

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.

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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. 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:

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.

Lucy Crehan. *Clever Lands: The Secrets Behind the Success of the World's Education Superpowers*. Unbound Press.

Dale Russakoff. *The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools?* Mariner Press.

Richard Reeves. *Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class Is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust, Why That Is a Problem, and What to Do About It*. Brookings Institution Press, 2017.

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:

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

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

WEEK 2:

Tuesday, January 9th

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM

Reading:

James Clavell. *A Children’s Story*

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

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

“Keeping the Wheels Turning,” *The Economist*, December 23, 2017.

Sheelah Kolhatkar. “Dark Factory,” *The New Yorker*, October 23, 2017.

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

Emily Badger and Kevin Quealy. “How Effective Is Your School District? A New Measure Shows Where Students Learn the Most,” *New York Times*, December 5, 2017.

Thursday, January 11th

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 15TH: MEMO #1: WHAT IS EDUCATION?**

Tuesday, January 16th

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:

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

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

Wednesday, January 17th

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 18th

10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Reading:

Liz Sablich. “7 Findings That Illustrate Racial Disparities in Education,” The Brown Center Chalkboard, Brookings, June 6, 2016.

Whitehurst et al. “60 Years after Brown v. Board of Education, how racially balanced are America’s schools?” Brookings Report, November 20, 2017.

“Identifying the Disadvantaged,” *The Economist*, June 18, 2014.

WEEK 4:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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

Tuesday, January 23rd

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:

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

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Emma Brown. "A Nobel Prize Winner Says Public Preschool Programs Should Start at Birth," *Washington Post*, December 12, 2016.

Thursday, January 25th

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:

Deborah A. Phillips et al. "Puzzling It Out: The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects: A Consensus Statement," 2017.

"Back to School," *This American Life* (podcast), September 14, 2012.

WEEK 5

TEACHERS

Tuesday, January 30th

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:

Elizabeth Green. "Building a Better Teacher," *New York Times Magazine*, March 2, 2010.

"Teaching the Teachers," *The Economist*, June 11, 2016.

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.

"Paying Teachers More," *The Economist*, August 24, 2000.

Emily K. Penner. "Teaching for All? Teach for America's Effects Across the Distribution of Student Achievement," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 2016.

Wednesday, January 31st

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

Steven Brill. "The Rubber Room," *The New Yorker*, August 31, 2009.

Thursday, February 1st

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

GUEST: DOUG STAIGER

Reading:

"Ensuring Fair & Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching," Policy and Practice Brief, Measures of Effective Teaching Project, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013.

Jackson, Rockoff, and Staiger. "Teacher Effects and Teacher-Related Policies," *Annual Review of Economics*, 2014.

Byron Auguste, Paul Kihn, and Matt Miller. "Closing the Talent Gap: Attracting and Retaining Top Third Graduates to Careers in Teaching," McKinsey & Company, September 2010.

Joe Nocera. "How to Grade a Teacher," *New York Times*, June 16, 2015.

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:

The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning, The Wallace Foundation, January 2013.

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

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

Paul Tough. “How Kids Really Succeed,” *The Atlantic*, June 2016.

Wednesday, February 7th

3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

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

Angela Duckworth. TED Talk: “Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance,” May 9, 2013.

Sal Khan. TED Talk: “Let’s Teach for Mastery—Not Test Scores,” November 2015.

Thursday, February 8th

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

ACCOUNTABILITY

GUEST: REBECCA HOLCOMBE, VERMONT SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Reading:

David Figlio and Krzysztof Karbownik. “Some Schools Much Better Than Others at Closing Achievement Gaps Between Their Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students,” Brookings Report, July 20, 2017.

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.

William G. Howell. “Results of President Obama’s Race to the Top,” *Education Next*, Fall 2015 (vol. 14, no. 4).

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:

Lucy Crehan. *Clever Lands: The Secrets Behind the Success of the World's Education Superpowers*. Unbound Press.

McKinsey and Company. *How the World's Best-Performing Schools Come Out on Top*, September 2007.

Amanda Ripley. "What America Can Learn from Smart Schools in Other Countries," *New York Times*, December 6, 2016.

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:

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.

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Kevin Carey. "Dismal Voucher Results Surprise Researchers as DeVos Era Begins," *New York Times*, February 23, 2017.

"Long-Haul Charters," *The Economist*, December 3, 2016.

David Leonhardt. "School Vouchers Aren't Working, but Choice Is," *New York Times*, May 2, 2017.

Gail Cornwall. "Why Parents Make Flawed Choices About Their Kids' Schooling," *The Atlantic*, October 18, 2017.

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?*

Mark J. Chin et al. "Assessing the Impact of the Newark Education Reforms: The Role of Within-School Improvement vs. Between-School Shifts in Enrollment," Harvard Center for Education Policy Research, October 2017.

Wednesday, February 28th

3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Reading for discussion:

"Two Steps Back," This American Life (podcast), October 15, 2004.

Thursday, March 1st

10:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Reading:

Richard Reeves. *Dream Hoarders*

WEEK 10

WRAPPING UP

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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.**