“Their dullness seems to be racial...Children of this group should be segregated in special classes...They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers” -- L. Terman, 1916 (about children in southern and eastern European immigrant families)

“On the one hand, schools reproduce the unequal hierarchical relations of the capitalist workplace; on the other, schooling represents the primary force in the United States for expanding economic opportunity for subordinate groups and the extension of democratic truths --M. Carnoy and H.M. Levin, 1985, p. 144

“The problem is not that we do not know how to make schools better but that we are fighting among ourselves about what goals schools should pursue. Goal setting is a political, and not a technical, problem. It is resolved through a process of making choices and not through a process of scientific investigation.” – D.F. Labaree, 1997.

“The task for governments committed to choice and competition policies-- and the task for those who advise them-- is to use theory and evidence to demonstrate to all the interest groups involved not that these policies deliver perfect services, but that they will provide a higher-quality, more responsive, more efficient and more equitable service than the alternatives.” J. Le Grand, 2007

Course Description and Goals

What is the purpose of education? Is it the same for all people? How do we educate children and to what end? Who decides? Can the private sector do this better than the public sector? In this course, we examine critical questions posed by contemporary conflicts about the goals and means of education, as well as what race, class and power have to do with how these conflicts are resolved. The course will use educational research and the language of politics and economics to analyze a series of case studies and/or policy challenges related to school funding, the origins of inequality in school outcomes, desegregation, charters/market models of reform, test-based accountability and teacher policy.

Course Objectives

The specific objectives for this course are:

(1) recognize historical and contemporary schools of thought with respect to school reform; 2) understand the challenge of educating all students to high levels; (3)
recognize and identify the political nature of school reform; 4) predict likely outcomes of selected education policies based on an analysis of incentives and to evaluate effectiveness with respect to evidence; (5) develop the skills involved in locating, critically reading, and analyzing research articles; and (6) develop the skills and understandings involved in researching, framing and advocating for policy alternatives.

<table>
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<th>Required Reading</th>
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**Required texts** to be purchased at Wheelock Books:


**All other readings and multimedia links will be available on Canvas.**

**Assignments:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Midterm</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Research paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Brief Class Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
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**Class Participation (10%)**

I expect all students to come to class fully prepared to participate. I may “cold call” on you to present aspects of assigned readings. When you read, you should read for the main idea of the text, and note examples. I do not require study groups, but I have noticed that students who collaborate with others have an easier time mastering the readings and developing their understanding.

**Research “White” Paper (30%)**

Whether you enter teaching, enter academia, run for school board, run for office, or serve on staff in a public policy context, you will be called on to advocate for your ideas and policy goals. Whether you can do so effectively will influence both your effectiveness as a policy actor and your own professional advancement. For this course, you will write a “white” paper in which you:

1) review research or literature relevant to the policy problem (cite relevant class readings and at least two sources you have identified relevant to the topic);
2) use the concepts of the course and research findings to analyze the problem, policy alternatives and potential tradeoffs;
3) propose a policy solution for the problem; and
4) explain how you could evaluate the effectiveness of your policy (e.g. describe an experimental design that could be implemented to test the effect of your policy recommendation, if implemented.

*Students will be asked to hand in a paper prospectus that outlines the proposed research topic along with two key contemporary empirically based references to support your thesis.

Brief Class Presentation (10%)

Students will do a brief, formal presentation on your research topics. This should last 5-10 minutes (maximum) and be highly focused. The purpose of this assignment is to prepare students to make presentations/provide synopses to key stakeholders on contemporary issues in education in the most concise way possible.

The Midterm (20%) and Final Exam (30%)

The midterm and final examinations will be multi-modal evaluations focused on course material and class discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Accessibility Issues</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students with accessibility issues enrolled in this course and who may need classroom-related accommodations are encouraged to see me privately as early as possible in the term so that I can adapt the course accordingly. Students requiring accessibility-related accommodations should register with the Student Accessibility Service office. Once SAS has authorized accommodations, students should show the originally signed SAS Accommodations/Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to me. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Religious Observances</th>
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<tr>
<td>Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.</td>
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Contemporary journal articles and multimedia resources on key topics will be available on canvas. These resources will be topically organized as pages on canvas. To locate the readings for a particular class, follow the topic list on the syllabus, and go to the canvas page with that topic name.

Week 1

3/29/16 Orientation, course overview, topic selection
3/31/16 No Class but: read “The Teacher Wars” by Dana Goldstein

Week 2

4/05/16: What is the purpose of education? What do Americans want from their schools?  
The history of Education: a broad overview

4/07/16: History of Education (cont’d)  
(including a discussion of the decolonization  
Native Americans in “Indian Schools”)

Week 3

4/12/16: Using Research Evidence in Education (refer to text)

4/14/16 Guest Speaker: Samuel Drazin  
Founder: Changing Perspectives

Week 4

4/19/16 School Funding  
Special Education

4/21/16: NCLB/ESSA better or worse?  
Paper Prospectus Due

Week 5

4/26/16: Guest Speaker: Steve Nelson  
Head of School at The Calhoun School, NYC

4/28/16: Guest Speaker: Martin Scanlan  
Professor of Education at Boston College

Week 6

5/03/16: Midterm Exam

5/05/16: What is the “academic achievement gap?”  
Why do we have an academic achievement gap? What do we do about it?
Multiculturalism & ESL

Week 7

5/10/16  Standardized testing & the core curriculum
         Pros & Cons of standardization of curricula

5/12/16: Identifying and retaining high quality teachers/measuring teacher value,
tenure. Do programs like Teach for America improve outcomes?

Week 8

5/17/16  How do you engage and motivate students?
         Socio-emotional factors in education
         Paper Due/

5/18/16  Student presentations

5/19/16: Alternatives to traditional Public Education: Charter Schools/Vouchers
         Pros & Cons

Week 9

5/24/16  International issues in education: are other countries really doing a better
         job educating their children? How do we know? What are they doing that
different?

5/25/16  Student Presentations

5/26/16: Student Presentations

Week 10

5/31/16: Finish Student Presentations, course wrap up and review

Final Exam: Sunday, June 5th at 11:30am