



COURSE SYLLABUS: SUMMER 2026

EDAD 621

Educational Law & Critical Policy Analysis

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: M. Nathan R. (Nate) Templeton, Ed.D.

Office Location: Ed North 125

Office Hours: Virtual (Online) M-F 6:00-8:30 p.m. or as Scheduled

Office Phone: 903.886.5895

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Preferred Form of Communication: text/email

Communication Response Time: *Within 6 hours via text/24 hours for emails received
Mon 8am-Thursday 4pm (emails received **Fri-Sun**
will be returned the following business day)*

COURSE INFORMATION

Textbooks Required:

Alexander, K., & Alexander, M. D. (2019). *American public-school law* (9th ed.). Cengage Learning.

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publishing manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC.

Spring, J. (2021). *Political agendas for education: From the religious right to the green party* (6th ed.). Routledge.

Other Documents for Consideration:

- ESSA, IDEA, Title IX
- TEA Documents
- Peer-reviewed articles

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Course Description

This course engages doctoral students in a comprehensive analysis of educational policy development and the dynamic relationship between legal frameworks and policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels. Through an in-depth examination of legal principles and governing laws, students critically explore their impact on the administration and leadership of educational organizations. Prerequisite: Doctoral standing.

Course Objectives

The purpose of the doctoral program is to develop scholar-practitioners who demonstrate breadth of perspective, advanced interpretive capacity, and the ability to conduct critical, applied inquiry. Consistent with this aim, this course engages doctoral students in the rigorous analysis of educational law and policy as interconnected systems that shape leadership practice.

This course develops students' capacity to critically examine how legal frameworks and policy processes influence educational organizations at the federal, state, and local levels, with an emphasis on moving beyond understanding to application. Through the integration of legal analysis, policy critique, and leadership application, students analyze policy development, evaluate implementation, and design legally grounded responses to complex problems of practice. In doing so, they examine how power, governance, and decision-making operate within educational systems, preparing them to navigate and influence policy environments while ensuring legal compliance and advancing appropriate outcomes for all students.

Upon successful completion of this course, doctoral students will be able to:

1. Understand the social, cultural, and political forces shaping the evolution of contemporary education programs and institutions.
2. Analyze and apply federal, state, and local legal principles including statutory and case law to educational leadership decisions.
3. Critically evaluate the development, intent, and impact of education policies, assessing their influence on systems, access, and outcomes.
4. Synthesize legal and policy knowledge to inform decision-making in complex, real-world educational contexts.
5. Assess policies and practices for legal compliance and equity implications, including potential disparate impacts on student populations.
6. Diagnose organizational challenges by examining how policies are developed, communicated, and implemented within dynamic educational systems.
7. Design and justify leadership actions and policy recommendations that are legally sound, contextually appropriate, and operationally feasible.
8. Synthesize and apply the key court rulings establishing education law parameters at the institutional level regarding student rights, governance, freedom of expression/speech, privacy issues, student discipline, legal liability and students with special needs
9. Construct a comprehensive, legally grounded policy analysis and action plan aligned to a problem of practice (Dissertation in Practice).

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be engaging in varying amounts of the following activities at different points throughout the course. Evaluation will be based on successful demonstration of:

GRADING

Student performance in this course is evaluated through a combination of weekly applied work, analytical assignments, and a culminating Dissertation in Practice (DiP) action plan. Assignments are designed to require the application of legal and policy analysis to real-world leadership contexts.

Final grades in this course will adhere to the following scale; however, the final course grade is determined by the instructor.

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Performance Expectations

This course is limited to students who have attained doctoral standing and reflects expectations for advanced analysis, synthesis, and application to problems of practice. Students are expected to demonstrate depth of thinking, integration of legal and policy frameworks, and the ability to produce actionable, legally grounded leadership responses. All assignments must be completed to successfully pass the course. The following grading distribution will be used:

- Weekly Discussions 20%
- Major Deliverables (Modules 1-11) 40%
- Policy Analysis Brief 10%
- Local Policy Audit 15%
- Final DiP Policy & Legal Action Plan 15%

There are no provisions for late work in this class.

Any academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism will result in an “F” in the course. If, you are unsure about academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism, consult the professor immediately.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Browser support

D2L is committed to performing key application testing when new browser versions are released. New and updated functionality is also tested against the latest version of supported browsers. However, due to the frequency of some browser releases, D2L cannot guarantee that each browser version will perform as expected. If you encounter any issues with any of the browser versions listed in the tables below, contact

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D2L Support, who will determine the best course of action for resolution. Reported issues are prioritized by supported browsers and then maintenance browsers.

Supported browsers are the latest or most recent browser versions that are tested against new versions of D2L products. Customers can report problems and receive support for issues. For an optimal experience, D2L recommends using supported browsers with D2L products.

Maintenance browsers are older browser versions that are not tested extensively against new versions of D2L products. Customers can still report problems and receive support for critical issues; however, D2L does not guarantee all issues will be addressed. A maintenance browser becomes officially unsupported after one year.

Note the following:

- Ensure that your browser has JavaScript and Cookies enabled.
- The Brightspace Support features are now optimized for production environments when using the Google Chrome browser, Apple Safari browser, Microsoft Edge browser, Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, and Mozilla Firefox browsers.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Brightspace Support

Need Help?

Student Support

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778 or click on the **Live Chat** or click on the words “[click here](#)” to submit an issue via email.



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System Maintenance

D2L runs monthly updates during the last week of the month, usually on Wednesday. The system should remain up during this time unless otherwise specified in an announcement. You may experience minimal impacts to performance and/or look and feel of the environment.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Late Work.

Late work is NOT accepted. You will have plenty of notification and time to complete course assignments. If you know you are going to be out of town and unable to access a computer, plan ahead. See Course Outline at the bottom of this syllabus.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: [Netiquette http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

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[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

AI Use Policy

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

ADA Statement

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: Sandi.Patton@tamuc.edu

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Website:

<https://new.tamuc.edu/sdrs/?level=freshman&stage=interested&interests=&ab=y#tamuc-section-29799>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling [903-886-5145](tel:903-886-5145). For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

Course Outline

1. Legal Foundation (What the law is)
2. Policy Framing (Why it exists / who it serves)
3. Leadership Application (What leaders must DO with it)

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Module 1: Foundations of Educational Law & Policy

Learning Objective

Develop a foundational understanding of educational law and policy systems and connect them to a defined problem of practice.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.1-2
- Political Agendas for Education Ch.1
- Case Law: Brown v. Board of Education (1954); San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez (1973)

Discussion Prompt

Explain how law and policy interact to shape educational systems.

Assignment Directions

Develop a 1-2 page Problem of Practice Brief that defines your problem, identifies legal and policy influences, and explains leadership implications.

Module 2: Federal vs. State Authority

Learning Objective

Analyze the distribution of power between federal and state systems.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.3
- Political Agendas for Education Ch.2
- Case Law: McCulloch v. Maryland (1819); South Dakota v. Dole (1987)

Discussion Prompt

To what extent should the federal government influence education policy?

Assignment Directions

Write a 2-page analysis of a federal policy and its local implications, including leadership decisions required.

Module 3: Student Rights

Learning Objective

Evaluate legal foundations of student rights.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.4-5
- Political Agendas Ch.3
- Case Law: Tinker v. Des Moines (1969); Goss v. Lopez (1975)

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Discussion Prompt

How should leaders balance student rights and discipline?

Assignment Directions

Analyze a discipline policy, identify legal risks, and recommend revisions (2 pages).

Module 4: Equity & Civil Rights

Learning Objective

Analyze legal frameworks related to equity.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.6-7
- Political Agendas Ch.4
- Case Law: Lau v. Nichols (1974); Plyler v. Doe (1982)

Discussion Prompt

Identify inequitable policy outcomes.

Assignment Directions

Write a 2-3 page memo identifying inequity and recommending corrective action.

Module 5: Teacher Law

Learning Objective

Understand legal protections of educators.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.8-9
- Political Agendas Ch.5
- Case Law: Pickering v. BOE (1968); Mt. Healthy v. Doyle (1977)

Discussion Prompt

Balance teacher rights with accountability.

Assignment Directions

Evaluate teacher evaluation systems and recommend legally defensible improvements (2-3 pages).

Module 6: Governance

Learning Objective

Examine governance structures.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.10
- Political Agendas Ch.6
- Case Law: BOE v. Pico (1982)

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Discussion Prompt

Define superintendent-board balance.

Assignment Directions

Map governance structure and recommend improvements (2 pages).

Module 7: Accountability

Learning Objective

Analyze accountability systems.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.11
- Political Agendas Ch.7
- Case Law: Debra P. v. Turlington (1981)

Discussion Prompt

Do accountability systems improve outcomes?

Assignment Directions

Analyze accountability system impacts and recommend changes (2-3 pages).

Module 8: Special Populations

Learning Objective

Evaluate legal requirements for special populations.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.12-13
- Political Agendas Ch.8
- Case Law: Rowley (1982); Endrew F. (2017)

Discussion Prompt

How can districts move beyond compliance?

Assignment Directions

Write a compliance vs equity analysis (2-3 pages).

Module 9: Finance

Learning Objective

Analyze school finance systems.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.14
- Political Agendas Ch.9
- Case Law: Rodriguez (1973)

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Discussion Prompt

Is funding equitable?

Assignment Directions

Write a finance equity brief (2-3 pages).

Module 10: Implementation

Learning Objective

Examine policy implementation.

Readings (Including Case Law)

- American Public School Law Ch.15
- Political Agendas Ch.10

Discussion Prompt

Why do policies fail?

Assignment Directions

Analyze a failed policy and propose solutions (2-3 pages).

Module 11: Contemporary Issues

Learning Objective

Apply legal reasoning to current issues.

Discussion Prompt

Analyze a current legal issue.

Assignment Directions

Write a 2-3 page issue brief with leadership response.

Module 12: Synthesis

Learning Objective

Synthesize learning into DiP solution.

Discussion Prompt

How has law and policy analysis shaped your leadership?

Assignment Directions

Develop a 5-8 page DiP policy and legal action plan.