

Who Decides? Decision Making in the US Education System
Global Development (GDEV) 1200

FWS Spring 2024
Mon Wed Fri 9:05am-9:55am
Warren Hall 138

Instructor: Kristie LeBeau
Pronouns: she/her/hers
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Office Hours:

Location – Warren 230

Time – Monday, 2:00-4:00; Friday, 10:00-12:00

Office hours are a way for me to answer questions and get to know you. Students are welcome to come to one office hour in the first month or two of class so we get a chance to meet outside of our class time together. My office hours will be on Monday 2:00-4:00pm in the basement of Mann Library (B75) in the Large Conference Room and Friday 10:00am-12:00pm in Warren 230. **I use [Google Calendar](#) to book office hours.** If you wish to meet with me outside of office hours, please send me an email.

Credits: 3

Course Description: Who decides what books students should read? Who has a say in what version of history is taught? This course will ask questions like these to explore key tensions surrounding decision-making in the US education system. Students will be asked to think critically about their own educational experiences and situate them within a larger historical context. This class will study a range of texts from past court cases to contemporary news articles. Students can expect to develop key writing skills through assignments that imitate practical, real-world examples that play out in the K-12 environment. This course will reinforce that there are many forms of effective expression and that it is empowering to be able to articulate ideas coherently in debates like these and beyond.

Rationale: To write well, you must read well. This is how our course will begin. Students will learn to closely read texts to pull out their key arguments and supporting evidence and then develop annotated bibliographies for each text. Next, we will practice reading multiple texts and putting them in conversation with each other. This skill will prepare students to learn how to support an argument with evidence. To practice these writing techniques, students will prepare a memo from the lens of a middle school teacher, supporting their reasoning for using a banned book in class. We will work on refining these skills and retaining a central focus throughout our writing to develop compelling stories for our designated audiences in the last half of the course. We will model this by writing a policy brief for an education audience of your choosing. We will conclude by repackaging our policy briefs for a different audience.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Identify key arguments and supporting evidence from assigned readings
2. Put sources in conversation with each other
3. Support an argument with evidence
4. Retain a central focus
5. Write for different audiences

Class Ground Rules:

- Actively listen to your classmates' contributions
- Be respectful when responding to/disagreeing with a classmate's viewpoint
- Be comfortable with being uncomfortable
- Understand that you won't say everything perfect, and neither will your classmates, but this is a place to learn and engage in fruitful conversations
- If someone says something that doesn't sit right with you, be willing to have a conversation about it rather than shutting that person down
- Be sure that everyone is ready to move forward with the conversation before moving on

Land Acknowledgement

Cornell University is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogohó:nq' (the Cayuga Nation). The Gayogohó:nq' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign Nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The Confederacy precedes the establishment of Cornell University, New York state, and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of Gayogohó:nq' dispossession, and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogohó:nq' people, past and present, to these lands and waters.

- Link to explore: [Native-Land.ca | Our home on native land](#)

Required Texts

A majority of the texts will be available via Canvas or the Cornell Library. Students are responsible for bringing these materials to class. Students will also be required to individually obtain a book of their choice for the Banned Book assignment. Details for this book selection will be provided in class.

Writing Assignments

Students will be expected to complete a total of 5 writing assignments. The first assignment will receive a completion grade. All subsequent assignments will receive two grades: A completion grade and a quality grade. The recorded grade will be a rough average of the two grades (75% completion, 25% quality). Students will be invited to write a reflection on each paper assignment, identifying areas for improvement to focus on in the next assignment.

1. First Paper Assignment

2. Annotated Bibliographies (2)
3. Banned Book Memo
 - a. Review Process
4. Policy Brief
 - a. Review Process
5. Repackaged Policy Brief

Participation & Attendance

Consistent attendance and active participation are crucial components of this course. Attendance will be taken every class. This being said, I understand that life happens, so communication is key. Communicate with me via email for excused absences. This encompasses any legitimate reason for missing class (e.g. illness, emergencies, mental health, etc.). Additionally, you are allowed one unexcused absence, no questions asked. However, it is YOUR responsibility to make up any missed work and/or catch up on class material for any class you miss, excused or unexcused.

- Participation & Attendance Rubric on Canvas

Grading

Class Attendance, Preparation & Participation (10%): Class attendance and participation during class is required. This means not only attending class meetings but contributing your ideas substantively to class discussion and in-class activities. Participation includes contributing substantively to peer review processes, of which there will be many.

- Students will receive a tentative grade mid-semester

One-on-One Meetings (5%): Students will be required to meet with me during office hours at least twice throughout the semester. Students can meet with me more frequently, but two meetings will count towards your grade.

First Paper Assignment (5%)

Annotated Bibliographies (15%)

Memo (20%)

Policy Brief (25%)

Repackaged Brief (20%)

Total: 100

Statement on Inclusivity: As an educational sociologist, I recognize that diverse learning needs are often associated with the different identities and backgrounds students bring into the classroom. It is my intention to invite all students into the learning process and create an environment that prevents those inequities from replicating and instead, establishes an environment in which all students can grow. In my goal to support students in their growth as individuals, I will make it a priority to proactively address any barriers that might adversely impact student growth, by creating an environment where diverse experiences are encouraged. I will continually work to create a classroom space where differences are valued and respected, and I

expect students in this class to assist in creating and maintaining this inclusive environment.

Statement on University Policies & Regulations: I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to matters such as: the observation of religious holidays; accommodations available to remedy inequities both visible and invisible; sexual harassment; racial or ethnic discrimination; plagiarism and other violations of community values regarding academic conduct. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the [Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity](#). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

Statement on AI:

The technology we use is constantly evolving. As we embark on a new phase of technological development surrounding AI generated text, we must work together to explore its utility while also maintaining academic integrity. In this course, we will work together to test out ways to ethically use AI programs as writers through in-class activities. However, any use of AI programs in the preparation process of assignments must be explicitly acknowledged, and all final writing assignments must not be AI generated. We are a community of learners working to strengthen our critical thinking, comprehension, and writing ability, and in order to do so, we must take an active role in the learning process.

Weekly Schedule, Readings & Assignments can be found on the class [Canvas page](#).