

Education 395: Senior Seminar

Topic: Charter Schools

Spring 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:10 am to 11:55 am

CMC 319

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30 to 5 pm; Wednesdays 9 to 11 am; or by appointment

Course Description

In this seminar, we will explore the role of charter schools in the U.S. educational landscape. We will start by examining the history and origin of charter schools and the effectiveness of charter schools. We will then look at the purposes of American public education and how charter schools fulfill or challenge those purposes. The next few topics we explore will depend on student interest. Topics can include: the impact of charter schools on teacher unions; the impact of charter schools on racial minority students, on English Language Learners or on students with disabilities; charter school funding and sponsorship; student voices in/on charter schools. Finally, through interviews with various stakeholders at charter schools, we will explore the reality of working at and being a parent at charter schools.

Course Objectives

1. Become familiar with the historical and recent developments in the charter school movement
2. Examine arguments for and against the expansion of charter schools and the evidence about the effectiveness of charter schools
3. Understand the perspectives of the various stakeholders at charter schools through interviews and readings
4. Develop/hone qualitative research skills, including conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, analyzing interview data, and analyzing documents.
5. Develop/hone collaboration and presentation skills

Course Expectations

A successful class depends on each member actively engaging as both a learner and a teacher. Discussion will be the primary activity during class meetings. Students are expected to come to every class on time with the assignments read and completed, and to be responsible and active participants in all class activities. I encourage you to think critically and voice your opinions; however, respect for the opinions of others and a willingness to collaborate are also essential. The final project for this course involves the entire group and therefore it is essential that you learn to collaborate effectively with your classmates.

Policies

Attendance: Given the importance that all Educational Studies classes place on learning with peers through classroom discussions, students are expected to come to every single class session, prepared to participate. We cannot become a community of learners or learning how to work effectively on a collective goal without regular attendance and participation from everyone. After two absences from class, each subsequent absence will result in the lowering of your course grade by a third (e.g. from a B to a B-). **If you miss more than 4 class sessions (20% of the class sessions), you will not be able to pass the class.**

Late Assignments: Assignments not turned in during class on the due date will be penalized one-half grade per day late (A to A-, etc.) and **will not be accepted after 7 days.** Please pace yourself so that you turn in your work on time.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments is required to speak with Disability Services for Students. Although they will send a letter about accommodations, it would be helpful if you can inform me of any accommodations required, so that we can make the appropriate arrangements for you.

Required Books

Dingerson, L., Miner, B., Peterson, B., & Walters, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Keeping the promise? The debate over charter schools*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, Ltd. Readings from the book are marked with an *

This book will be available at the Carleton bookstore. There will also be a copy on reserve at the library. All other readings will be available on Moodle.

Field Trips

As part of the course, you will be required to participate in two field trips to visit charter schools up in the Twin Cities. There are required readings you need to complete before each trip (you can find the readings on Moodle under the section "Field Trip Readings"). These field trips will require extra time outside of class time.

Please note that a lot of information about the course including assignment details is provided in the syllabus and on Moodle. Because of field visits and class visitors, there might be changes to the reading schedule, so please make sure to check email and Moodle on a regular basis for these changes.

READING SCHEDULE

Please note that readings are organized by themes, not by weeks.

THEME 1: HISTORY, ORIGINS, AND STRUCTURE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Tuesday, March 27th

Introductions

Thursday, March 29th

National Alliance of Public Charter Schools. (2011). *A growing movement: America's largest charter school communities.*

National Alliance of Public Charter Schools. (2011). *Openings and closings of charter schools 2011-2012.*

National Center for Educational Statistics. Fast Facts on charter schools.

*Dingerson, L., Miner, B., Peterson, B., & Walters, S. (2008). Introduction. In L. Dingerson, B. Miner, B. Peterson & S. Walters (Eds.), *Keeping the promise? The debate over charter schools* (pp. xi-xix). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

*Sizer, T., & Wood, G. (2008). Charter schools and the values of public education. In L. Dingerson, B. Miner, B. Peterson & S. Walters (Eds.), *Keeping the promise? The debate over charter schools* (pp. 3-16). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

Buckley, J., & Schneider, M. (2007). *Charter schools : hope or hype?* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press. pp. 1-18

Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers : the art and method of qualitative interview studies.* New York: Free Press. Chapter 1, Appendices C and D.

Tuesday, April 3rd READING RESPONSES DUE BY MONDAY, 12 PM (GROUP A)

CLASS VISITOR: BONNIE JEAN FLOM

Bonnie Jean Flom has served public school students in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin as a teacher or principal for thirty-four years. She has worked in urban, suburban, and rural districts within both traditional and non-traditional settings. She served as the principal of the first conversion charter school in the state of Minnesota. From 2001 to 2005, she served as the Charter School Liaison at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, providing oversight and technical assistance to the five schools sponsored by Hamline.

For three years she coordinated a FINAP grant awarded to EdVisions, Inc. Her duties within the grant included the coordination of a regional, five-state Charter Starters Conference that served nearly sixty developing charter schools over three summers. For the past ten years she has worked

as an independent consultant, providing a wide variety of services to both existing and start-up charter schools.

Ms. Flom earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Minnesota State University, majoring in Elementary Education, with a minor in Special Education. Her Master of Science Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, with an emphasis on Music, and her Education Specialist's Degree were also earned at Minnesota State University - Mankato.

Buckley, J., & Schneider, M. (2007). *Charter schools : hope or hype?* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press. Chapter 2

*El-Amine, Z., & Glazer, L. (2008). "Evolution" or Destruction? A look at Washington, D.C. In L. Dingerson, B. Miner, B. Peterson & S. Walters (Eds.), *Keeping the promise? The debate over charter schools* (pp. 53-66). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

<http://chartervision.org/law/history> (History of charter schools in Minnesota)

Merseth, K. K. (2009). *Inside urban charter schools : promising practices and strategies in five high-performing schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. (Introduction, pp. 1 – 9; Chapter 7 127-148).

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research : a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Chapter 1 & 5

THEME 2: THE GREAT DEBATE—HOW ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS DOING?

Thursday, April 5th READING RESPONSES DUE BY WEDNESDAY, 12 PM (GROUP B)

Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) (2009). *Multiple choice: Charter school performance in 16 states*. Stanford, CA: CREDO, Stanford University. (Read Executive Summary and Section IV—Charter school effects on student learning)

Hoxby, C. M., & Murarka, S. (2009). *Charter schools in New York City : who enrolls and how they affect their students' achievement*. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research. (Read Sections I, II, III, VII, VIII)

Reardon, S.F. (2009) *Review of "How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement."* Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved [March 19, 2012] from <http://epicpolicy.org/thinktank/review-How-New-York-City-Charter> (Read Executive Summary, Sections V & VI).

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research : a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press. Chapter 6

Tuesday, April 10th READING RESPONSES DUE BY MONDAY, 12 PM (GROUP B)
We will start class at 10 am (and end at 11:45 am) because our (virtual) class visitor can meet with us from 10 am to 10:30 am.

CLASS VISITOR: MYRON ORFIELD, Executive Director of Institute on Race & Poverty
Bio: <http://www.irpumn.org/website/about/index.php?strWebAction=staff>

Gleason et al. (2010). The evaluation of charter school impacts (executive summary). Mathematica Policy Research (U.S. Department of education).

Institute on Race and Poverty. (2012). *Update of "Failed promises: Assessing charter schools in the Twin Cities"*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Law School.

Macey, E., Decker, J., & Eckes, S. (2009). The Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP): An Analysis of One Model's Efforts to Promote Achievement in Underserved Communities. *Journal of School Choice*, 3(3), 212-241.

Jackson, K. J. (2009). The social construction of youth and mathematics: The case of a fifth grade classroom. In D. B. Martin (Ed.), *Mathematics teaching, learning, and liberation in the lives of Black children* (pp. 175-199). New York: Routledge.

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/03/18/hopes-and-fears-for-parent-trigger-laws>
[Read all 6 responses]

THEME 3: PURPOSES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION: WHERE DO CHARTER SCHOOLS FIT IN?

Thursday, April 12th READING RESPONSES DUE BY WEDNESDAY, 12 PM (GROUP A)

Feinberg, W. (2012). The idea of a public education. *Review of Research in Education*, 36, 1-22.

Fuller, B. (2000). *Inside charter schools : the paradox of radical decentralization*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1

Chubb, J. E., & Moe, T. M. (1990). America's public schools: Choice is a panacea. *The Brookings Review*, 8(3), 4-12.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research : a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press. Chapter 7

Tuesday, April 17th START CONTACTING PEOPLE AND SETTING UP INTERVIEWS
DEVELOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (AS A GROUP)

Lubienski, C. (2001). Redefining "Public" Education: Charter Schools, Common Schools, and the Rhetoric of Reform. *Teachers College Record*, 103(4), 634-666.

Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system : how testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books. (Chapter Seven, pp. 113-147)

Buckley, J., & Schneider, M. (2007). *Charter schools : hope or hype?* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press. Chapter 12

*Hanauer, A. (2008). Profits and privatization: The Ohio experience. In L. Dingerson, B. Miner, B. Peterson & S. Walters (Eds.), *Keeping the promise? The debate over charter schools* (pp. 35-52). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

*Miner, B. (2008). Lessons from the ground: Interviews with charter school educators. In L. Dingerson, B. Miner, B. Peterson & S. Walters (Eds.), *Keeping the promise? The debate over charter schools* (pp. 81-90). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

O'Brien, E. (2011). The transformation of the role of 'race' in the qualitative interview: Not if race matters, but how? In J. H. Stanfield (Ed.), *Rethinking race and ethnicity in research methods* (pp. 67-94). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Thursday, April 19th **FIELD TRIP TO LJA/LEAVE CAMPUS AT 8 AM**

Tuesday, April 24th

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research : a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press. Chapter 8

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research : a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Chapters 7 & 8

Thursday, April 26th

THEME 4: STUDENT CHOSEN TOPICS

Tuesday, May 1st

GROUPS 1 & 2

Thursday, May 3rd

GROUPS 3 & 4

Tuesday, May 8th *All interviews must be completed and interviewed.*

GROUPS 5 & 6
Start data analysis

THEME 4: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA AND PREPARATION OF PRESENTATION

Thursday, May 10th

Data Analysis

Tuesday, May 15th

Prep for presentation

Thursday, May 17th

Prep for presentation

Tuesday, May 22nd

Prep for presentation

Thursday, May 24th

Prep for presentation + PUBLIC PRESENTATION (Common Time)

Tuesday, May 29th

Wrap up

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. All written assignments are due at the date and time specified. Half a grade will be deducted for each day it is late.

2. All written assignments should be typed using 12-point font (Times Roman would be best), **double-spaced**. If due in class, please print out your papers and STAPLE them. Double-sided printing is encouraged.

3. Quality of writing: **Make sure to proofread** and spell-check your papers and to use proper citation in-text and in the bibliography. Use APA format for in-text citation and the bibliography. You do not need a cover page. Make sure that you are familiar with the College's policy on plagiarism and academic honesty. **At least half a grade point will be deducted for improper citation.** See these websites for more information:

<https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/complete/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> [also has good general information about academic writing]

4. Papers should provide credible evidence for assertions and should demonstrate a close reading of and connections to the course material.

READING RESPONSES (2): 10% (2 pages)

Group A: Casey, Megan, Hannah, Joe, Mouhamadou, Rebecca

Group B: Tina, Rachel, Jesse, Ally, David

You will upload these responses to Moodle at noon the day before class (2 pages max).

In these responses, you will write about at least one theme in the readings that stood out to you. You will also pose at least three questions about the readings that you would like for the class to discuss. If we are going to have a class visitor for a particular class session, at least one of your questions should be for the visitor.

Because these questions and responses will guide the discussion for the class session, late submissions will receive no credit.

FIELD REPORTS (2) 20% DUE A WEEK AFTER OUR VISIT TO THE SCHOOL SITES

4-6 PAGES (guidelines adapted from Dr. Edward Zlotkowski)

The purpose of this guide is to allow you to turn the school visits into a learning experience. To do so, you have to attempt to differentiate among three kinds of responses: objective accuracy, personal

awareness, and intellectual analysis. To help you do so, here's a way to write up your observations from your school visit:

Observations: an objective, detailed description of what you saw and heard during your school visit. This part of the description should focus on as much significant details as you can remember as well as attempting to be as objective as possible.

Example: "I saw three students who had their heads down on the table, and one student who was picking his nose" NOT "I saw three disengaged students."

Reactions: a self-critical response to your visit, including feelings, thoughts, judgments and what you learned about yourself and your assumptions from your experience. Think about your reactions and your attitudes toward people you encountered at the school. What made you feel comfortable/uncomfortable? What surprised you or challenged you? You can also discuss how the visit influenced your thinking about charter schools. In this section, you're focusing on self-awareness and self-analysis.

Reflection: a discussion of your visit in relation to the concepts and themes discussed in class and to the specific assigned readings for the school visit. This section should demonstrate your skill in making connections between the school visit and course readings as well as in using concepts discussed in class to analyze and illuminate your visit.

How you organize the final report is up to you, as long as it's clear that you have all three components and you made clear distinctions between observations, reactions, and reflections.

TOPIC PRESENTATION: 15%

This assignment is your opportunity to explore in detail, in pairs or trios, a topic related to charter schools.

In pairs or trios, you will prepare a 45-minute presentation, which will inform your classmates about your topic. You can choose to organize that time in any format—you can present for part of the time, do an activity, lead a discussion, and so forth. You can also provide a reading for your classmates to complete before your presentation (should be sent out to the class at least 48 hours before class time). You should plan to meet with me before your presentation.

As part of the research for your presentation, you are expected to consult at least THREE academic sources (i.e. journal articles published in peer reviewed journals or books published by university presses or other reputable presses). Along with any visual material that you use for your presentation (i.e. posters, handouts, PowerPoint), you will hand in a bibliography of sources consulted. You are encouraged to look at the bibliography on Moodle and to meet with Danya Leebaw, the social science reference librarian, to help you find appropriate sources.

Possible topics include:

1. Charter schools and racial/class segregation
2. Racial minority students in charter schools
3. English Language Learners in charter schools
4. Students with disabilities in charter schools
5. Charter school funding
6. Charter schools and teachers' unions
7. Ethnic/racial and/or gender focused charter schools
8. Student opinions/voices about charter schools
9. Urban versus non-urban charter schools

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS (2): 20%

All students will conduct at least two interviews with charter school stakeholders. You are responsible for:

1. Contacting the stakeholders
2. Finding out as much information as you can about the person/school online before the interview so that you can tailor the questions
3. Setting up a time to conduct the interview (either in person or on the phone) and sending the interviewees a copy of your questions before the interview
4. Making sure that you have the proper, functioning audio equipment to record the interview and know how to use it
5. Making sure your participants understand the purpose of the interview and getting informed consent verbally as well as a signed consent form
6. Transcribing the interview (FYI: transcribing an hour interview takes up to 4 hours)

PUBLIC PRESENTATION: 25% 12 to 1 pm Thursday, May 24th

You will be presenting the findings from your interviews and the research literature (as a class) to the Carleton community/Northfield community. The public presentation will take place during common time on Thursday, May 24th. The content and format of the presentation will be developed as a group. We will also develop criteria for evaluating the presentation as a group.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH/PRESENTATION PROCESS: 10% 4-6 pages DUE TUESDAY, MAY 29TH

In this paper, you will discuss the learning opportunities and challenges with the interview process, the process of analyzing the data and developing the group presentation. Additionally, you should address these questions: How did the research project deepen, enhance, and challenge the academic literature on charter schools? How did the academic literature help you understand better what you were hearing in the interviews? What would you do differently now that you have completed the process?