

Education 250
Fixing Schools: Politics and Policy in American Education
Spring 2013
M, W: 150-300PM; F: 220-320PM
Willis 114

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Office Hours: T: 11AM-1230PM; W: 315-415PM; and by appointment

Course Description

How can we fix American public schools? This is a question that plagues reformers in government, private foundations, non-profit organizations and school districts, whether they work at the national, state or local level. Embedded in this question are a number of additional questions: What is *broken* about our schools? How should they be repaired? And who should lead the fix?

This course will examine the leading contemporary education reform efforts, including the accountability, school choice and common core movements. We will analyze the initiatives, strategies and ideological underpinnings of different reform groups and explore the dynamic interactions among the many different stakeholders responsible for shaping American education.

Course Readings

Brill, Steven. *Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.

Ravitch, Diane. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

* All additional readings will be available on Moodle *

Course Requirements

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Participation (15%)	Every class
Blog Contributions (20%)	Bi-weekly (Sundays and Thursdays), starting April 7
In the News Small Group Presentation (20%)	Occasional Fridays, starting April 19
Analytical Essay (20%)	Friday May 10 by 1159PM
Final Paper (25%)	1-page proposal due Friday, May 17 by 1159PM; Paper due Monday, June 10 by 5PM

Course Outline (subject to minor revisions)**INTRODUCTIONS**

M, April 1

- Course Syllabus (read *in advance* of class)

Bring to class a recent article about what's wrong with American schools

W, April 3

- *Condition of Education 2012*, Introduction
- *What Americans Said about the Public Schools*
- *Highlights from PISA 2009*

F, April 5

- David Labaree, "From Citizens to Consumers"

Sunday, April 7: Course Blog Opens

M, April 8

- *Class Warfare*, pp.19-30
- *Death and Life*, Ch.1
- David Labaree, "Organizational Resistance to Reform" (read pp. 106-112 and 122-133; skim pp. 113-121)

ACCOUNTABILITY

W, April 10

- *Class Warfare*, pp.58-60 and 84-5
- Patrick McGuinn, skim "The Early Federal Role in Education"; read "Convergence"
- George W. Bush, [NCLB Signing Ceremony Speech](#), January 8, 2002 (18:00-38:00)



F, April 12

- *Class Warfare*, pp.86-108, 119-32, 147-9, 155-60, 185-7, 210-15, 219-26 and 324-30
- *Death and Life*, Ch.5

M, April 15

- *Class Warfare*, pp.1-9, 236-44, 254-64, 268-9, 306-20, 353-4, 359-62, 371-8 and 402-21
- Michele McNeil, “States Press Reset Button Under NCLB”
- Richard Perez-Peña, “Waivers for 8 More States from ‘No Child Left Behind’”

W, April 17

- *Death and Life*, Chs.6 and 8
- Skim New York State Grade 4 Math and Language Arts Tests

F, April 19

In the News

M, April 22

- *Class Warfare*, pp.21-22, 173-75, 190-91, 199-200, 216-18, 331-33 and 384-6
- Watch PBS Frontline Special, [“The Education of Michelle Rhee,”](#) in advance of class



CHOICE

W, April 24

- *Class Warfare*, pp.10-18, 133-38, 141-46, 161-72, 289-301 and 387-91
- *Death and Life*, Ch.7
- Jack Buckley and Mark Schneider, *Charter Schools: Hope or Hype*, Ch.1

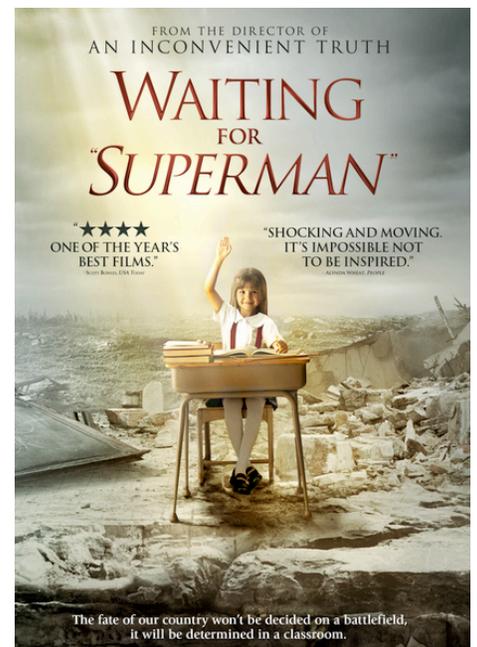
F, April 26

- *Class Warfare*, pp.72-76
- Skim *School Choice in America 2011*
- Jay Matthews, *Work Hard, Be Nice*, Excerpts
- Explore the [KIPP](#) website

Over the Weekend: Screening of *Waiting for Superman*

M, April 29

- CREDO, *Multiple Choice*, Executive Summary
- Jal Mehta, “A Case for Educational Markets from the Left”
- Terry Moe and Paul Hill, “Governments, Markets and the Mixed Model of American Education Reform”
- Diane Ravitch, “The Myth of Charter Schools”



TEACHERS, TEACHERS UNIONS AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

W, May 1

- Malcolm Gladwell, “Most Likely to Succeed”
- Frederick Hess, “Teachers and Teaching”

F, May 3

In the News

M, May 6

No Class (Midterm Break)

W, May 8

- *Class Warfare*, pp.51-7, 61-3 and 68-71
- Linda Darling-Hammond, “Teacher Preparation”
- Jack Schneider, “The Right Teachers: Teach for America”

F, May 10

- *Class Warfare*, 31-41, 77-79, 150-54, 176-7, 194-5, 201-5, 229-35, 247-53 and 363-70
- The New Teacher Project, “The Widget Effect”

Analytical Essay due by 1159PM

M, May 13

- *Death and Life*, Ch.9
- Larry Cuban, “Bias toward Numbers in Judging Teaching”
- Eric Hanushek, “Recognizing the Value of Good Teachers”

W, May 15

- David Labaree, “Classroom Resistance to Reform”

F, May 17

In the News

1-page Final Paper Proposal Due by 1159PM

FOUNDATIONS AND PHILANTHROPY

M, May 20

- Frederick Hess, “Philanthropy Gets in the Ring”

Foundations Mini-Presentations

W, May 22

- *Class Warfare*, pp.345-49
- *Death and Life*, Ch.10

F, May 24,

In the News

Course Blog Closes

THE COMMON CORE

M, May 27

- Common Core FAQs
- Sean Cavanagh, “Resurgent Debate, Familiar Themes”

W, May 29

- Common Core State Standards, Excerpts
- Ken Kay and Bob Lenz, “Which Path for the Common Core?”
- Anthony Rebola, “Charlotte Danielson on Teaching and the Common Core”

F, May 31

In the News

CONCLUSIONS

M, June 3

- *Class Warfare*, pp.302-5 and 422-38
- *Death and Life*, Ch.11

W, June 5

- Reading TBD

Course Assignments and Grading

Participation, 15%

“Be Prepared.” The Scout motto sums up the crux of participation. Because this course places a premium on classroom and small-group discussions, students are expected to come to every class on time with the assigned readings completed, ready to participate meaningfully in all class activities. In addition to the assigned texts on the syllabus, **I expect that each of you will spend at least a half hour every week reading up on the most recent developments in the world of educational policy and reform** (please see the *In the News* links on our Moodle site for relevant resources). Speaking up, while important, is not the only hallmark of participation. Active listening and engaging with others’ ideas respectfully are also key components of participation. *Air-time* is less important than the relevance and sincerity of your contributions.

Please *power-down* your electronic devices—laptops, cell-phones, etc.—before the start of class (and, yes, we can still see you when you are surreptitiously texting under the table).



“Before I read about my summer vacation, I’d like to ask that all pagers, beepers, and cell phones be turned off.”

Blog Contributions, 20%

Bi-Weekly, Sundays and Thursdays (4/7 to 5/23); posts by 5PM and comments by 8AM the following day

The purpose of these blog posts is twofold. First, they are designed to keep you thinking about the course readings. Education reform is a complex business and the more you write about it, the more well developed your ideas will be. Second, they are intended to stimulate thoughtful discussion, both online and in class.

Posts should be between 400 and 600 words in length. Comments should be between 150-250 words in length. I do not expect that your blog contributions will be finely polished but they should represent a serious engagement with the course materials. Posts and comments will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Credit will be given to all posts that demonstrate you have read and thought critically about the reading(s). Credit will be given to all comments that offer a thoughtful response to your classmate’s original post. Your grade will depend on the number of weeks for which you receive credit for a post AND a comment. Seven posts/comments out of 7 weeks = A. 6 = A-. 5 = B+. 4 = B. Less than 4 = no credit for this portion of the course.

Students with last names A-M will be posters on Sundays and commenters on Thursdays. Students with last names N-Z will be posters on Thursdays and commenters on Sundays.

In the News Small Group Presentations, 20%
Occasional Fridays, starting April 19

Working in small groups, prepare a one-hour presentation that illuminates a significant contemporary educational debate, controversy or policy initiative pertaining to fixing schools. Prepare a class handout with a 250-word summary of the issue at hand along with a short bibliography (minimum of five sources). In your presentation, draw at least one noteworthy connection between the topic and our course material. Email me the topic of your presentation at least one week in advance. Each group should also meet with me in advance to discuss their ideas and plans. I highly recommend that all groups practice their presentations before class.

Analytical Essay (1,000 words), 20%
Friday, May 10 by 1159PM

The goal of this essay is to present a critical analysis of one of the course texts we have read before the due date. Your essay should have a central argument that focuses on what is most significant, provocative or problematic about the text. Concentrate your energies on developing your own original analysis—deepening or complicating our understanding of the text—rather than on summarizing the text. Please see the Guidelines for Critical Reading below.

Final Paper (approx. 2,000 words), 25%
1-page proposal with your news story, initial paper ideas and initial bibliography due on Friday, May 17 by 1159PM

Final Paper due Monday, June 10 by 5PM

The goal of the final paper is to offer a critical analysis of a news story about a particular educational reform. Find a news story from the popular—that is, non-academic—press. It might be a newspaper or magazine article, a television spot or a radio piece. Choose a reputable source (the *New York Times*, say, versus *TMZ*). Your paper will:

1. provide a brief overview of the educational reform and the main claims presented in the news story
2. assess the validity of the claims about the reform based on our course readings and at least five additional scholarly sources (articles, book chapters and/or books) that we have NOT read for class
3. explain the significance of the reform in light of what you've learned about fixing schools over the course of the term (in other words, how does the reform *fit* into the contemporary school reform landscape?)

The Fine Print

Attendance:

Given the importance that all Educational Studies classes place on learning with peers through classroom discussions, students are expected to come to every class session. After two unexcused absences from class, each subsequent absence will result in the lowering of your course grade by a third (e.g. from an A to an A-).

Guidelines for Written Assignments:

1. All written assignments should be double-spaced and written in 12-point *Times* font
2. Include a word-count at the top of each assignment
3. Use a standard format (APA, Chicago, etc.) for all citations
4. Submit all of your assignments using the dropboxes on Moodle
5. No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval from the instructor

Guidelines for Critical Reading:

As a critical reader of a particular text, you should use the following four questions to guide your reading:

1. What are the author's main claims? This is the analysis issue—what is the author's angle?
2. Who says? This is the validity issue—what is the author's evidence?
3. What's new? This is the value-added issue—what does the author contribute that we don't already know?
4. Who cares? This is the significance issue—is the text worth reading?

Academic Honesty:

Sharing ideas with friends is central to the academic enterprise at Carleton. So too is availing yourself of the ever-expanding universe of print and digital resources available through the Libe. In your written work, of course, it is imperative that the words you present as your own are in fact original to you. When you borrow somebody else's ideas or words, make sure to cite the original author. For more on academic honesty at Carleton, including a helpful overview of citations, see: <http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/>

Disability Services:

Carleton is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services, Andy Christensen, at 222-4464 or anchrist@carleton.edu, to begin the process.

Images Credits:

President George W. Bush Signs No Child Left Behind: Tim Sloan, 1/8/2002; "How to Fix America's Schools": *Time*, 12/8/2008; *Waiting for Superman* Movie Poster: Participant Media, 2010; and "Before I read": Danny Shanahan, *New Yorker*, 9/11/2000.