

## COURSE OUTLINE

Education 20: Education Issues in Contemporary Society

Winter 2016

Tuesday-Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

X-hour Discussion Sessions: Wednesday 3:00 p.m. – 4:05 p.m.

Professor Charlie Wheelan

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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. 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:

James Clavell. *The Children's Story*, Dell.

Robert Putnam. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Simon and Schuster.

Paul Tough. *Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*, Mariner Books.

James J. Heckman. *Giving Kids a Fair Chance (A Strategy that Works)*, The MIT Press.

Elizabeth Green. *Building a Better Teacher*, W.W. Norton.

Amanda Ripley. *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got That Way*, Simon and Schuster.

Joel Klein. *Lessons of Hope: How to Fix Our Schools*, Harper Paperbacks.

Kevin Carey. *The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere*, Riverhead Books.

Fareed Zakaria. *In Defense of a Liberal Education*, W.W. Norton.

## MEMOS

There are five memos to be completed during the course. Each individual memo has a maximum word limit of 1,000 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).*

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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) Reform:** *Write a white paper directed to a district, a state, or the federal government proposing a specific education reform.*

## 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 was given.
- Class participation/attendance (20%): 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 (60%): 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?

#### **Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

INTRODUCTION

#### Reading:

“Knowledge for Earnings’ Sake,” *The Economist*, October 12, 2013.

“A Hereditary Meritocracy,” *The Economist*, January 24, 2015.

Claire Cain Miller. “As Robots Grow Smarter, American Workers Struggle to Keep Up,”  
*New York Times*, December 15, 2014.

#### **Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>**

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

#### Reading for discussion:

David Rohde, Kristina Cooke, and Himanshu Ojha. “The Decline of the ‘Great Equalizer,’” *The Atlantic*, December 19, 2012.

#### **Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

GUEST: MICHELE TINE

#### Reading:

James Clavell. *A Children’s Story*

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Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Purpose of Education," *The Maroon Tiger* (Morehouse College Student Paper), 1947.

Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick. "What Americans Want from Public Schools," in *The American Dream and the Public Schools*.

**7:00 p.m. Film night: "Most Likely to Succeed" (Make up time: 3:00 p.m. on Friday, room TBD)**

WEEK 2

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, JANUARY 11<sup>TH</sup>: MEMO #1: WHAT IS EDUCATION?**

**Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

Sandra Black and Kenneth Sokoloff. "The Rise and Decline (?) of Public Education in the United States," *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, vol. 1.

This American Life #512: "House Rules," November 22, 2013.

Sean F. Reardon. "The Widening Income Achievement Gap," *Faces of Poverty*, vol. 70, no. 8, May 2013.

**Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

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

WEEK 3

RACE AND SEGREGATION

**Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

GUEST: BRUCE SACERDOTE

Reading:

Derek Neal. "Why Has Black-White Skill Convergence Stopped?" *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, vol. 1.

Richard V. Reeves. "School Readiness Gaps Are Improving, Except for Black Kids," Brookings Social Mobility Memo, November 13, 2015.

"Identifying the Disadvantaged," *The Economist*, June 18, 2014.

**Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>**

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

This American Life #562 and #563: *The Problem We All Live With, parts 1 and 2*

**Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

*Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*  
Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer. "Are High Quality Schools Enough to Close the Achievement Gap? Evidence From a Social Experiment in Harlem?" NBER Working Paper 15473, November 2009. **SKIM FOR KEY IDEAS**

**7:00 p.m. Film Night: "American Promise" (Make up screening Friday, 3:00 p.m., room TBD)**

WEEK 4

SCHOOL READINESS AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, JANUARY 25<sup>TH</sup>: MEMO #2: AGREE OR DISAGREE: THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FUNDAMENTALLY FAIR.**

**Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

James J. Heckman. *Giving Kids a Fair Chance (A Strategy that Works)*  
McKinsey and Company. *How the World's Best-Performing Schools Come Out on Top*, September 2007.

**Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>**

3:00 p.m.—4:15 p.m.

Reading for Discussion:

"Back to School," *This American Life* #474, September 14, 2012.

**Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 p.m.

Reading:

Amanda Ripley. *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got That Way*.

WEEK 5

ACCOUNTABILITY AND FUNDING

**Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

Helen Ladd and Susanna Loeb. "The Challenges of Measuring School Quality: Implications for Educational Equity," in *Education, Justice & Democracy*, Reich and Allen, eds.

Patrick McGuinn. "The Federal Role in Educational Equity: The Two Narratives of School Reform and the Debate over Accountability," Chapter 10, *Education, Justice, & Democracy*, Reich and Allen, eds.

Jordan Ellenberg. "Meet the New Common Core," *New York Times*, June 16, 2015.

"No Child Left Behind Gets Left Behind," *The Economist*, December 12, 2015.

Lizette Alvarez. "States Listen as Parents Give Rampant Testing an F," *New York Times*, November 9, 2014.

**Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>**

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

David Denby. "Public Defender: Diane Ravitch Takes on a Movement," *The New Yorker*, November 19, 2012.

**Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

GUEST: REBECCA HOLCOMBE

Reading:

"The Promise and Pitfalls of Using Imprecise School Accountability Measures," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 16(4): 91-114, Fall 2002 (with Thomas Kane).

Eric A. Hanushek. "School Resources," Chapter 14, *Handbook of the Economics of Education*.

Hochschild and Scovronick. "School Finance Reform" in *The American Dream and the Public Schools*.

WEEK 6

TEACHERS

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8<sup>TH</sup>: MEMO #3: ACCOUNTABILITY: EXPLAIN THE ROLE THAT STANDARDIZED TESTS SHOULD PLAY IN EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS (AND THEREFORE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS).**

**Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

Eric A. Hanushek and Steven Rivkin. "Teacher Quality," *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, vol. 2.

Gordon, Kane, and Staiger. "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job," The Hamilton Project, Discussion Paper 2006-01, April 2006.

David Leonhardt. "The Case for \$320,000 Kindergarten Teachers," July 27, 2010.

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**Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>**

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

Steven Brill. “The Rubber Room,” *The New Yorker*, August 31, 2009.  
“Paying Teachers More,” *The Economist*, August 24, 2000.

**Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

GUEST: DOUG STAIGER

Reading:

Elizabeth Green. *Building a Better Teacher*.  
“Ensuring Fair & Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching,” Policy and Practice Brief,  
Measures of Effective Teaching Project, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013.

WEEK 7

THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup>: MEMO #4: TEACHERS: EVALUATE HOW WE RECRUIT, HIRE, TRAIN, AND PAY PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN AMERICA AND PROPOSE A CHANGE IN THAT PROCESS.**

**Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

GUEST: PHIL HANLON

Reading:

Kevin Carey. *The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere*.  
Paul Campos. “The Real Reason College Tuition Costs So Much,” *New York Times*,  
April 4, 2015.

**Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>**

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

Andrew Delbanco. “MOOCs of Hazard,” *New Republic*, March 31, 2013.  
Michael S. McPherson and Lawrence S. Bacow. “Online Higher Education: Beyond the  
Hype Cycle,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 29, no. 4, Fall 2015.

**Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

Michael S. McPherson and Morton Owen Schapiro. “U.S. Higher Education Finance,”  
*Handbook of the Economics of Education*.

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WEEK 8  
SCHOOL CHOICE

**Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:  
Hochschild and Scovronick. “Choice,” in *The American Dream and the Public Schools*.  
Carolyn M. Hoxby. “School Choice and School Productivity: Could School Choice Be a  
Tide that Lifts All Boats?” *The Economics of School Choice*, University of  
Chicago Press, 2003.

**Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.  
Film: “The Education of Michelle Rhee”

WEEK 9  
POLITICS OF REFORM AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

**Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.  
GUEST: ROBIN STEANS

Reading:  
Joel Klein. *Lessons of Hope: How to Fix Our Schools*, Harper Paperbacks.

**Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:  
“Two Steps Back,” *This American Life* #275, October 15, 2004.  
James Piereson and Naomi Schaefer Riley. “Zuckerberg’s \$100 Million Lesson,” *Wall  
Street Journal*, October 6, 2015.

**Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.  
GUEST: JULIA BOWEN

Reading:  
Atila Abdulkadiroglu *et al.* Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston’s Charter, Pilot and  
Traditional Schools. Prepared for The Boston Foundation, January 2009.  
Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO). National Charter School Study  
Executive Summary, 2013.  
Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO). Urban Charter School Study  
Report on 41 Regions, 2015.  
Kate Taylor. “At a Success Academy Charter School, Singling Out Pupils Who Have  
‘Got to Go’,” *New York Times*, October 29, 2015.

WEEK 10  
WRAP-UP

- **5:00 P.M., MONDAY, MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup>: MEMO #5: REFORM: WRITE A WHITE PAPER DIRECTED TO A DISTRICT, A STATE, OR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROPOSING A SPECIFIC EDUCATION REFORM.**

**Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

Fareed Zakaria. *In Defense of a Liberal Education.*

**Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**

**3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.**

**BONUS MEMO AND DISCUSSION: IN NO MORE THAN 500 WORDS, PROPOSE AND EXPLAIN A CHANGE TO THE DARTMOUTH CURRICULUM (BROADLY CONSTRUED) THAT WOULD IMPROVE OUR LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION.**