

**Public Policy Research and Analysis in Postsecondary Education**  
**Course Number EDUC 881    Winter Semester, 2017**

**Location:** 2228, School of Education Building

**Time:** Tuesdays from 9:00 to noon  
(see course schedule below)

**Instructor:**

Stephen L. DesJardins (Steve)

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**Office hours:** No set office hours. I would prefer that you make an appointment (via e-mail) but if you drop by my office without an appointment I will try to accommodate you.

**Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:**

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000 or <http://ssd.umich.edu/>) typically recommends accommodation through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. For additional information about services for students with disabilities see: <http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/>

**Students Rights and Responsibilities:**

I encourage you to read your rights and responsibilities as a student. Information on these topics can be found at: <http://www.umich.edu/~oscr/>. I would also encourage you to read the University's General Catalogue, especially the sections that detail your rights as a student and the section that discusses the University's expectations of you as a student. (See <http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/>.)

**On Diversity:**

I intend to present materials and activities that are respectful of our diverse world and I encourage you to provide suggestions on how we can incorporate new materials to improve the course for all students. The University of Michigan has a number of affirmative action policies and these policies can be found at:

<http://www.umich.edu/~hrra/oiie/>

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The course is designed to provide doctoral students with a foundational understanding of the theories, concepts, frameworks, and processes that can be employed to study postsecondary education public policy. There will be readings about the theories and concepts used to frame empirical research in education public policy. In addition to interrogating these theories and concepts, we will also examine how some of these theories have been applied in empirical research in postsecondary education public policy

The goals of the course are to provide you not only with a solid theoretical and conceptual understanding of postsecondary public policy issues, but also to provide you with insights about how to interrogate the literature using theoretical frames. The prerequisites are: Doctoral students in CSHPE who have successfully passed EDUC 764. Exceptions will be considered but require the consent of the instructor.

**COURSE CONDUCT**

Class attendance is required. If you miss class, or are consistently late for class, it will negatively affect your grade. Students are expected to have read the required materials at the time the topic is discussed in class.

There will be a number of readings from journals, edited books, and other sources. The reading materials will be provided to you by the instructor and will be housed on a Canvas site to facilitate distribution.

**EVALUATION**

I encourage you to see me if you are having difficulty with the course materials. There are no tutors or Graduate Student Instructors (GSI) for the course

Grades for the course will be based on class discussion and attendance (30%) writing assignments (20%), and a final paper and presentation (35% for the paper; 15% for the presentation). Grading will be A thru F only (on a plus/minus system) for three (3) semester credit hours. Incomplete grades are *strongly* discouraged; in any event, an incomplete must be arranged with the instructor by April 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Class Discussion:** This class is a seminar thus we will rely heavily on discussions of the readings. You must be prepared to offer comments, observations, critiques, or ask questions about the readings. If you all do so you will learn a great deal from each other.

**Written Discussion Questions:** There will be a variety of writing assignments in this class. These papers will graded pass or fail. Papers that contain improper grammar, are not clearly written, or do not sufficiently address the specific writing assignment are candidates for a failing grade. These writing assignments will account for 20% of your grade. Unless it is cleared with the instructor in advance of the due date, turning in these questions late will result in them receiving a failing grade. You are expected to write so I can get an evaluation of your understanding of the concepts being discussed and to give you practice communicating your ideas in writing, a skill that is required to be a successful in graduate school and in the labor market. In addition, having you write allows me to assess how well you write and to intervene if you need help communicating in writing.

### **Final Paper**

The final paper will be a critical, integrative literature review focused on a significant issue, problem, or topic in higher education. The issue, problem, or topic must have a substantial body of literature in higher education or a related discipline. The literature review will be a critical analysis, interpretation, and synthesize of the literature related to the problem or topic chosen. The literature interrogated may include theoretical and/or empirically-based journal articles, books, chapters, or opinion pieces.

The objective of preparing this paper is for you to gain experience doing such an integrative literature review to prepare you for Paper A that you must complete to achieve candidacy. This exercise will provide you with a less high-stakes venue than the Plan A and in so doing allow you to learn how to demonstrate your knowledge of the literature and help you gain a better understanding of the topic chosen.

This paper will count for 35% of the final grade. You will also present the results of your paper to the class and that presentation will count for 15% of your final grade. You will be required to submit a short (one or two paragraph) abstract proposing the topic you would like to explore, which is **due on February 14<sup>th</sup>**. The proposal will be discussed with you in a meeting with the instructor and a plan of action for how to proceed will be developed. Be sure to select a topic that can be managed in about 25 (double spaced) pages (excluding appendices, references, or the cover page). The paper must be well-written throughout in APA style. **All final papers are due (posted to your Canvas dropbox) on or before the beginning of our final class on April 18. Exceptions must be arranged with the instructor by the end of class on April 8.**

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Session 1: Introductions/Discussion of Course/Introduction to Content (January 10)**

**Objectives:** Permit us to learn more about each other, provide some background about the course content, and discuss the expectations that I have for the class.

**Reading Assignments:** None

### **Session 2: Theories, Concepts, and Frameworks (January 17)**

**Objectives:** In this section we will discuss theories, frameworks, models, concepts and how these are defined and interrelated. The objective is to learn how research is framed, how theories are developed and tested, how constructs are defined and operationalized, and how to use our knowledge of these issues to critically appraise empirical research.

**Reading Assignments:**

Watch this Youtube video first: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLMwtNDi1ok>

**Canvas:**

Then read these chapters, in this order.

Cooper: Chapter 1. Conceptualising Social Life,

Gilbert: Chapter 2. Research, Theory, and Method,

These chapters can also be found in:

Gilbert, G. N. (2001). *Researching social life*. London: Sage Publications.

**Writing Assignment Number 1:**

Many authors who write about theories and models suggest that the former is related to the “why?” and the latter to the “how?” research is conducted. In no more than one single-spaced page, explain what is meant by this and provide examples from higher education if appropriate. Use the readings from this week and/or any other knowledge you have that may be pertinent to craft your response. Your response is due on January 24<sup>th</sup> so that it can be used as a reference during our class discussions.

### **Session 3: Theorizing About Rational Behavior (January 24)**

**Objectives:** In this session we will examine the concept of rational behavior that is so often used as the basis of studies in higher education. In particular, the chapter will demonstrate how this theory has been applied to the study of the way that students make their college choice decisions.

**Reading Assignments:**

Review of economic theory: <http://www.digitaleconomist.org/>

**Canvas:**

DesJardins, S. L. and Toutkoushian, R. K. (2005). Are Students Really Rational? The Development of Rational Thought and Its Application to Student Choice. In John Smart (Ed.) *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* XX, 191-240.

**Writing Assignment Number 2:**

You are sitting in a paper session at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) conference. The papers presented were all about how students make their college choice decisions and each one was framed using rational choice theory. As part of his comments about the papers, the discussant, a famous higher education professor with some training in economics, makes the following statement, “The ration choice framing of the papers is interesting given that we all know that prospective students are not rational.”

Given your knowledge about rational choice theory, write a one-page (single spaced) response to the discussant’s claim about students not being rational in terms of making choices about college attendance (whether to go to college) and/or choice (where to go to college). Your response is due on January 31<sup>st</sup> so that it can be used as a reference during our class discussions on this topic.

## **Session 4: Human Capital Theory (January 31)**

**Objectives:** In this section we will examine human capital theory and how it has been and can be used to study education issues. The objectives are to better understand some of the specifics of human capital theory, how it can be used to study both individual and social investments in education, and alternatives to human capital theory (in particular, signaling theory).

### **Reading Assignments:**

Ehrenberg, R.G., Smith, R.S. (2012) *Modern Labor Economics*, 11th ed. Prentice Hall.  
“Investments in Human Capital: Education and Training

**Canvas:** Ehrenberg & Smith, *Modern Labor Economics Theory and Public Policy 2012*  
Read Chapter 9: Investments in Human Capital: Education and Training, pp. 278-318.

### **Supplemental Readings:**

Becker, G. S (1993). *The Economic Way of Looking at Life. Nobel Lecture* (Coase-Sandor Institute for Law & Economics Working Paper, 12). Chicago: University of Chicago Law School.

Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Schultz, T.W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 51: 1-17.

**Writing Assignment Number 3:** Human capital and signaling theory have often been used to try to explain how schooling affects individuals and society. The former emphasizes the role of education in augmenting individuals’ productivity and future earnings. Signaling argues that education merely signals to potential employers about individuals’ innate ability, which is rewarded in the labor market. In no more than two single-spaced pages, discuss the main differences between the two theories. Are there any complementarities? Do you think that one theory is more effective in explaining the education/earnings link than the other? If so, explain why, if not, why not?

**Bonus:** In no more than two sentences explain why individual rates of return to schooling decline with additional education.

## **Session 5: Bounded Rationality (February 7)**

**Objectives:** Many observers believe that the rational model of human behavior is deficient. Bounded rationality asserts that decision makers are intendedly rational but because of human cognitive and emotional architecture, they sometimes fail in making decisions. In this section we will read an article that lays out the history and development of bounded rationality and how it can be used to study the policy process.

**Reading Assignments:** Jones, B. D. (1999). Bounded Rationality. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2: 297-321.

**Canvas:** Jones, *Bounded Rationality*.

### **Supplemental Readings:**

Simon, H. A. (1947). *Administrative Behavior*. New York: Macmillan

Simon, H. A. (1979). Rational decision-making in business organizations. *American Economic Review*, 69: 495–501

Simon, H. A. (various years). *Models of Bounded Rationality, Vols. 1, 2 and 3*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Simon, H. A. (1995). Rationality in political behavior. *Polit. Psychol.* 16:45–61

Simon, H. A. (1996). *Models of My Life, MIT Edition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Simon, H. A. (1999). The potlatch between political science and economics. In J. Alt, M. Levi, & E. Ostrom, (Eds). *Competition and Cooperation: Conversations with Nobelists about Economics and Political Science*,. Cambridge,UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

**Writing Assignment Number 4:** As Jones notes in the reading for this week (pp. 305-306), there are numerous objections to rational choice. These objections fall in to (at least) two categories: the nature of the decision maker and the nature of the environment. In no more than two single spaced pages, choose one objection from each of these two categories and explain the fundamental aspects of each objection. In addition to describing each objection you should discuss how they might affect some aspect of higher education practice or research. For example, one of the objections about decision makers is that they do not consider all aspects of a decision facing them. This objection could have implications for how we think about and research student college choices, such as providing more information to students or how they gather and assess information about college characteristics and attributes.

**Session 6: Writing a Critical Literature Review  
(February 14 & 21)**

**DUE February 21<sup>ST</sup> : PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER**

**Objectives:** Writing a critical literature review requires a specific set of skills in order to be effective. In this section we will examine some resources that will help you prepare to construct a critical literature review. The objective is to provide you with the tools necessary to write a critical literature review.

**Reading Assignments:**

Access this site and make sure to watch the embedded video:

<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/dissertationlitreview>

Check out this Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCEknjt7SeM>

See this webpage: <http://writingcenter.waldenu.edu/50.htm>

**Canvas:** Cooper Hedges: Research Synthesis as a Scientific Process;  
Eisenmann\_The Literature Review as Scholarship

Knopf\_Doing\_a\_Literature\_Review

**Supplemental Readings:**

Galvan, J.L. (2006). *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing.

**Writing Assignment:** To comply with this assignment you should use the resources provided in the University of Michigan library guide, other materials available to you on Canvas about literature reviews, and the discussions we had in class over the last few weeks.

Prepare a document that 1) describes the topic that you would like to explore in the critical literature review you will prepare for this class; and 2) include a list of the theoretical and/or empirical literature that you are considering examining as part of this process. The description part should be relatively brief, not more than a couple of paragraphs. The list of literature will depend on the topic and parameters initially chosen to do this search. It would be helpful if you include information about your literature search, such as search parameters, data bases searched, time parameters...

**Session 7: Policy Process: Multiple Streams  
(March 7)**

**Objectives:** The multiple streams approach explains how policies are made by government under conditions of ambiguity. It has proven useful in explaining national, supranational, and subnational policies in a variety of settings and is often used to study decision making in complex organizations such as institutions of higher education. In this section we'll read a chapter that provides an overview of the multiple streams approach, with a particular focus on the underlying assumptions and guiding logic and how it has been applied.

Reading Assignments:

**Canvas:** Sabatier, P. A. and Weible, C. M. (2014). *Theories of the Policy Process*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Chapter 3. Zahariadis, *Ambiguity and Multiple Streams*

**Supplemental Readings:**

Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. *Longman Classics Edition*. New York: Pearson Education.

**Writing Assignment Number 5:** Work on your final papers

**Session 8: Policy Process: Punctuated Equilibrium  
AND Policy Feedback Theory  
(March 14)**

**Objectives:** Punctuated equilibrium theory seeks to explain a simple observation: although generally marked by stability and incrementalism, political processes occasionally produce large-scale departures from the past. Even if incrementalism is the norm, important programs and policies are sometimes changed dramatically. Stability and change are important elements of the policy process, but most policy models have been designed to explain one or the other. We will read a chapter that demonstrates the utility of punctuated equilibrium theory in explaining both stability and change.

Policy feedback theory is a relatively new line of theory that examines how policy, once implemented, can restructure political processes. This line of thinking has had a particularly profound effect on the conduct of policy analysis. The objective of examining policy feedback theory is to better understand its development and to note when it can be effective in helping to frame research on policy issues.

**Reading Assignments:**

**Canvas:** Sabatier, P. A. and Weible, C. M. (2014). *Theories of the Policy Process*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Chapter 2. Frank R. Baumgartner, Bryan D. Jones, and Peter B. Mortensen, *Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in Public Policymaking*.

Chapter 5. Suzanne Mettler and Mallory SoRelle, *Policy Feedback Theory* .

**Supplemental Readings:**

Jones, B. D. & Baumgartner, F. R. (2009). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jones, B. D. & Baumgartner, F. R. (2005). *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mettler, S. & Welch, E. (2004). Civic generation: Policy feedback effects of the G.I. Bill on political involvement over the life course. *British Journal of Political Science*, 34(3): 497-518.

**AN APPLICATION OF PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY:**

Doyle, W. R. (2010). Does Merit-Based Aid "Crowd Out" Need-Based Aid? *Research in Higher Education*, 51(5): 397-415.

Mills, M. R. (2007). Stories of Politics and Policy: Florida's Higher Education Governance Reorganization. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 78(2): 162-187

**Writing Assignment:** Work on your final paper.

**Session 9: Policy Process: The Advocacy Coalition Framework  
AND Innovation and Diffusion Models  
(March 21)**

**DUE MARCH 20: FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER**

**Objectives:** In this session we will read a chapter about the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The objectives will be to better understand the development and theoretical foundations of the ACF and how it has been and could be applied in empirical work.

We will also read a chapter that delves into the dominant theories of innovation in the public sphere and how policies diffuse across time and space. Some of these theories have been used to study higher education policy innovations and diffusion. The objective is to provide you with the knowledge of these theories, how they have been and could be applied to the study of higher education issues.

**Reading Assignments:**

**Canvas:** Sabatier, P. A. and Weible, C. M. (2014). *Theories of the Policy Process*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Chapter 6. Jenkins-Smith, *Advocacy Coalition Framework*

Chapter 9. Berry and Berry, *Innovations and Diffusion Models*

**Supplemental Readings:**

AN APPLICATION OF POLICY DIFFUSION: Berry, F. S. & Berry, W. D. (1990). State lottery adoptions as policy innovations: An event history analysis. *American Political Science Review*, 84(2): 395-415.

Buckley, J. (2002). Diffusion or confusion? Modeling policy diffusion with discrete event history data. Paper prepared for the 19th Annual Summer Political Methodology Meetings, Seattle, Washington. <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/media/Paper/buckl02.pdf>

AN APPLICATION OF POLICY DIFFUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: Doyle, W. R., McLendon, M. K., & Hearn, J. C. (2010). The adoption of prepaid tuition and savings plans in the American states: An event history analysis. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(7): 659–686.

McLendon, Michael K., Steven B. Deaton, and James C. Hearn. 2007. "The Enactment of Reforms in State Governance of Higher Education: Testing the Political Instability Hypothesis." *Journal of Higher Education* 78: 645-675.

McLendon, Michael K., James C. Hearn, and Steven B. Deaton. 2006. "Called to Account: Analyzing the Origins and Spread of State Performance-Accountability Policies for Higher Education." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28: 1-24.

McLendon, Michael K., Donald E. Heller, and Steven P. Young. 2005. "State Postsecondary Policy Innovation: Politics, Competition, and the Interstate Migration of Policy Ideas." *Journal of Higher Education* 76: 363- 382.

McLendon, Michael K., Christine G. Mokher, and Stella M. Flores. 2011. "Legislative Agenda Setting for In-State Resident Tuition Policies: Immigration, Representation, and Educational Access." *American Journal of Education* 117: 563-602.

AN APPLICATION OF POLICY DIFFUSION IN EDUCATION: Michael Mintrom and Sandra Vergari. (1998). Policy Networks and Innovation Diffusion: The Case of State Education Reforms. *The Journal of Politics*. 60(1).

AN APPLICATION OF ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK: Ness, E. C. (2010). The Politics of Determining Merit Aid Eligibility Criteria: An Analysis of the Policy Process. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81(1): 33-60.

Rogers, E. (1995). *Diffusion of Innovations*. (4th Edition). New York, NY: The Free Press.

Sabatier, P.A., & Jenkins-Smith, H. (1988). An advocacy coalition model of policy change and the role of policy orientated learning therein. *Policy Sciences*, 21: 129-168.

Sabatier, P.A., & Jenkins-Smith, H. (1993). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

**Writing Assignment: Work on Final Paper**

**Session 10: Higher Education Theories  
(March 28 and April 4)**

**DUE APRIL 4: SECOND DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER**

**Objectives:** In this section we will continue our discussion of the use of theories, frameworks, models, concepts, but this time we are going to specifically examine these issues in the context of postsecondary/higher education. The objective is to learn more about the theories that are often used as the basis for higher education research.

**Reading Assignments:**

Available on **Canvas**:

FOR MARCH 28: Smart, J. C., Feldman, K. A., & Ethington, C. A. (2006). *Holland's Theory and Patterns of College Student Success*. Commissioned Report for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success: Spearheading a Dialog on Student Success.

FOR APRIL 4: Melguizo, T. (2011). A review of the theories developed to describe the process of college persistence and attainment. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Volume 26, pp 395-424.  
There is also a table associated with this chapter that is located on Canvas.

**Supplemental Readings:**

Look this over; an example of Bayesian updating: [http://www-math.bgsu.edu/~albert/nsf\\_web/tutorial/a\\_brief\\_tutorial.htm](http://www-math.bgsu.edu/~albert/nsf_web/tutorial/a_brief_tutorial.htm)

Perna, L. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J.C. Smart (ed.). *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research XXI*: 99-157. Netherlands: Springer.

Terenzini, P.T., & Pascarella, E.T. (1977). Voluntary freshman attrition and patterns of social and academic integration in a university: A test of a conceptual model. *Research in Higher Education*, 6: 25-43.

Thomas, L.L., Kuncel, N.R., and Credé, M. (2007). Noncognitive variables in college admissions: The case of the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 67, 635-657.

Vidovich, Lesley. (2013). Policy Research in Higher Education: Theories and Methods for Globalising Times, in Jeroen Huisman , Malcolm Tight (ed.) *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research (International Perspectives on Higher Education Research, Volume 9)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 21 – 39.

Vigil Laden, B., Milem, J.F., Crowson, R.L. (2000). New institutional theory and student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departing puzzle*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

### **Writing Assignment Number 9: Work on Final Paper**

#### **Session 11: Behavioral Economics (April 11)**

**Objectives:** Behavioral economics is a theory that has developed to try to link neoclassical economics and foundations in psychology. The theory developed in part because of the limits of neoclassical theory in explaining anomalies that arose in individual decision making and in some aspects of market economies. In this section we will discuss some of the underlying principles of behavioral economics and how they might be applied to the study of higher education issues.

#### **Reading Assignments:**

**Canvas:** Samson, A. (2014). *The Behavioral Economics Guide 2014*. **READ PAGES 1-27 and think of how some of the concepts discussed could be applied to a postsecondary education issue to be discussed in class.**

#### **Supplemental Readings:**

Boatman A., Evans, B., & Soliz, A. (2014). *Applying the Lessons of Behavioral Economics to Improve the Federal Student Loan Programs: Six Policy Recommendations*. Lumina Foundation Report.

Diamond, A., Vorley, T., Roberts, J. & Jones, S. (2012). *Behavioural Approaches to Understanding Student Choice*. National Union of Students. **(Especially Appendix I that contains the glossary of terms).**

Murphy, J. G., Correia, C. J., Barnett, N. P. (2007). Behavioral economic approaches to reduce college student drinking. *Addictive Behaviors*, 32: 2573–2585

### **Writing Assignment: Work on Final Paper**

**Session 16  
(April 18)**

**FINAL PAPERS (UPLOADED TO THE CANVAS ASSIGNMENT FOLDER)  
ARE DUE ON THIS DAY. MAKE SURE YOU NAME YOUR DOCUMENT LIKE  
THIS: LAST NAME\_EDUC 881\_FINAL\_PAPER\_2017**

**FINAL PRESENTATIONS IN-CLASS  
3-5 MINUTE DISCUSSION OF THE FINAL PAPER  
YOU MAY WANT TO USE POWERPOINT TO PRESENT THE MAIN  
ASPECTS OF YOUR PAPER  
UPLOAD YOUR FILE TO THE ASSIGNMENT FOLDER BY APRIL 17 AT  
8:00pm AND NAME IT LIKE THIS:  
LAST NAME\_EDUC 881\_FINAL\_PRESENTATION\_2017**