COURSE OUTLINE

Education 20: Education Issues in Contemporary Society
Winter 2018
Tuesday-Thursday 10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
X-hour Discussion Sessions: Wednesday 3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Professor Charlie Wheelan
209A Rockefeller
O) 603-646-4086
E-mail: charles.j.wheelan@dartmouth.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. or by appointment

OBJECTIVES
This course gives students a critical introduction to the public institution they know best – the American school. You have already spent at least twelve years “studying” schools from the inside, though you have probably only considered a small piece of the broader education system. Public schools are one of the most important public policy levers for shaping society. We will examine the history and structure of public education in America. We will also study myriad topics related to creating “better schools”: recruiting and training teachers; charter schools and related institutional innovations; testing and accountability; school funding; racial and economic segregation. Overall, the course will explore how public education can contribute to a more informed, prosperous, and fair society.

The course will have four overlapping objectives:

1. Explore and discuss big social questions related to education.

2. Understand and appreciate the research methodologies for answering important empirical questions related to the topics in the course.

3. Engage policy experts in a way that elicits important information on our topics of study.

4. Develop the ability to integrate your views into a cogent, succinct policy memo.

Given the broad scope of the course, students should expect a heavy reading load.

CANVAS
There is a Canvas site for the course where announcements, readings, grades and other material related to the course will be posted.

READING
The required texts are available at Wheelock Books. All other readings will be posted on the Canvas site. You are responsible for doing all readings before the class for which they are assigned. Please note that for copyright reasons, you will only be able to access readings posted on Canvas from a computer recognized as part of the Dartmouth community.
RWIT
Since writing is an important part of the class, students are welcome to make use of RWIT in preparing memos and rewrites.

LAPTOPS
Laptops and other electronic devices will NOT be allowed in class or the discussion groups. If you have a disability that requires the use of a laptop, please see me and we will make an appropriate accommodation.

Required Texts:


MEMOS
There are six memos to be completed during the course. Each individual memo has a maximum word limit of 1,000 words, except for the final reform memo, which is 1,500 words. The group memos have a limit of 1,500 words. **This is a binding limit.** The first two individual memos may be rewritten. The grade for the assignment is the average of the first and second drafts.

1. *What is education?* Evaluate your formal schooling so far, including your time at Dartmouth, and analyze situations in which that schooling has succeeded or failed based on your definition of education.

2. *(Group Memo)* Agree or Disagree: The American education system is fundamentally fair. If you disagree, explain why an unfair system persists.

3. *Accountability:* Explain the role that standardized tests should play in evaluating the performance of students (and therefore of teachers and schools).

4. *Teachers:* Evaluate how we recruit, hire, train, and pay public school teachers in America and propose a change in that process.

5. *(Group Memo)* Summarize and briefly compare the different school visit experiences.
6. Reform: Write a white paper directed to a district, a state, or the federal government proposing and defending a specific education reform or package of reforms.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

- **Quizzes (20%)**: There will be weekly quizzes on the assigned readings. The quizzes may or may not be announced in advance. The quizzes will be based on all reading since the last quiz.

- **Class participation/attendance (15%)**: This is a class that depends on the informed participation of a broad swath of class members. Each student will be assigned to a discussion group. There will be a class participation grade based in part on the evaluations of your fellow group members.

- **Memos (65%)**: The five policy memos will be the most important assignments in the class. This is the vehicle for incorporating the important ideas in the class into a meaningful and persuasive essay.

SCHEDULE

**WEEK 1**

**WHAT IS EDUCATION?**

**Thursday, January 4th**

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading:


**WEEK 2**

**Tuesday, January 9th**

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM**

Reading:

James Clavell. *A Children’s Story*


Thursday, January 11\textsuperscript{th}  
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  

**FILM: “MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED”**

---

**WEEK 3**  
**EDUCATION, OPPORTUNITY, AND RACE**

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, JANUARY 15\textsuperscript{TH}: MEMO #1: WHAT IS EDUCATION?**

---

**Tuesday, January 16\textsuperscript{th}**  
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 

**Reading:**  
Robert Putnam. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*  

---

**Wednesday, January 17\textsuperscript{th}**  
3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.  

**Reading for discussion:**  
“The Problem We All Live With,” This American Life (podcast) Parts 1 and 2, July 31 and August 7, 2015.

---

**Thursday, January 18\textsuperscript{th}**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.  

**Reading:**  

---

**WEEK 4:**  
**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, JANUARY 22\textsuperscript{ND}: MEMO #2 (GROUP MEMO): AGREE OR DISAGREE: THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FUNDAMENTALLY FAIR**

---

**Tuesday, January 23\textsuperscript{rd}**  
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  

**Reading:**  
*Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada’s Quest to Change Harlem and America*

Thursday, January 25th
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:
“Back to School,” This American Life (podcast), September 14, 2012.

Wednesday, January 31st
3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

Thursday, February 1st
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

GUEST: DOUG STAIGER

Reading:
WEEK 6
PRINCIPALS, FUNDING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- **5:00 p.m., Monday, February 5th:** MEMO #3: TEACHERS: EVALUATE HOW WE RECRUIT, HIRE, TRAIN, AND PAY PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN AMERICA AND PROPOSE A CHANGE IN THAT PROCESS.

**Tuesday, February 6th**
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Reading:**


**Wednesday, February 7th**
3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

**Reading for discussion:**


**Thursday, February 8th**
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

GUEST: REBECCA HOLCOMBE, VERMONT SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

**Reading:**


WEEK 8
INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

- 5:00 P.M., MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH: MEMO #4: ACCOUNTABILITY: EXPLAIN THE ROLE THAT STANDARDIZED TESTS SHOULD PLAY IN EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS (AND THEREFORE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS).

Tuesday, February 13th
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:

Wednesday, February 14th
3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

SCHOOL VISITS

Thursday, February 15th
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

SCHOOL VISITS

WEEK 9
CHARTERS AND CHOICE

Tuesday, February 20th
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

GUEST: JULIA BOWEN, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BERKSHIRE ARTS & TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL

Reading:

Thursday, February 22nd
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Film: “The Education of Michelle Rhee”

Friday, February 23rd

WEEK 10
REFORM

● 5:00 P.M., Monday, February 26th: Memo 5 (Group Memo): Summarize and briefly compare the different school visits.

Tuesday, February 27th
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

GUEST: ROBIN STEANS, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADVANCE ILLINOIS

Reading:
Dale Russakoff. The Prize: Who’s in Charge of America’s Schools?

Wednesday, February 28th
3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

Thursday, March 1st
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:
Richard Reeves. Dream Hoarders

WEEK 10
WRAPPING UP
Tuesday, March 6th
10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

• 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 6th: Memo #6: Reform (1,500 Words): Write a white paper directed to a district, a state, or the federal government proposing a specific education reform.