



EDSI 6331: Educational Policy and School Improvement

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Office Hours	TBD at the beginning of the semester & by appointment
Term	Spring 2026

University Withdrawal Dates

Last day to withdraw from the course is **March 30, 2026**.

Course Description

This course examines state and federal policies that have been implemented or considered to improve schools. These policies will be evaluated to determine effectiveness, and modifications will be explored to determine how local policy can move to greater school improvement.

Student Learning Outcomes

- a. The student will approach challenges in innovative data-driven ways, including the use of interdisciplinary teams, as well as expand their problem solving, creative design, communication, and collaboration skills.
- b. The student will develop the knowledge, skills and tools to utilize data to guide school improvement and policy, and to improve learning outcomes leading to college and career readiness.
- c. The student will develop a P-20 perspective of the education system to address school improvement in the broader perspective, including educator preparation, teaching and learning.
- d. The student will conduct research of practice and responsiveness to improve teaching and learning experiences, counseling and support services, school leadership, educational organizations and structures, and all other educational disciplines.
- e. The student will understand the philosophical and historical perspectives of school reform, learning opportunities for all, and can address educational issues using a variety of strategies.

Textbooks

Grant, A. (2023). *Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things*. Viking.

Course Content

While the course learning outcomes will remain as listed above, the educational policies studied will be dictated by the current students' dissertation work. The content will be differentiated to meet the students' needs as they prepare to finalize their research and dissertation.

Required readings, expectations for assignments, and dates will be outlined in the Canvas course.

Topics

- Course Overview & Structure
- Federal, State, & Local Educational Policy
- Overview of Policy Analysis & Evaluation Framework
- Developing a Logic Model for Policy Evaluation
- Current Educational Policies
- The Cohort's Problems of Practice & Relevant Educational Policies
- *Hidden Potential* and School Improvement

Course Policies

Grading Criteria

In the spirit of policy evaluation and improvement science, which focus on enhancing our professional capacity, this course will use an ungrading approach. There will be no letter grades assigned to your work. Instead, you will receive ongoing feedback on your work-in-progress, including your policy evaluation presentations, reflections, and final submissions. This feedback is intended to help you refine your work and integrate policy evaluation meaningfully into your dissertation.

Ungrading requires more effort and reflection from you (and the instructor) compared to traditional grading. However, the goal is for you to take greater ownership of your learning. This approach aims to be more valuable as you prepare for your dissertation and future professional practice.

This course is built on mutual support and collaborative learning. You are expected to engage with your peers, exchange ideas, provide feedback, and support each other's progress. During presentations and discussions, offer constructive and respectful feedback to help your peers refine their work. The emphasis is on progress, reflection, and meaningful engagement, **not on perfection**. Take risks, explore ideas, and learn from both successes and challenges.

Expectations

You are expected to:

- Complete readings from the required textbook *Hidden Potential*, and the articles shared by Dr. Oliveras and your peers.
- Join Zoom discussions prepared to engage actively and thoughtfully.
- Contribute constructively by asking questions and offering feedback.

- Submit written work that meets doctoral-level standards, using professional language and APA 7th edition formatting.
- Attend Zoom meetings and submit all work on time.

Assignments

Assignments are designed to help you integrate policy evaluation into your dissertation work. They are opportunities for reflection, growth, and peer learning rather than formal assessments.

- Complete assignments in a way that supports your individual dissertation goals.
- Share insights during presentations and discussions.
- Focus on engagement and reflection rather than rigid criteria.
- Adapt assignments as needed to fit your dissertation's specific needs.
- If you encounter challenges, communicate with Dr. Oliveras promptly.

Presentations

Each student will lead a policy evaluation presentation related to their problem of practice.

- Prepare an engaging presentation that connects the policy evaluation to your dissertation.
- Facilitate a Zoom group discussion using guiding questions and prompts.
- Encourage peer input and foster collaborative learning.

Participation

Active participation is essential for collaborative learning and deepening your understanding of policy evaluation.

- Attend all scheduled sessions and engage actively in Zoom group discussions.
- Share insights, ask thoughtful questions, and provide constructive feedback to your peers.
- Listen actively and maintain a respectful learning environment.

Reflections

If you miss a Zoom group discussion, you must submit a 500–750-word reflection within 48 hours. The reflection should explore how the week's discussions and readings apply to your problem of practice.

Course Evaluation

Because this is an **ungraded doctoral course**, completion is based on the following criteria:

Participation:

- Attend and actively engage in at least 80% of the Zoom group discussion sessions.
- If you miss a session, watch the recording and submit a reflection within 48 hours.

Student-Led Presentation:

- Deliver one policy evaluation presentation and facilitate a group discussion.

Dissertation Integration:

- Submit sections of your dissertation that incorporate relevant policies, demonstrating your understanding of the content and its relevance to your research.

Rubrics detailing expectations for each assignment will be available in the Canvas course.

Criteria to Earn a B

To earn a B, you must:

- Participate in at least 80% of the sessions (or submit reflections for missed sessions).
- Deliver a policy evaluation presentation that meets the basic requirements.
- Submit your latest dissertation work throughout the semester, demonstrating basic integration of policy evaluation (e.g., mentioning policies without detailed analysis or critical reflection).
- Show consistent progress on your dissertation and a commitment to learning by completing readings and engaging in discussions.

Criteria to Earn an A

To earn an A, you must meet all the criteria for a B and:

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of policy evaluation by integrating policy into your dissertation work in a meaningful and critical way. This involves thorough analysis of how policies impact your problem of practice and intervention.
- Show evidence of critical thinking and reflection on policy evaluation frameworks and their implications for your dissertation.
- Engage in thoughtful, in-depth discussions during Zoom sessions, offering insights that demonstrate mastery of the course content.
- Incorporate feedback from peers and the instructor to refine your work and strengthen the policy evaluation in your dissertation.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Please avoid the consequences of academic dishonesty by citing all sources that you use in your work. When you upload your work, Canvas will immediately process your work through **Unicheck**. You will immediately see the report. Use these reports to identify potential instances of plagiarism and address them before submitting your work. There is no written collaboration in this course. There will be no flexibility or exemptions; plagiarism will not be tolerated. Unauthorized collaboration is considered cheating and will be handled according to University Policies and the Students Standards of Academic Conduct.

Submitting the same assignment for multiple courses, even if you are the original author, is unacceptable and considered self-plagiarism. However, since you are working on your dissertation, **submitting different iterations of your chapters is acceptable**.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged, aligning with UT Tyler's commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in the Honor Code. Faculty and students

must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using AI tools.

AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content, which may appear accurate but can be incomplete, biased, or taken from other sources without attribution. Therefore, AI should not be a substitute for traditional research methods. You are responsible for ensuring the quality and accuracy of your submitted work.

For this course, students may use AI platforms to prepare, revise, and edit assignments and dissertation work. AI tools can help identify flaws in reasoning, clarify arguments, and correct citations. However, you must critically assess the validity and applicability of AI-generated content.

To uphold academic integrity:

- Cite AI contributions according to APA 7th edition guidelines.
- You will not receive full credit if your work contains inaccurate, invalid, or inappropriate AI-generated content.
- Engage in collaborative learning and peer feedback as primary sources of insight, using AI tools as supplements rather than substitutes.

Your ethical responsibilities remain the same: follow UT Tyler's Honor Code and uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. Misusing AI tools in violation of these guidelines constitutes a breach of academic integrity and may result in disciplinary action.

[APA Style Citation Information](https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt) <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Code of Conduct

I expect students in this course to conduct themselves as university students of graduate standing. I expect students to participate in class activities. I expect students to meet assigned deadlines. I expect students to behave in an academically honest manner. I reserve the right to penalize students who violate class policies.

Email

My email address is yoliveras@uttyler.edu. **Please note that this is not a Patriots email address.** Email is the best way to communicate with me.

I will make every effort to respond quickly to your emails. Communicating with you is a priority but I also want you to have realistic expectations in terms of a timely response. If it is a weekday and you haven't heard from me within 24 hours, I did not get your email and please send it again and/or send a text message. I will share my cell phone number in class. If it is a weekend, I do my best to respond in a timely manner, but it might be Monday before I respond.

People First Language/Class Etiquette

Our language reflects our attitudes and beliefs. Always refer to persons, including people with disabilities, with respect. Degrading terminology will not be tolerated. In this class, we will strive to use "people first" language. "People First" language always refers to the person first and not as a label or a category. For example, refer to "a student with autism" not "an autistic child."

Safe Zone

I consider our online Canvas course shell to be a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being - regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students consider our online Canvas course shell a safe environment.

Digital Library Resources

Students enrolled in our doctoral program have online access to the UT Tyler Robert R. Muntz Library (<http://library.uttyler.edu>). Follow the link to the library and then complete the instructions at those sites for accessing information from a distant site. Many of the database subscriptions funded by student fees give you access to full text journals that you will need for your review of the literature. If a specific journal is not available, Vandy Dubre will procure the article for you. Please take the time to update your account and get familiar with the resources available.

University Policies

Refer to the University Policies page in the Canvas course.

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Texas Educators

Access the [Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators](#).