

IDH 3931  
Spring 2024

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Class Location:

Fridays, 3<sup>rd</sup> Period  
Honors Village Classroom

Office Location: Norman Hall, Room 2709J

Office Hours: TBD Based on Class Poll; or email for appointment

Phone: 352 273-4348

Welcome to IDH 3931, Can't Teach This. I am excited to have each of you in the course and to work with you this semester as we explore the policy history of what can and cannot be taught in schools. This syllabus provides an overview of the course. Please review and reach out with any questions. I look forward to getting to know you and working with you throughout the semester!

-Chris

### **Course Summary**

What public schools teach plays a central role in developing the foundation for civic engagement, common understanding, and a functioning democracy. In the past several years, the content taught in K-12 schools has become a point of contentious political debate. From legislation banning the teaching of critical race theory to that which influences what books are included in school libraries, many states have enacted new policies that shape the content children and youth are exposed to in school. These policies are sometimes controversial, contested, and politicized; yet, such public policy debates over what should be taught in schools are not new.

This seminar explores the policy history of what can and cannot be taught in public schools. It examines how contemporary debates over the content and curriculum of schooling may be informed by the study of similar arguments in prior times. Through guest speakers, debates, and policy analysis, students will explore topics such as the teaching of religion, biology and evolution, climate change, and sexual education among others. Students will probe the legal, social, and political factors that have shaped the content of public schools, examine policies and laws that guide standards and curriculum decisions, and, ultimately, consider how an understanding of these historical policy debates over what is taught in schools can inform the decisions facing education policy today.

## **Course Objectives**

1. Develop analytic skills in identifying and describing policy problems in education.
2. Evaluate the relative effectiveness of various educational policies at improving student outcomes.
3. Apply social science research methods to the study of educational policy.

## **Textbook**

There is no required textbook for this course. Readings will be made available through Canvas and the UF library.

## **Evaluation and Assessment**

Full descriptions of and rubrics for assignments will be available through Canvas.

### *Issue Memos (40%)*

Throughout the semester, students will complete two “issue memos”. Each memo will identify a controversial topic in education covered in the course and summarize in one page the nature of the controversy, the values at stake, the stakeholders involved, the arguments (legal, political, social, economic, etc.) for each side. Alongside this summary, students will identify one historical debate over topics taught and briefly explain how the two relate. The first issue memo is worth 15% and the second 25%. You are free to choose any topic/week to complete these and turn them in throughout the semester.

### *Reflective Creation (20%)*

In this assignment, students will communicate how their thinking about what can be taught in public schools has evolved throughout the semester. Students will produce two deliverables: 1) A creative expression of how their thinking on the topic has changed (or not) throughout the semester. This could be a poem, a piece of art, a song, a short essay, a social media thread, a radio segment, an op-ed, or just about anything else you can think of. 2) A one page written explanation of how the reflective creation represents students’ change (or lack thereof) in thinking about what is taught in schools.

### *Policy Debate (20%)*

The class will engage in a civil debate regarding what can be taught in K-12 public schools. Students will be split into two groups, each preparing to debate one side of the issue.

### *Course Activities and Participation (20%)*

Engagement in the material and with classmates is critical to the course experience. Students’ course activities and participation grade will be determined based on participation in class.

### **Grading Scale:**

93 to 100 A

90 to <93 A-

87 to <90 B+

83 to <87 B

80 to <83 B-  
77 to <80 C+  
73 to <77 C  
70 to <73 C-  
67 to <70 D+  
63 to <67 D  
60 to <63 D-  
<60 Not passing

Details on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points can be found in the undergraduate catalogue available here:

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

### **Academic Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

### **Attendance and Make-Up Work**

This course is designed to be interactive and collaborative. As such, attendance at all class meetings is expected. If a class must be missed, please let me know as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made. In general, make-up work is not accepted unless arrangements have been made. That said, life happens, so please do not hesitate to reach out if circumstances dictate the need for an extension or accommodation. I am always happy to work with you to accommodate your needs.

### **Disability Resource Center**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <http://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

### **Online Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas

course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Software Use**

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

### **In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **Free Exchange of Ideas Statement**

In this course, we will cover subjects that may be sensitive and/or challenging. As in all our courses, we do this not to indoctrinate but to instruct, to prepare you to be the most effective and successful educator or scholar that you can be. We encourage you to understand all concepts presented in class, but we cannot determine your personal beliefs. What you personally choose to believe is your business.

### **Additional Resources**

Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent

help may contact:

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

[Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

[Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

[Teaching Center](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

[Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

On-Line Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#)

Week	Topic	Readings
1 (Jan. 12 <sup>th</sup> )	Can We Teach This?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Case for Contention – Introduction (pages 1-9)</li> <li>• HB 7 Summary</li> <li>• SB 266 Summary</li> </ul>
2 (Jan. 19 <sup>th</sup> )	Corrupting the Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plato - Apology</li> <li>• Pyle, J. (1997). Socrates, the Schools, and Civility: The Continuing War Between Inculcation and Inquiry</li> </ul>
3 (Jan. 26 <sup>th</sup> )	A Brief History of What Can't be Taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case for Contention – Chapter 1</li> </ul>
4 (Feb. 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	State House to School House: Standards and Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who Controls Teachers' Work? – Excerpt from Introduction</li> </ul>
5 (Feb. 9 <sup>th</sup> )	Separation of Church and State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battleground – Chapter 2- God in Public Schools and Public Squares</li> </ul>
6 (Feb. 16 <sup>th</sup> )	Taking it on Faith – Prayer and the Hidden Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chalk and Gavel Podcast - Kennedy v. Bremerton: When and how can school employees engage in private prayer?</li> </ul>
7 (Feb. 23 <sup>rd</sup> )	May the Monkey Take the Stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanchez (2023). The Monkey Trial: John Scopes and the Battle over Teaching Evolution</li> </ul>

8 (Mar. 1 <sup>st</sup> )	Climate, Science, and Who Influences Textbook Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AP News – Texas approves new textbooks after friction over fossil fuels in the US’s biggest oil and gas state</li> </ul>
9 (Mar. 8 <sup>th</sup> )	The Birds and the Bees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too Hot to Handle – Introduction &amp; Conclusion Chapter</li> </ul>
10 (Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup> )	Him/Her/They	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chalk and Gavel Podcast: Parents Defending Education v. Olentangy: Can schools implement pronoun policies that require students to use another student's preferred pronouns?</li> <li>• Parental Rights in Education Act (HB 1557 – 2022)</li> </ul>
11 (Mar. 29 <sup>th</sup> )	Is History Written by the Victors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whose America? – Chapter 2</li> </ul>
12 (April 5 <sup>th</sup> )	Critical Race Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Daily Podcast – The Debate over Critical Race Theory</li> <li>• The Thomas B. Fordham Institute – Education Gadfly Podcast - The Trump and DeSantis culture war fixation</li> </ul>
13 (April 12 <sup>th</sup> )	Policy Debate Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silenced Stages Excerpt</li> <li>• <i>Dr. Curran will be away at a conference this day. Meet in person with debate teams to prepare arguments.</i></li> </ul>
14 (April 19 <sup>th</sup> )	Policy Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No readings</li> <li>• Class public policy debate</li> </ul>
Exam Week	Creative Reflection Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class presentations of creative reflection projects</li> </ul>

Note. Topics and content of syllabus are subject to change based on student input, interests, and emergent elements of the course.