especially pp. 20-37

<http://wtgrantfoundation.org/resource/the-research-says-definitions-and-uses-of-a-key-policy-term-in-federal-law-and-local-school-board-deliberations>

### 7. The Courts

#### Readings:

(\* ) Superfine and Thompson, “Interest Groups, the Courts, and Educational Equality: A Policy Regimes Approach to Vergara v. California.”

(\* ) J. Dunn and M. West, “Calculated Justice: Education Research and the Courts.” From F, Hess, ed., *When Research Matters*.

(\* ) Welner, K. G. (2012). “Scholars as policy actors: Research, public discourse, and the zone of judicial constraints.” *American Educational Research Journal*

(\* ) L. Garces, “Reflections on a Collaboration: Communicating Educational Research in Fisher,” *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 174–175

## 8. Think tanks and foundations

### Readings:

Henig Ch.6. "Follow the Money: The Role of Funding in the Politicization of Research"

Feuer, Ch 1. "Whither Altruism," **and** Ch. 3. "Lights Unto the Nation."

(\*) A. Rich, "War of Ideas." *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Spring 2005)

(\*) S. Reckhow, "More than Patrons: How Foundations Fuel Policy Change and Backlash," *PS* • July 2016

## 9. Media as gatekeepers

### Readings:

Henig, Ch. 7. "How Research Reaches the Public Ear: Old Media and New."

(\*) Pew Research Center <<http://www.journalism.org/2017/05/10/americans-attitudes-about-the-news-media-deeply-divided-along-partisan-lines/>>

(\*) Malin and Lubienski, "Educational Expertise, Advocacy, and Media Influence," Education Policy Analysis Archives  
<<http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1706/1456>>

(\*) E. Haas, "False Equivalency: Think Tank References on Education in the News Media," *Peabody Journal of Education*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (2007)

## 10. Interest groups

### Readings:

(\*) Lindblom & Woodhouse, Ch. 7 "Interest Groups in Policy Making"

(\*) T. Moe, "Vested Interests and Political Institutions," *Political Science Quarterly* (2015)

(\*) DeBray et al., "The Institutional Landscape of Interest Group Politics and School Choice," *Peabody Journal of Education* (June 2007)

(\*) Ferrare et al., "Policy Network Convergence and Innovation Among Education Advocacy Organizations An Analysis of the PIE Network."

(\*) Davis, "No Test Left Behind."

<<http://talkingpointsmemo.com/features/privatization/four/>>

### III. Additional Cases

#### 11 Rise of Randomized Field Trials TFs and why they have not resolved voucher question

##### Readings:

(\*) G. Forster, A Win-Win Situation: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice (Friedman Foundation) <http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/A-Win-Win-Solution-The-Empirical-Evidence-on-School-Choice.pdf>

(\*) Shakeel et al., "The Participant Effects of Private School Vouchers across the Globe: A Meta Analytic and Systematic Review." Working Paper. U. of Arkansas 2016.  
<http://www.uaedreform.org/downloads/2016/05/the-participant-effects-of-private-school-vouchers-across-the-globe-a-meta-analytic-and-systematic-review-2.pdf>

(\*) C. Lubienski, *NEPC Review: A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice and The Participant Effects of Private School Vouchers across the Globe: A Meta-Analytic and Systematic Review* <http://nepc.colorado.edu/thinktank/review-meta-analysis>

(\*) Dynarski et al., *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program Impacts After One Year.* <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20174022/pdf/20174022.pdf>

#### 12. Holding Teachers Accountable

##### Readings:

(\*) S. Reckhow and S. Galey, "Did Research Inform the National Policy Debate on Teacher Evaluation?"



(\*) Lincove et al., "The Politics and Statistics of Value-Added Modeling for Accountability of Teacher Preparation Programs."

(\*) Friedman, Chetty, et al., "Great Teaching," *Education Next* (Summer 2012)  
<http://educationnext.org/great-teaching/>

(\*) Raudenbush, S. W. (2015). Value added: A case study in the mismatch between education research and policy. *Educational Researcher*, 44(2), 138-141.

(\*) Henig, "The Politics of Data Use *Teachers College Record*, 114(11), 2012.

### 13. Common Core

#### Readings:

(\*) L. McDonnell and S. Weatherford, "Evidence Use and the Common Core State Standards Movement: From Problem Definition to Policy Adoption," *American Journal of Education* (November 2013)

(\*) Supowitz, Daly et al. #COMMONCORE *How social media is changing the politics of education*. NOTE: Explore the entire web site.  
<http://www.hashtagcommoncore.com/#0-1>

### IV. What to do?

#### 14. What Needs to Change: Researchers and Universities or Other Actors and Institutions?

#### Readings:

(\*) National Research Council. (2012). *Using Science as Evidence in Public Policy*, Chs. 4-5  
<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13460/using-science-as-evidence-in-public-policy>

(\*) Cynthia E. Coburn and William R. Penuel, "Research–Practice Partnerships in Education: Outcomes, Dynamics, and Open Questions." *Educational Researcher* (2016)

(\*) Explore the WT Grant Foundation web site "Improving the Use of research." Explore whole section  
<http://wtgrantfoundation.org/focus-areas/improving-use-research-evidence>

(\* ) AERA Knowledge Matters Forum website <http://www.aera100.net/ed-talk-videos.html>

Feuer, Ch. 4. "A Policy Grammar"

Henig, Ch. 8. "Can the Ideal of Informed Democracy be Revived?"

(\* ) Henig "Politics and the use of research evidence." Remarks made at Presented at W.T. Grant Conference on "Advancing the Use of Research Evidence" Washington DC. February 13-14, 2017

(\* ) Hess, When Research Matters Ch. 11. "Conclusions: Education Research and Public Policy"