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:
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- 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, 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

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

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](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**


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
(ann.p.)

1 INTRODUCTION and OVERVIEW

I. Framing Ideas

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

Readings:


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

Readings:
Hird, Preface; Chs. 1-2.


NOTE: No class Meeting on Wednesday September 27th

4. COMPETING PARADIGMS 3. Practitioner knowledge

Readings:


(*) 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
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.”


7. The Courts

Readings:

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


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.”


9. Media as gatekeepers

**Readings:**

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


10. Interest groups

**Readings:**

(*) Lindblom & Woodhouse, Ch. 7 “Interest Groups in Policy Making”


III. Additional Cases

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

Readings:


12. Holding Teachers Accountable

Readings:

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

(*) Friedman, Chetty, et al., “Great Teaching,” Education Next (Summer 2012) http://educationnext.org/great-teaching/


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

13. Common Core

Readings:


(*) 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:


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