



PPDE 671: Economic Analysis of Education Policy
Spring 2025—Wednesday—6:00pm-9:20pm

Location: DMC 210

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Schweig

Email: schweig@usc.edu

Office: Office available by Zoom

Office Hours: via Zoom Tuesday 3:00-4:00 pm or by appointment

Course Description

Why do we hold teachers and schools accountable for their students' achievement? How do the designs of accountability system impact educators' behavior responses? We know teachers are an important part of students' success, but how can we create reliable and valid measure of teacher effectiveness? How do school choice policies affect students' educational outcomes? Why are achievement gaps so stubborn? These are some of the important questions that are hotly debated in the popular media and in academic circles. Answers to these questions are especially important given that the current landscape is marked by decreasing resources and increasingly high stakes, essentially expecting educators to produce more with less. In this course, we will explore how many of these questions can be answered using basic economic theories and principles. The field of economics studies how individuals make choices in the presence of scarce resources. As such, it directly relates to the present economic reality faced by most families, educators, administrators and policymakers.

Learning Objectives

- Improve ability to evaluate and present papers that use quantitative techniques common in economics of education papers.
- Understand how to use basic economic theory to predict how policy affects education outcomes.
- Gain a broad understanding of the topics that economics of education researchers focus on.

Course Website

All course-related materials will be posted on Brightspace. Please login using your USC credentials.

Through Brightspace, you will have access to the course syllabus, course assignments, course announcements, and discussion boards. In addition, you can use Brightspace to submit written assignments in the Assignments section unless otherwise indicated.

I recommend that you set your communication settings so that all course announcements are emailed to you. Please use your USC email address, even if you have other addresses. The

Blackboard system will not accept non-USC addresses so you may miss class email communications if you do not use the USC email address.

For technical support on Brightspace, call the Brightspace Help Line (888)895-2812 or email Brightspace Support at brightspace@usc.edu.

Preparation and Participation Guidelines

Students are expected to participate weekly and attend class meetings. Please do not attend class in person if you are experiencing any possible Covid-19 symptoms. If you need to miss class, slides and lecture notes will be shared.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Textbook

“Economics of Education” by Michael Lovenheim and Sarah Turner. ISBN: 071677705
(<https://store.macmillanlearning.com/us/product/Economics-of-Education/p/1319282202>)

Articles

Most classes will also require reading empirical articles or cases. These will be posted to Brightspace throughout the semester.

Grading Breakdown

Component	Weight	Details
Participation	10%	Class meetings will be a mixture of lecture and class discussion. The quality of the class discussion will heavily depend on student participation. Students are expected to complete all the weekly reading and to come to class ready to discuss the readings and themes.
Discussion facilitation	30%	Students will complete weekly reading assignments. Three lead students will be responsible for facilitating a 50 minute class discussion on the assigned weekly readings. The discussion should include a five-to-ten-minute introduction to the reading. In addition, the lead students will: 1) post a short (500 word) synthesis of the readings on the Brightspace discussion board, 2) post three to five discussion questions on Brightspace, and 3) moderate responses to these discussion questions. The online summaries should address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the one or two most interesting points or compelling ideas raised by these readings?• What weaknesses or limitations did you find in these readings? What important questions are left unanswered?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do these readings relate to other themes and topics address in the class up to this point? <p>Summaries and discussion questions should be posted on Brightspace by 2pm Tuesday, two days before our class meeting.</p> <p>The remaining students are responsible for responding to at least two discussion questions (~200 words) on Brightspace, and participating in the class discussion.</p> <p>During the course of the semester, each student will serve as a weekly discussion leader twice. I will assign students to topics during the first week of class.</p> <p>In Weeks 7, 9 and 13 there will be no lead students assigned to facilitate discussion, and all students are responsible for providing responses to discussion questions on Brightspace.</p>
Problem Sets	20%	During the semester, there will be two problem sets that cover the economic intuition of education policy, as well as applications of economic tools to the analysis of education policy.
Annotated Bibliographies	40% (20% each)	<p>Students will choose two course topics to explore in greater depth by developing annotated bibliographies on two course topics. These bibliographies will contain five academic sources as well as what you learned from your research.</p> <p>Annotated bibliographies will contain: 1) a description of the topic (~250 words), 2) a discussion of how these bibliographic sources were selected (~250 words), 3) the annotated bibliography (~200 words per source), and 4) a discussion of what you learned from your research (500-1000 words). More specifics will be shared as we get closer to the assignments.</p>

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

- 93 ≤ **A**
- 90 ≤ **A-** < 93
- 87 ≤ **B+** < 90
- 83 ≤ **B** < 87

- 80 ≤ **B-** < 83
- 77 ≤ **C+** < 80
- 73 ≤ **C** < 77
- 70 ≤ **C-** < 73
- 67 ≤ **D+** < 70
- 63 ≤ **D** < 67
- 60 ≤ **D-** < 63
- 0 ≤ **F** < 60

Late Assignments

Late assignments will only be accepted in cases of extreme emergencies and should be requested BEFORE the due date. The decision to accept late work is solely at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	1/15/2025	Introduction	
2	1/22/2025	Econometric Fundamentals	
3	1/29/2025	Education as an Investment	Discussion Facilitation Group 1
4	2/5/2025	Education as an Investment II	Discussion Facilitation Group 2
5	2/12/2025	Money as an Input	Discussion Facilitation Group 3
6	2/19/2025	Teachers as an Input	Discussion Facilitation Group 4
7	2/26/2025	No Class	Problem Set 1
8	3/5/2025	School Accountability	Discussion Facilitation Group 5
9	3/12/2025	School Choice	Annotated Bibliography 1
10	3/19/2025	Spring Break	
11	3/26/2025	Inequality	Discussion Facilitation Group 6
12	4/2/2025	Student Discipline	Discussion Facilitation Group 7
13	4/9/2025	Teacher Labor Markets	Problem Set 2
14	4/16/2025	Early Childhood Education	Discussion Facilitation Group 8
15	4/23/2025	Out of School Time	Discussion Facilitation Group 9
16	4/30/2025	COVID-19 and education	Discussion Facilitation Group 10
Annotated Bibliography 2 due 5/7/2025			

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written

permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Detailed Reading List (* student leaders facilitate discussion)

Week 1: Introduction

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapters 1,2

Week 2: Econometrics Fundamentals

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapter 3
- [School's In: Shaping Policy with Evidence with Heather Hough](#)

Week 3: Education as an Investment I

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapters 4 and 5
- *Clark, D., & Martorell, P. (2014). The signaling value of a high school diploma. *Journal of Political Economy*, 122(2), 282-318.
- *Elliott, W., & Nam, I. (2013). Is student debt jeopardizing the short-term financial health of US households?. *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, 95(September/October 2013).

Week 4: Education as an Investment II

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapters 6 and 13
- *Hoekstra, M. (2009). The effect of attending the flagship state university on earnings: A discontinuity-based approach. *The review of economics and statistics*, 91(4), 717-724.
- *Weissman (2012). <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/05/does-it-matter-where-you-go-to-college/257227/>

Week 5: Money as an Input

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapters 8 and 9
- *Jackson, C. K., & Mackevicius, C. (2021). *The distribution of school spending impacts* (No. w28517). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- *Johnson, R. C., & Jackson, C. K. (2019). Reducing inequality through dynamic complementarity: Evidence from Head Start and public school spending. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 11(4), 310-49.

Week 6: Teachers as an Input

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapter 7
- Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L. V. (2004). How large are teacher effects?. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, 26(3), 237-257.

- *Kennedy, M. M. (2010). Attribution error and the quest for teacher quality. *Educational researcher*, 39(8), 591-598.
- *Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., Keeling, D., Schunck, J., Palcisco, A., & Morgan, K. (2009). The widget effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness. *New Teacher Project*.

Week 7: No Class

Week 8: School Accountability

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapter 11
- *Figlio, D., & Loeb, S. (2011). School accountability. *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, 3, 383-421.
- *Dee, T. S., & Dizon-Ross, E. (2019). School performance, accountability, and waiver reforms: Evidence from Louisiana. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 41(3), 316-349.
- Commentary: <https://www.mathematica.org/blogs/improving-school-accountability-measures-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-an-opportunity-borne-of-necessity>

Week 9: School Choice (No Student Lead Discussion this week. All students responsible for responding to two discussion questions that I will post on Blackboard)

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapter 10
- McEachin, A., Lauen, D. L., Fuller, S. C., & Perera, R. M. (2020). Social returns to private choice? Effects of charter schools on behavioral outcomes, arrests, and civic participation. *Economics of Education Review*, 76, 101983.
- Monarrez, T., Kisida, B., & Chingos, M. (2019). Charter School Effects on School Segregation. Research Report. *Urban Institute*.
- *Rapa, L. J., Katsiyannis, A., & Ennis, R. P. (2018). Charter school enrollment effects: A review of results from recent large-scale studies. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27(10), 3132-3140.
- Education Gadfly Show #849: The success of Denver's "portfolio"-style school reform, with Parker Baxter

Week 10 Spring Break

Week 11: Inequality

- *Voight, A. (2013). The Racial School-Climate Gap. *Region IX Equity Assistance Center at WestEd*.
- *Reardon, S. F. (2013). The widening income achievement gap. *Educational leadership*, 70(8), 10-16
- Kostyo, S., Cardichon, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). Building a Positive School Climate. Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real: State Strategies to Close the Opportunity Gap. Research Brief. *Learning Policy Institute*.
- <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-one>

Week 12: Discipline

- *Barrett, N., McEachin, A., Mills, J. N., & Valant, J. (2021). Disparities and discrimination in student discipline by race and family income. *Journal of Human Resources*, 56(3), 711-748.
- *Darling-Hammond, S., Fronius, T. A., Sutherland, H., Guckenburg, S., Petrosino, A., & Hurley, N. (2020). Effectiveness of restorative justice in US K-12 schools: A review of quantitative research. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 24(3), 295-308.
- <https://www.stitcher.com/show/schools-in-with-denise-pope-and-dan-schwartz/episode/school-defiance-policies-and-the-school-to-prison-pipeline-with-guest-peter-williamson-64231802>

Week 13: Teacher Labor Markets (No Student Lead Discussion this week. All students responsible for responding to two discussion questions that I will post on Blackboard)

- Lovenheim and Turner: Chapter 12
- Boyd, D. J., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Michelli, N. M., & Wyckoff, J. (2006). Complex by design: Investigating pathways into teaching in New York City schools. *Journal of teacher education*, 57(2), 155-166.
- Lovison, Virginia S.. (2022). The Effects of High-performing, High-turnover Teachers on Long-run Student Achievement: Evidence from Teach For America. (EdWorkingPaper: 22-675).
- Podcast: <https://www.educationnext.org/the-education-exchange-teach-for-america-teachers-improve-twice-as-fast-as-others/>

Week 14: Early Childhood Education

- *Shager, H. M., Schindler, H. S., Magnuson, K. A., Duncan, G. J., Yoshikawa, H., & Hart, C. M. (2013). Can research design explain variation in Head Start research results? A meta-analysis of cognitive and achievement outcomes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(1), 76-95.
- *Gomez, C. J., Cannon, J. S., & Bongard, M. (2021). The Big Lift Evaluation: Research Findings Five Years In. Research Report. RR-A1411-1. *RAND Corporation*.
- Manship, K., Holod, A., Quick, H., Ogut, B., de los Reyes, I. B., Anthony, J., ... & Anderson, E. (2017). The Impact of Transitional Kindergarten on California Students: Final Report from the " Study of California's Transitional Kindergarten Program". *American Institutes for Research*.

Week 15: Out of School Time

- *Augustine, C. H., McCombs, J. S., Pane, J. F., Schwartz, H. L., Schweig, J., McEachin, A., & Siler-Evans, K. (2016). Learning from summer. *Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation*.
- *McMurrer, J., Frizzell, M., & Yoshioka, N. (2015). Expanded Learning Time: A Summary of Findings from Case Studies in Four States. *Center on Education Policy*.
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American journal of community psychology*, 45(3), 294-309.
- <https://soundcloud.com/user-458541487/identifying-summer-learning-loss-and-finding-solutions-to-overcome-it-with-guesttom-dee>

Week 16: COVID-19

- *Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E., & Liu, J. (2020). Projecting the potential impact of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. *Educational Researcher*, 49(8), 549-565.
- <https://time.com/6225894/los-angeles-schools-improvement-pandemic-learning-naep/>
- *Goldhaber, D., Kane, T. J., McEachin, A., Morton, E., Patterson, T., & Staiger, D. O. (2022). *The consequences of remote and hybrid instruction during the pandemic* (No. w30010). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Nickow, A., Oreopoulos, P., & Quan, V. (2020). The impressive effects of tutoring on prek-12 learning: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental evidence.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.