

SCHOOLING AND OPPORTUNITY

Winter 2009

John G. Ramsay
106 Willis Hall
Extension x4008
jramsay@carleton.edu

Office Hours: M-F 2-3 & by appt

Course Description

This course focuses on how and why educational promise, talent and aspiration are shaped, nurtured and neglected by American schools. We will examine evidence, theories, and ideologies about the workings of primary, secondary and post-secondary schools in the United States. We will evaluate a number of empirical studies that describe how schools consider, and neglect the learning opportunities of students of color, students from low-income families and more privileged students. The role educational institutions play in preserving stratification systems and building opportunity structures will be our central concern.

Course Objectives

The course aims to develop knowledgeable and skillful students of equality educational opportunity and quality educational opportunities: theories, concepts, research, and implemented practices in different kinds of schools. It aims at building a variety of skills useful for understanding these concepts as a cultural and political ideals and as a frustratingly difficult ideals to realize in the day-to-day practice of imperfect schools.

Finally we will strive to create a inclusive community of civil skeptics and critics, students striving to engage each other with skill and in good faith both when we agree and more importantly, when we disagree with each other's evidence, conclusions and viewpoints.

Online access for *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* can be made through their [website](#)

Username: Educ353

Password: Knights

Course Schedule

January 5 - January 9, Week One

Monday, January 5

- John Hope Franklin, “A Life of Learning.” (article #4)
- http://www.acls.org/Publications/OP/Haskins/1988_JohnHopeFranklin.pdf

Pathways to Economic Mobility: Key Indicators, Fact Sheet
http://www.economicmobility.org/assets/pdfs/Pathways_to_Economic_Mobility_Fact_Sheet.pdf

Wednesday, January 7

[A Life of Learning by Helen Vendler](#) (article #50)

- [A Life of Learning by Robert K. Merton](#) (article #25)
- Dialogue between Kwame Anthony Appiah and Robert Boynton
- http://www.robertboynton.com/articleDisplay.php?article_id=8
- Pat Courtney Gold
- http://www.craftinamerica.org/artists_fiber/story_116.php

Friday, January 9

John Ramsay, “Marks of Distinction”

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=2103424&site=ehost-live>

“The Oracle: The Many Lives of Ariana Huffington”

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/10/13/081013fa_fact_collins

“The Uses of Adversity” by Malcolm Gladwell

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/11/10/081110fa_fact_gladwell

January 12 - January 16, Week 2

Monday, January 12

Paul Tough, *Whatever it Takes*, Chapters 1,2,3 and 4.

Wednesday, January 14

Paul Tough, *Whatever it Takes*, Chapters 5,6, 7 & 8.

Friday, January 16

Paul Tough, *Whatever it Takes*, Chapters 9, 10 and 11. .

January 19 - January 23, Week 3

Monday, January 19

[Opportunity In America: The Role of Education by Isabel Sawhill](#)

“Education and Economic Mobility,” by Ron Haskins

http://www.economicmobility.org/assets/pdfs/EMP_Education_ChapterVIII.pdf
“The Battle for Brainpower”
http://www.economist.com/specialreports/displayStory.cfm?story_id=7961894

DUE: Lives of Learning and Opportunity Considered

Using the autobiographical and biographical materials from the first week of class and *Whatever it Takes*, write an essay that addresses the question: How and Why Does Educational Opportunity Matter? Argue from examples. Essay mean “attempt.” Don’t think of this as your definitive answer to this question, but an exploration of your first tentative answer. Argue from examples. Use quotes. Use the concepts of social, human and financial capital to think with—to clarify your points. Use the concepts of stratification system and opportunity structure to describe and explain your meanings. Due in Class. Do not exceed 7 pages. Staple your pages together. Number your pages.

Cite your work e.g.:

Bracey, G.W. (2002) Summer loss: The phenomenon no one wants to deal with. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84 (1), 12-13.

Wednesday, January 21

Ted Kolderie, “The Other Half of the Strategy: Following Up on System Reform By Innovating with School and Schooling,”

<http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/innovatingwithschooling.pdf>

OTHER READINGS WILL BE SENT VIA E-MAIL FOR THIS CLASS.

Friday, January 23

Victoria Purcell-Gates, *Other People's Words*, Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2, pp. 1-39.

January 26 – January 30. Week 4

Monday, January 26, Week 4

Purcell-Gates, Chapters 3 and 4. and 5

Wednesday, January 28

Purcell-Gates, Ch. 6 and 7

Friday, January 30

- Purcell-Gates Ch. 8 and 9, pp. 155-200.
Midterm take-home exam

This will be a standard take-home, aimed at testing your knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of the first half of the course. It will focus on Purcell-Gate's *Other People's Words*. You will receive a complete instruction sheet on the question and the format of the take-home. It will be due in class on Friday, Feb.6. It will count for 25% of your final grade.

February 2 - February 6, Week 5

Monday, Feb. 2

Deborah Meier, *In Schools We Trust*, Introduction and Part One pp. 1-78

Wednesday, Feb. 4

Meier, *In Schools We Trust*, Part Two, pp. 95-137.

Friday, Feb. 6

Meier, Part Three, pp. 155--182.

Gilberto Conchas, *The Color of Success*, Introduction and Chapter 1.

February 9 - February 13, Week 6

• Monday, Feb. 9 Midterm Break

Wednesday, Feb. 11

Gilberto Conchas, *The Color of Success*, Chapters 2,3 and 4.

Friday, Feb. 13

Gilberto Conchas, *The Color of Success*, Introduction and Chapters 5,6 & 7.

February 16 - February 20, Week 7

Monday, February 16

- Alan Peshkin, *Permissible Advantage?* Chapters 1,2,3

Research Paper Assignment

This goal of this assignment is to challenge you to research a specific reform, or program that you are especially interested in. You will need to address the following questions: What is the program? What problems is it attempting to address? Who founded it and why? What financial resources support it? What are its goals? To what extent does it contribute to the strengthening of an opportunity structure? What evidence exists that it is effective or ineffective? **Due in class on Monday, Feb. 23.** It will count for 25% of your final grade. (Length 7-10 pages). Please clear your topic with me ahead of time.

Wednesday, February 18

- Peshkin, *Permissible Advantage?* Chapters 4,5

Friday, Feb. 20

- Peshkin, *Permissible Advantage?* Chapters 6,7.

February 23 – February 27, Week 8

Monday, Feb. 23

Clayton Christensen, et al, *Disrupting Class*, Introduction and Chapters 1,2 and 3.

Research Paper Due in Class

Wed., Feb. 25th

Clayton Christensen, et al, *Disrupting Class*, Chapters 4,5, 6.

Friday, February 29

Clayton Christensen, et al, *Disrupting Class*, Chapters 7,8,9.

March 2 - March 6, Week 9

Monday, March 2

- [The Future of College Access... by Michale Mumper](#)
- [Assessing the Results of Race-Sensitive College Admissions by Derek Bok](#)
- [Children Smart Enough to Get Into Elite Schools... by Alan Krueger](#)
- [Postsecondary Opportunity Issue: #188 and #186](#)

Wednesday, March 4

- [Thin Ice by Claude Steele](#)
- [Studying Students Studying Calculus by Uri Treisman](#)

March 9 - March 13, Week 10

Monday, March 9

REVIEW

Wednesday, March 11

REVIEW

Last Day of Class

Final Take-Home Exam: This will be a standard take-home, aimed at testing your knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of the second half of the course. It will focus on the readings since mid-term. You will receive a complete instruction sheet on the question and the format of the take-home. **It will be due in class no later than 9:30 PM on Monday, March 16th.** It will count for 25% of your final grade.