

EDUC 216: Education & Social Policy

Thursdays, 1:30 – 4:00 pm // Spring 2016 // Wellesley College

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Office hours: Thursdays, by appointment



Image: *The Migration Series*, Panel 58, Jacob Lawrence

Course Description

In this course, we examine education policies of recent decades as well as the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped them. We will analyze the different – and sometimes conflicting – goals, motivations, and outcomes of educational policies. Who designs educational policy and for whom? Whose interests are served and whose interests are unmet? Using a case study approach, we will discuss major topics of debate in American education, including equal educational opportunity, school desegregation, school choice, and education standards and testing, and consider new policies.

The course does not require a prior knowledge of educational issues.

Course Site

The course site for EDUC 216 will be an important resource for completing and submitting assignments, obtaining course materials, keeping track of due dates, and communicating with one another. Please bookmark it and check it frequently for updates.

URL: sakai.wellesley.edu/portal/site/21629-201602

Disabilities + Accommodations

If you have a disability or health concern that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require adjustments or accommodations, please contact Disability Services or visit: wellesley.edu/disability/requests.

If you already have documentation indicating that you need accommodations, please provide that information privately. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential.

Course Requirements

No late assignments will be accepted. If you have an extenuating circumstance that precludes you from timely submission of an assignment, you must ask your Dean to submit a letter on your behalf, requesting an extension.

Course Participation (20%)

"As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence." – bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

This is a discussion-based course and effective learning—your own and that of others—is contingent on active participation. Full engagement and participation in every class is required, as is your preparation, attendance, and timeliness. Your completion of shorter weekly assignments is also incorporated into your participation grade. If you will be late to or absent from class for any reason, please notify me immediately via email. Missing class or arriving late may impact your final grade.

A note on technology in the classroom: as laptops and iPads have become fixtures in our classrooms, they have tremendous potential to draw us deeper into a state of engagement by providing a way to efficiently take notes or look up information that can supplement the discussion. However, they have equal or greater potential to disrupt our engagement. The question is always whether using technology is drawing you into class or pulling you out (e.g. through distractions such as email, social media, readings/assignments for other courses, et cetera), and the answer to that question is generally apparent to you as a thoughtful student, as well as to your peers and often to your instructor. Please keep this in mind and be judicious and conscientious in your use of technology.

Analytic Memos (20%)

To synthesize your learning and understanding about each of the major areas of study, you will write two analytic memos. No more than 1,500 words, memos should be clear statements that analyze a particular issue across readings. Memos should not be summaries of the readings. The memo should respond to the assigned question by 1) taking a stance on an issue, 2) presenting evidence from the readings and class discussions in support of that stance, and 3) offering your analysis of the evidence. This assignment is geared to push your thinking on a topic, encourage you to engage more substantively with the readings, and help you formulate an argument.

Memos are due on March 2 and April 6.

Contemporary Issue Presentation (20%)

You will work with a partner or in a small group to introduce a contemporary education policy issue or controversy that is unfolding in a particular setting. You will provide some background and an overview of the pertinent issues, explain relevant policies affecting the issue, and connect it to course themes that we have discussed. Presentations will be 20 minutes long, followed by a discussion that you will lead. Further guidelines as well as a signup for presentation dates will be distributed in class.

Community Events + Reflection Paper (20%)

You will attend two community events this semester and write a reflection based on the off-campus event.

Event 1: Film Screening

On Thursday, February 18 at 6 o'clock, we will attend an on-campus screening of the documentary film *Tested*, including a talkback with director Curtis Chin. You do not have to write a reflection for this event, but you should take notes, as the film is considered an assigned text.

Event 2: Off-Campus Event

Choose an event related to education or education policy taking place in the greater Boston area. A list of options is posted on the course site (all will be free and open to the public). After you attend the community event, you write a reflection (no more than 750 words) that includes a very short (no more than 100 words) summary of the event and describes your reaction/reflection to the event and its connection to the concepts that we have covered in class. I also encourage you to share your experiences where relevant during class discussion. If you have a suggestion for an event not included in the provided list that you would like to attend, please email me your request at least a week prior to the date.

General Guidelines for Written Assignments

Unless noted, all assignments are due via the course site by midnight on the due date noted. Written assignments should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document in Times New Roman, size 12, and double spaced, with 1-inch margins. They should be read carefully and revised before you submit them. It is often helpful to share writing with a partner for proofreading and feedback. If your partner provides you with an idea, concept, or term that you find yourself using in the paper, include a footnote in which you attribute them with proper credit.

Analytic Memos (20%)

To synthesize your learning and understanding about each of the major areas of study, you will write two analytic memos. No more than 1,500 words, memos should be clear statements that analyze a particular issue across readings. Memos should not be summaries of the readings. The memo should respond to the assigned question by 1) taking a stance on an issue, 2) presenting evidence from the readings and class discussions in support of that stance, and 3) offering your analysis of the evidence. This assignment is geared to push your thinking on a topic, encourage you to engage more substantively with the readings, and help you formulate an argument.

Memos are due on March 2 and April 6.

Policy Memo (20%)

Your final assignment will be a policy memo in which you will draw on evidence from the course as well as other resources to make recommendations to a decision-maker (such as a school principal, a state lawmaker, or a district superintendent) regarding an educational policy issue. The assignment will include

- the policy memo itself (1,000 words)
- a 300-500 word reflection on the considerations that informed your writing of the memo (e.g. the audience, your personal values, experiences, and beliefs, evidence and concepts from the course, compromises you had to make)
- an annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources (not assigned as course content) that informed your writing of the memo.

Guidelines and topics for this final assignment will be distributed via the course site on Tuesday, April 26 and the assignment will be due by Tuesday, May 10, also via the course site.

Class Sessions

Except where a URL is included, all readings are available for download on the course site.

Part I: Foundations and Fundamentals – How Do Schools Work?

Class 1: January 28, 2016

Key questions: What is social policy? How have our own educational experiences been shaped by social policies?

- No readings for this session.
- **Assignment: Autobiographical Statement (distributed in class). Due Sunday, January 31.**

Class 2: February 4, 2016

Key questions: What are some purposes of school? How has the purpose of schooling been defined over the course of American history?

- Spring, J. American Education, 16th ed. (2013). Chapter 1, "The History and Political Goals of Public Schooling," and Chapter 2, "The Social Goals of Public Schooling."
- "Learning to Read and Write." In Douglass, F. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave.
- Bear, C. "American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many" (May 19, 2008), NPR. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16516865>
- **Sign up for contemporary issue presentations (discussed in class; sign up via course site by midnight)**

Class 3: February 11, 2016

Key question: What should students learn and how should they learn it?

- Common Core State Standards for Mathematics
- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
- "Conversation: A Three-Minute Video on Common Core State Standards," <https://vimeo.com/116379560>
- Freire, P. Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Chapter 2.

Class 4: February 18, 2016

Key question: How do we assess student learning?

- Meier, D. In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization (2002). Chapter 6, "Why Tests Don't Test What We Think They Do," and Chapter 7, "Standardization versus Standards."
- Booher-Jennings, Jennifer. 2005. "Below the Bubble: 'Educational Triage' and the Texas Accountability System." American Educational Research Journal, 42(2): 231-268.
- **Evening film screening: Tested, with director Curtis Chin, 6 pm**

Class 5: February 25, 2016

Key questions: What makes a good teacher? Who should be a teacher? How should they be prepared for their work?

- Drury, D. and Baer, J. *The American Public School Teacher: Past, Present & Future* (2011). Chapter 1, "Introduction," Chapter 2, "A Statistical Portrait of the American Public School Teacher, 1955 to 2010," and Chapter 6, "A Vision of the New Teacher in the Twenty-First Century."
- Sanchez, C. "Study: Teacher Prep Programs Get Failing Marks" (June 18, 2013), NPR. <http://www.npr.org/2013/06/18/192765776/study-teacher-prep-programs-get-failing-marks>
- National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), "Teacher Prep Review" (2013), Executive Summary and Part I.
- Ladson-Billings, G.J. "I ain't writin' nuttin': Permissions to Fail and Demands to Succeed in Urban Classrooms," in Delpit, L. & Dowdy, J.K. *The Skin that We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom* (2002).
- Analytic memo assigned in class; due March 2, 2016

Class 6: March 3, 2016

Key questions: Do policies governing schools eliminate class inequalities, or perpetuate them? How can schools better meet the needs of low-income students?

- Rist, R. (1970) "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education." *Harvard Educational Review* 40(3): 411-451.
- Khan, S.R. (2010). "Getting In: How Elite Schools Play the College Game," in A. Howard & R. Gaztambide-Fernández, *Educating Elites: Class Privilege and Educational Advantage*.
- Jack, A.A. "What the Privileged Poor Can Teach Us" (September 12, 2015), *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/13/opinion/sunday/what-the-privileged-poor-can-teach-us.html>

Class 7: March 10, 2016

Key questions: How can social policies make it easier or more difficult for parents and families to play a role in their children's education? What role should families play in shaping social policy?

- Mira, M., Nikundiwe, T. and Wadhwa, A. "Our Strength is the Power of Our Community: Political Education and the Continuation of the Struggle in Denver," in Warren, M.R. & Mapp, K.L. (2011), *A Match on Dry Grass*.
- Mapp, K. L. (2003). "Having Their Say: Parents Describe Why and How They Are Engaged in Their Children's Learning." *School Community Journal*, 13(1), 35-64.
- Debate Club: Is there a need for parent trigger laws? *US News and World Report*. <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-there-a-need-for-parent-trigger-laws>
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Home and Classrooms." *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.

Part II: Details, Challenges, and Contradictions – Shaping Just Policies

Class 8: March 17, 2016

Key questions: How do we create inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities?

- Kliewer, C., Biklen, D., & Petersen, A. (2015). "At the End of Intellectual Disability," *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(1), 1-28.
- Hehir, T. (2005). *New directions in special education: Eliminating ableism in policy and practice*. Chapter 1, "Defining Ableism in Education," and Chapter 6, "Policy."
- Beals, K. "The Common Core is Tough on Kids with Special Needs" (February 21, 2014), *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/02/the-common-core-is-tough-on-kids-with-special-needs/283973/>

NO CLASS MARCH 24: SPRING BREAK

Class 9: March 31, 2016

Key questions: What is "school choice" and how does it work? What factors should determine which school a child attends?

- Catalyst Chicago. "Weighing the Options" (November/December 2008).
- Payne, C., & Knowles, T. (2009). Promise and peril: Charter schools, urban school reform, and the Obama administration. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(2), 227-239.
- Lareau, A., & Goyette, K. (Eds.). (2014). *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*. Russell Sage Foundation. Chapter 6, "Schools, Housing, and the Reproduction of Inequality," and Chapter 7, "Middle Class Parents, Risk, and Urban Public Schools."
- Analytic memo assigned in class; due April 6, 2016

Class 10: April 7, 2016

Key questions: What is the current state of school segregation? What policies are in place to lessen school segregation, and how well are they working?

- Hannah-Jones, N. "Segregation Now: Investigating America's Racial Divide" (April 16, 2014), *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/segregation-now-the-resegregation-of-americas-schools>
- Linn, R.L. and Kevin G. Welner. 2007. "Race-Conscious Policies for Assigning Students to Schools: Social Science Research and the Supreme Court Cases." *National Academy of Education Committee on Social Science Research Evidence on Racial Diversity in Schools. Executive Summary and Chapter 6*. http://www.naeducation.org/cs/groups/naedsite/documents/webpage/naed_080863.pdf
- This American Life, "The Problem We All Live With – Part II" (August 7, 2015). <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/563/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-two> {This is an audio file, about 1 hour long.}

Class 11: April 14, 2016

Key questions: How do social policies influence the functions of discipline and punishment in schools? What impacts do suspension and expulsion have on students' experiences of schooling?

- APA Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2006). Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. Washington, DC. <http://www.apa.org/pubs/info/reports/zero-tolerance.pdf>
- Casella, R. (June 2003). Zero tolerance policy in schools: Rationale, consequences, and alternatives. *Teachers College Record*, 105(5), 872–892.
- Sartain, L., Allensworth, E.M., & Porter, S. "Suspending Chicago's Students: Differences in Discipline Practices Across Schools" (2015). Consortium on Chicago School Research. Executive Summary & Introduction.
- Perez, J. "Teachers Complain about Revised CPS Discipline Policy" (February 25, 2015), *Chicago Tribune*. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-cps-discipline-concerns-met-20150225-story.html>

Class 12: April 21, 2016

Key question: How do social policies influencing citizenship and social policies influencing schools interact in the lives of undocumented students and students from mixed-status families?

- Gonzales, R. G. (2011). "Learning to Be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood." *American Sociological Review*, 76(4), 602–619.
- Ledesma, A. "On the Grammar of Silence: The Structure of My Undocumented Immigrant Writer's Block" (2015), *Harvard Educational Review*.
- Canedo Sanchez, R.E. & So, M.L. "UC Berkeley's Undocumented Student Program: Holistic Strategies for Undocumented Student Equitable Success Across Higher Education" (2015), *Harvard Educational Review*.
- Yoshikawa, H. & Suárez-Orozco, C. "Deporting Parents Hurts Kids" (April 20, 2012). *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/21/opinion/deporting-parents-ruins-kids.html>

Final Assignment Distributed via Course Site Tuesday, April 26.

Class 13: April 28, 2016

Key questions: Where does change come from? How do policy levers work (or fail) to transform schools? Who can influence policy, and how?

- Tyack, D. & Cuban, L. *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (2009). Chapter 3, "How Schools Change Reforms."

Final Assignment Due May 10, 2016