

Education Reform, Past and Present (EDUC 300)

Trinity College

Spring 2020 | M 6:30–9:10pm | McCook 213

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Course Description

To what aims have education reformers aspired over time? When and how did schools become tools for divergent goals, such as reducing inequality, advancing capitalism, creating cultural uniformity, and liberating oppressed peoples? Why have reforms succeeded or failed to achieve these ends, and what were some of the unintended consequences? Over a century of education reforms, what has changed about public schooling, and what has remained the same?

In this mid-level undergraduate course, we compare and contrast selected movements, both past and present, to reform elementary, secondary, and higher education in the United States from the nineteenth-century Common School era to the modern day. We examine how these reform movements facilitated or hindered equitable educational opportunity and access for minoritized communities. Students will develop skills in reading and researching primary and secondary sources, interpreting divergent perspectives, and expository writing.

Cross-listed with American Studies and Public Policy & Law. Pre-requisite: EDUC 200, or AMST or PBPL major, or permission of instructor.

Learning Objectives

In this mid-level required course for Educational Studies majors, students will:

- a) Interpret historical sources from different periods and perspectives to better understand how education has varied from their current-day experiences.
- b) Compare and contrast different explanations about the causes and consequences of educational change and continuity over time.
- c) Propose a research question, identify appropriate sources, and write a substantive essay that supports their thesis with persuasive evidence.

Course Materials

The following book is required and available for purchase at the Trinity College bookstore. It is also available through the Trinity College library course reserves.

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). *The American Dream and the Public Schools*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

You are also required to purchase a course reader at the Trinity College bookstore. Please see me if this will be difficult for you.

Please note that readings are subject to change.

Course Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Due date	Submission	Points
Class participation	Daily	In class	10
Four short essays	Feb. 3, Feb. 17, Mar. 23, Apr. 6	Moodle, 9:00am	4x5=20
Education policy journalism assignment	24 hours after event and by Mar. 2	Moodle, 24 hours after event	10
Open book/notes mid-term exam	Mar. 9	In class	15
Final paper: Proposal	Mar. 30	Moodle, 9:00am	5
Final paper: Draft (minimum of 4 paragraphs)	Apr. 20	Moodle, 9:00am	5
Final paper: Feedback on 2 peers' drafts	Apr. 20	Moodle, 9:10pm	2x5=10
Final paper: Presentation	Apr. 27	In class	5
Final paper: Final draft	May 4	Moodle, 11:59pm	20
			Total = 100

The grading scale is as follows:

90 to 100% = A (outstanding work)

80 to 89% = B (good work)

70 to 79 % = C (adequate work)

Below 70% = D or F (unsatisfactory work)

Each letter grade is divided into equal thirds for minus (-), regular, and plus (+) letter grades (e.g. 80 to 83.33 is a B-, 83.34 to 86.67 is a B, and 86.68 to 89.99 is a B+).

Class participation (10 points)

This is a discussion-based seminar. Thus, your attendance and active participation at each class session are critical to your learning and success in this course, as well as the learning and success of your classmates.

Class begins on time and you are required to attend from start to finish. If you know you will be absent or will need to arrive late or leave early, please contact me in advance so that we can discuss how you will make up the work (see “Excused absences and making up work” on p. 5 below). Unexcused absences, late arrivals, or early departures will affect your grade.

Outstanding class participation involves:

- *Coming prepared to each class.* Come to each class having completed all required readings and assignments and with all necessary materials, such as readings and notes. Arrive on time and ready to engage.
- *Actively engaging in class discussions.* Make thoughtful contributions to class discussions based on completed readings and assignments.
- *Listening and respond to others with respect.* Make space for others to share their perspectives and opinions in class discussions. Listen attentively and respectfully. If you disagree with something someone has said, do so graciously, respectfully, and with evidence to support your counterargument. Be open to learning from others' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations.

As part of your participation grade, you are required to visit me for a 15-minute office hour appointment at a minimum of twice this semester: once between Weeks 2–4 (so that I can get to know you and your interests) and once between Weeks 8–11 (to discuss your final research paper). Please sign up on Moodle.

Four short essays (Each around 700 words or up to 2 double-spaced pages; 4x5 = 20 points)
Due Feb. 3, Feb. 17, Mar. 23, and Apr. 6. Upload to Moodle by 9:00am.

The short essays evaluate your analytical thinking and writing skills. Each essay is evaluated on the following criteria:

- Does the essay demonstrate a clear understanding of the focal reading(s) or historical source(s)? (2 points)
- Does the essay make appropriate connections across readings and/or historical sources? (2 points)
- Is the essay organized and clearly written? (1 point)

Education policy journalism assignment (Around 700 words or up to 2 double-spaced pages; 10 points)
Due 24 hours after event and by Mar. 2. Upload to Moodle by 9:00am.

The objective of this assignment is to gain an up-close view of the educational policymaking process and to better understand journalism source materials and the challenges of reporting news quickly and accurately. You are required to attend at least one hour of a public event (e.g., Connecticut General Assembly meeting, Hartford Public Schools Board meeting, Connecticut State Board of Education meeting). Decide which story about your event is most newsworthy and write a journalism-style essay of around 700 words. Report what you heard or witnessed at the public event, and to attribute any quotes or information to the source from which you heard or read it. Submit with your essay a photo of yourself at the event to prove you attended. Additional information about this assignment will be distributed in class.

Open-book/notes mid-term exam in class (15 points: 3 essays, 5 points each)
Mar. 9, 6:30–7:45pm

The mid-term exam evaluates your skills in interpreting and analyzing education reform movements. Typical questions may resemble one of the following formats:

- Explain why reformers A and B supported the same movement, but for different reasons.
- How would reformer C, from one historical period, respond to reformer D, from a different historical period?
- Read a passage by author X and explain how reformer Z would respond.

The mid-term is *interpretive*, meaning that you cannot study in the same way you would for a memorization-based exam. In the weeks leading up to the mid-term exam, we will practice sample exam questions as a class. You are also encouraged to prepare for the mid-term by working in small groups to brainstorm a list of anticipated questions, then rehearse (oral or written, solo or group) how to answer each. Also, organize your materials in advance, since it would be unwise to waste your time flipping through hundreds of pages when you should be writing.

Unless you have a documented medical condition that requires it, **bathroom use is not permitted during the mid-term exam.** Please plan accordingly.

Final paper

Proposal due Mar. 30. Upload to Moodle by 9:00am. (5 points)

Draft (minimum 4 paragraphs) due Apr. 20. Upload to Moodle by 9:00am. (5 points)

Feedback on 2 peers' drafts due Apr. 20. Upload to Moodle by 9:10pm. (2x5 points = 10 points)

Brief presentation due Apr. 27. (5 points)

Final draft due May 4. Upload to Moodle by 11:59pm. (8–10 double-spaced pages; 20 points)

The final paper evaluates your research, historical interpretation, and analysis skills. The paper is a research essay that addresses **change and/or continuity over time** regarding any topic in education. By design, the boundaries are very broad. You may explore *any topic* related to education, at *any level inside the schooling system* (early childhood, elementary & secondary, or higher education) *or outside the system* (home schooling, community-based education, etc.), in *any location* (local, domestic, or international) *or time period* (centuries ago or recent events), as long as you frame the question around change and/or continuity over time.

Appropriate types of research questions that address change and/or continuity over time:

1. Historical origins — *How did X first arise at this period in time?*
2. Historical causation — *What factors caused X to happen over time?*
3. Multiple definitions — *How did different reformers envision X over time?*
4. Social history of human experiences — *How did group Y experience X over time?*
5. Historiographical — *How have different historians interpreted X over time?*
6. Policy formation — *How did X arise as a policy issue over a specific period?*
7. Policy implementation — *How was X transformed from policy into practice?*

Additional information about the final paper will be distributed in class.

Academic Policies

Accessibility

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me during the first two weeks of the semester or a minimum of 10 days prior to needing your accommodations. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation. If you do not have approved accommodations, but have a disability requiring academic accommodations, or have questions about applying, please contact Lori Clapis, Coordinator of Accessibility Resources at 860-297-4025 or at Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu.

Intellectual honesty

Please note that the Trinity College Student Integrity Contract and Student Handbook Intellectual Honesty Policy are posted on Moodle. Students are expected to conform to both the Integrity Contract and the rules governing intellectual honesty for each assignment. Intellectual dishonesty and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Instances of intellectual dishonesty or plagiarism may result in assignment failure, course failure, referral to the Honor Council, and/or other consequences.

You are required to appropriately cite works for all course assignments, whether you directly quote authors or draw from their ideas. You may use any citation style (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA), as long as you do so consistently. If you have any questions about how to cite another author's work appropriately, or how to draw upon another author's work without plagiarizing, please ask me.

Use of electronics

Please bring your laptop computer to class, as you will need it for most class meetings to engage in specific learning activities. Please speak with me if you need to borrow a laptop. However, outside of such learning activities, the use of laptops and other electronics (phones, tablets, etc.) is not permitted, as they can be a distraction to you and your classmates. In other words, please keep your laptops in your

bags until I ask that you take them out for an activity. I will only make exceptions if you require accommodations or have otherwise received permission from me.

Late assignments

Assignment deadlines are firm. Late assignments will be penalized with a 10% deduction for every 1 to 24-hour period beyond the deadline. Exceptions will be granted only for documented family or medical emergencies.

Excused absences and making up work

Please notify me during the first week of the course if you require any scheduling accommodations for religious observances. If granted an excused absence from class for religious observances or documented family or medical emergencies, you must complete a short essay (700 words or up to 2 double-spaced pages) responding to the week's readings and submit it to me before the next class meeting. This is to ensure that you do not fall behind in the course material.

Additional Notes on How to Succeed in This Course

Make use of feedback and reflect on how you can improve. We are all developing as writers and thinkers (myself included), and we all improve through receiving feedback. Attend to the feedback you receive from me and from your peers, and reflect on how you can incorporate this feedback into future work. Take advantage of peer workshopping opportunities in class, as well as the resources at the Writing Center.

Ask when you need help. I encourage you to ask questions in class when something is not clear. If something is not clear to you, chances are, it is unclear to others, too. If you are more comfortable asking for assistance in a private setting, please send me an email (for quick questions), come to my office hours, or make an appointment to meet outside of my office hours. Please note that I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, and I do not respond to emails on Saturdays.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Mon. Jan 27 – Course Overview and Introduction to Common School Reform

Guiding questions: What do Americans want from public schools? How do these goals complement or conflict with one another? How have these multiple goals informed education reform efforts over time?

Readings due:

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Introduction and Ch. 1: What Americans want from public schools. In *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (pp. 1–27). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [28]

Week 2: Mon. Feb 3 – The Common Schools Movement: History and Legacy

Guiding questions: What were the goals of the Common Schools Movement? What were movement's advantages and shortcomings? To what extent are the goals of the Common Schools Movement reflected in contemporary public schooling and school reform?

Assignment due (9:00am on Moodle): Short Essay #1. Discuss how the multiple goals of schooling that Hochschild and Scovronick describe played out in your own K–12 educational experience. In the context of your family, school, or community, was one goal more prevalent, and if so, which one? How, if at all, did you experience the goals to be in tension with one another?

*Sign up for a 15-minute office hour appointment on Moodle!

Readings due:

Tyack, D. B. (1974). "Creating the one best system" (pp. 39–59). In *The One Best System*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [20]

Goldstein, D. (2014). "Missionary teachers": The Common Schools Movement and the feminization of American teaching (pp. 13–32). In *The Teacher Wars*. New York, NY: Doubleday. [19]

DesRoches, D. (2019, Nov. 13). [In Connecticut, fewer reporters, more missed stories](#). *Phi Delta Kappan*. [5]

"Notes on terminology about race and ethnicity" (From Professor Stefanie Wong)

Week 3: Mon. Feb 10 – Progressive Education: History, Theories, and Legacy

Guiding questions: How did reformers define the goals of progressive education, and how did their goals compare and contrast? How did these goals reflect debates over individual versus collective goals of public schooling? What has been the enduring legacy of progressive education?

Readings due: (Assigned jigsaw-style; read and annotate your assigned article on Google Drive)

Dewey, J. (1900/1990). The school and social progress. In *The school and society* (pp. 19–44). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Yerkes, R. M. (1919). The mental rating of school children. *National School Service* 1(12), 6–7. Retrieved from <http://archive.org/details/nationalschoolse01unituoft>

Cubberley, E. P. (1916). The organization of school boards. In *Public School Administration* (pp. 85–97). Boston, New York etc.: Houghton Mifflin. Retrieved from <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001283482>

Haley, M. (1904). Why teachers should organize. In *National Association of Education. Journal of Addresses and Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Meeting (St. Louis)* (pp. 145–152) Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112039515827?urlappend=%3Bseq=161>

Washington, B. T. (1903). Industrial education for the Negro. In *The Negro Problem* (pp. 7–30). New York, NY: J. Pott & Company. Retrieved from: <http://archive.org/details/negroproblemseri00washrich>

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). The talented tenth. In *The Negro Problem* (pp. 31–76). New York, NY: J. Pott & Company. Retrieved from: <http://archive.org/details/negroproblemseri00washrich>

Week 4: Mon. Feb 17 – School Desegregation Policies

Guiding questions: How have school desegregation policies exemplified the tensions between the individual and collective goals of public schooling? How did individuals experience school desegregation? What have been the barriers to school desegregation over time?

Assignment due (9:00am on Moodle): Short essay #2. Watch your assigned oral history video from the [Brown v. Board of Education Oral History Project](#). Discuss the interviewee's experience with school desegregation, making connections with this week's assigned readings and podcast.

Readings due:

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Ch. 2: School desegregation. In *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (pp. 28–51). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [23]

Donato, R., & Hansson, J. (2019). Mexican-American resistance to school segregation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(5), 39–42. [3]

Rothstein, R. (2019). The myth of de facto segregation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(5), 35–38. [3]

Listen to *This American Life* (2015), “The Problem We All Live With,” [Part One](#)

Week 5: Mon. Feb 24 – Bilingual Education Policies: Focusing on Hartford

Guiding questions: How have policies advanced and constrained equitable educational opportunities for English language learners in Hartford? (Guest speaker: Alejandra Zaldivar, ‘20)

Readings due:

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Ch. 6: Separation and inclusion. In *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (pp. 133–167). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [33]

Gándara, P., Losen, D., August, D., Uriarte, M., Gómez, M. C., & Hopkins, M. (2010). Ch. 2: Forbidden language: A brief history of U.S. language policy. In *Forbidden language: English learners and restrictive language policies* (pp. 20–36). New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [16]

Zaldivar, J. A. (2019). State of bilingual education in Hartford: Opportunities for growth. Poster prepared for Trinity College Community Learning Research Fellows, Center for Hartford Engagement and Research.

Week 6: Mon. March 2 – Separation or Inclusion? Special Education Policies

Guiding questions: Over time, how have policies advanced or constrained equitable educational opportunity and access for students with disabilities? How inequities in special education reflect tensions between individual and collective goals of public schooling? (Guest speaker: Former Hartford Public Schools Superintendent Hernan LaFontaine)

Assignments due (9:00am on Moodle):

- Education policy journalism assignment.
- Submit and vote for your top 3 oral history questions for former Hartford Public Schools Superintendent Hernan LaFontaine.

Readings due:

Losen, D. J., & Orfield, G. (2002). Introduction. In *Racial inequity and special education* (pp. xv–xxxvii). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. [17]

Belkin, L. (2004, Sept. 12). [The lessons of Classroom 506](#). *The New York Times*. [20]

Gonen, Y., & Zimmerman, A. (2019, October 31). [A two-tiered system: Families who can’t afford private evaluations struggle to secure special ed services](#). *Chalkbeat*. [6]

LaFontaine, H. (Reading TBD)

Week 7: Mon. March 9 – Mid-term and School Finance Reform, Past and Present

Guiding questions: What political, social, and economic factors have accounted for unequal school funding over time? How do debates over school funding reforms reflect debates regarding the individual versus collective goals of public schooling?

Readings due:

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Ch. 3: School finance reform. In *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (pp. 52–76). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [24]

Cope, S. (2019, November 5). [The power of a wealthy PTA](#). *The Atlantic*.

Mon. March 16 – No Class (Spring break)

Week 8: Mon. March 23 – From Equity to Accountability

Guiding questions: In what ways do high-stakes testing and accountability policies complement or complicate the goal of achieving equitable education? How does the contemporary accountability movement compare and contrast with Progressive Era reforms?

Assignment due (9:00am on Moodle): Short essay #3. Conduct an oral history interview with someone at least two generations older than you (i.e., a grandparent or someone of around the same age as a grandparent). Ask the interviewee to comment on their experiences with any of the course topics we have studied thus far (e.g., perspectives on progressive education, desegregation and integration, special education, bilingual education, or school finance). Write an essay discussing your interviewee’s story, connecting it with course readings and discussion themes. In addition to the essay, please submit the interview transcription, transcribed via <http://Trint.com>. **Please speak with me in advance if you need assistance with identifying someone to interview.**

Readings due:

Ravitch, D. (2010). Ch. 2: Hijacked! How the standards movement turned into the testing movement (pp. 15–30) and Ch. 8: The trouble with accountability (pp. 149–168). In *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books. [34]

Barnum, M., & LeMee, G. M. (2019, December 5). [Looking for a home? You’ve seen GreatSchool’s ratings. Here’s how they nudge families toward schools with fewer Black and Hispanic students](#). *Chalkbeat*. [8]

Listen to [“The mismeasure of schools: Data, real estate, and segregation.”](#) Have You Heard Podcast.

Week 9: Mon. March 30 – School Choice: Advancing or Constraining Equity?

Guiding questions: How have reformers framed school choice policies over time, and how do their framings reflect the multiple goals of schooling? How have school choice policies advanced or constrained educational equity over time? How have individuals experienced school choice?

Assignment due: Short essay #4. Watch your assigned oral history video from the [Connecticut Digital Archive](#). How does the interviewee discuss the choice he/she made for his/her children? How does the interviewee’s choice reflect one or more of the multiple goals of schooling? How does this individual’s choice compare and contrast with the types of choices discussed in the readings and podcast? (TBD extra credit: Transcribe an interview and edit for readability)

Readings due:

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Ch. 5: Choice. In *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (pp. 107–132). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [25]

Thomas, J. R. (2016, December 21). [“School Choice: Betting the Odds.”](#) *The CT Mirror*. [3]

Revised 01.27.20

Thomas, J. R. (2016, December 1). [“New Data: Majority of Hartford Schools Still Segregated: Some Progress Made.”](#) *The CT Mirror*. [3]

Thomas, J. R. (2020, January 10). [“State Settles School Desegregation Case.”](#) *The CT Mirror*. [3]

Listen to *This American Life* (2015), “The Problem We All Live With,” [Part Two](#)

Week 10: Mon. April 6 – Teaching Teachers, Past and Present

Guiding questions: How have approaches to preparing teachers evolved over time? What debates endure regarding teacher preparation?

Assignment due (9:00am on Moodle): Final paper proposal. In no more than 2 double-spaced pages, discuss the topic of your final paper, research questions, and proposed sources of evidence.

Readings due:

Fraser, J. W., & Lefty, L. (2018). Introduction: Considering the future of teacher preparation in light of the past. In *Teaching teachers: Changing paths and enduring debates* (pp. 1–23). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. [22]

The New York Times Editorial Board. (2017, Nov. 3). [The best charter schools deserve more leeway on hiring.](#) *The New York Times*. [2]

Fuhrman, S. (2017, Nov. 12). [Charter school teachers.](#) Letter to the editor. *The New York Times*. [1]

Gould, W. (2017, Sept. 11). [A great way to get teachers into the classroom.](#) Op-ed. *The New York Times*. [2]

Optional: NPR. (2014, Dec. 1). [Teach For America at 25: With maturity, new pressure to change.](#)

Week 11: Mon. April 13 – “The Education Debt”

Guiding questions: Over time, how have scholars explained the potential for public education to remedy racial and socioeconomic inequities? To what extent has this research informed education and other social policies?

Readings due:

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3–12. [9]

Anyon, J. (2005). What “counts” as educational policy? Notes toward a new paradigm. *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(1), 65–88. [24]

Listen to [“Schools can’t fix poverty \(So why do we keep insisting they can?\).”](#) Have You Heard Podcast.

Week 12: Mon. April 20 – Class Cancelled (Prof. Castillo at AERA conference in San Francisco)

Assignments due: Final paper introduction and two or more body paragraphs due **9:00am** on Moodle. Feedback on two peers’ drafts due by **9:10pm** on Moodle.

Even though we will not be meeting in person, I encourage you to use the class time (at a location of your choice) to respond to your peers’ drafts.

Optional readings on higher education admissions reform at Trinity College:

Tough, P. (2019, Sept. 10). [What college admissions offices really want](#). *The New York Times*.

Fuller, R. W. (1968, Sept. 30). [The admission of women undergraduates to Trinity College](#). Trinity College Archives.

Week 13: Mon. April 27 – Brief Research Presentations & Making Sense of Reform

Guiding questions: What are the challenges to achieving meaningful school reform? What specific challenges emerge in light of contemporary political, social, economic, and demographic changes? How do these changes impact debates over the multiple goals of public schooling?

Assignment due (in class): 5-minute research presentation

Readings due:

Karp, S., & Christensen, L. (2003). Why is school reform so hard? *Education Week*. [3]

Hochschild, J. L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Ch. 8: Public schools in the new America. In *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (pp. 191–201). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [10]

Mon. May 4 – Final paper due by 11:59pm on Moodle