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***History of American Education***

History 79-338, Summer 2018

**Course Description:** Americans have long understood schools both as mechanisms for developing communal values and as instruments for social reform. Schools have been alternatively described as pillars of democratic society and as authoritarian institutions for managing deviance. This course provides an introductory historical survey of American educational ideas and institutions. From debates in the 17th and 18th centuries over the proper balance of religious and secular education to fierce battles today over the role of the federal government in enforcing No Child Left Behind, citizens have been politically mobilized through their concerns about education. By understanding the complicated history of American educational ideas and institutions, this course prepares students to engage critically with ongoing debates about American education.

**Course Objectives**

Students will:

* Describe some aspects of the evolution of American education institutions over the past 200 years
* Describe past and current educational debates in the United States that exemplify a broad range of historical, philosophical, and contemporary concerns.
* Evaluate and critique contemporary “histories” of American education and policy solutions

Students will also develop specific ways of “thinking” historically:

* Identify the strengths and weaknesses of historical sources
* Craft historical arguments via analytical, evidence-based writing
* Communicate your ideas clearly and persuasively via public speaking and other forms of public writing

**Your Final Grade is based on**:

1. Student-led discussion: 25%
2. Class Participation: 25%
3. Response Paper #1, (2-3 pages) 25%
4. Response Paper #2, (2-3 pages): 25%

**Class Format, Readings, and Participation**

This course combines seminars, in-class primary documentary analysis, and student-led discussion.

Readings are assigned for each class. Readings are one of the most important building blocks of the course; successful fulfillment of other course requirements depends on the conscientious completion of course readings.

You are expected to read critically. When reading secondary sources, you should:

1. Identify the authors’ main arguments, or how they interpret and make sense of the subject they are studying.
2. Assess whether they provide good evidence to support their argument and whether their reasoning is logical and cogent.
3. Find weaknesses in arguments by identifying unstated assumptions or comparing arguments across readings. When comparing authors’ arguments, consider: Do the authors have the same interpretation of the topic? If not, can you reconcile them or is one stronger?

When reading primary sources, you should:

1. think about what you can and cannot learn about the past from this document. All historical documents were written by people with a certain stake in the subject and this influenced what they wrote. For example, a journalist, a college president, and a student would have been likely to have different views on an issue in the early twentieth century and you could learn different ideas from their accounts.
2. try to discern how the author’s purposes shaped that document. You should try to think about who the intended audience was and how that influenced what was said.
3. think about the author’s relation to the events or issues discussed and decide whether they are a reliable authority or not. Consider the author’s assumptions about their subject.

**Assignment Descriptions**

The assignments are designed to develop a student’s personal and public voice as writers and citizens. The writing assignments will build upon each other: the weekly online reflections will prepare you fishbowl debates and the debates will prepare you for your final paper. The goal of each assignment is to demonstrate your learning and growth in the class.

**#1. Student-led discussions**

In a small group, facilitate one class discussion based on assigned readings (Week 3 or 6). To do this, you are to develop a list of questions that help identify the argument of the secondary reading and highlight key issues from a particular primary document (of choice). You may facilitate discussion in any way you wish. E.g., you might pose questions to the group, or do small group work, or anything else you believe will foster discussion of the topic.

Grading: Students will be graded upon preparation, use of class material, and post-debate reflections. Students will be graded on an A,B,C,D, F grading scale.

**#2: Response Papers #1-2**

Response Paper #1: Please analyze the movie “Waiting for Superman,” in light of what you have learned about public schooling in the United States. Do you support the movie’s claims and conclusions? Which ones? Why or why not?

Response Paper #2: Please analyze the movie “Starving the Beast,” in light of what you have learned about higher education in the United States. Do you support the movie’s claims and conclusions? Which ones? Why or why not?

Grading: Student papers will be 3-4 pages in length, present a clear argument or problem, and use evidence from readings and class material to support the main claims. Students will be given a writing rubric and will be graded on an A,B,C,D, F grading scale.

**#3. Class Participation**

I believe we all learn best in a supportive environment, in which you are listening actively, not only to me but also to your fellow students. In addition to the above assignments, class discussion and activities will be a crucial component of this course. The success of the course relies upon students’ engagement with activities and content. Excellent class participation involves raising thoughtful questions, building on the ideas of others, and synthesizing ideas across readings and discussions. Use the in-class activities as an opportunity to express your ideas and concerns. What did you find compelling or confusing? With what did you most strongly agree or disagree? What were the most important passages or arguments and why? Think deeply, ask questions, and challenge ideas. The best learning is when we learn from each other.

Grading: Class participation will be based on a variety of factors, including: active listening (e.g. asking clarifying questions), speaking up and sharing ideas during discussion and activities, taking notes, and sharing post-class reflections with D. Busch (via email). Students will have the opportunity to give input on their participation grades at mid-semester and end of the semester. For class participation, students will receive a check plus, check, or check minus (2,4,6 points; late grades lowered).

**Communicating with Me**

I encourage you to communicate with me throughout the course over email or during office hours. No question is too small or too large.

**Community, Ethics, and Etiquette**

One of the goals of this course is to create community through shared experiences. It is useful to set some parameters for us in order to be successful in building an effective, accountable, and honest community.

*Attendance:* A strong community starts with commitment and showing up to class. Attendance is thus crucial to this course. Chronic tardiness or multiple unexcused absences affects the growth of community and will be reflected in your participation grade.

*Technology:* Community is also built through face-to-face interactions. While some class activities will encourage the use of laptops and other forms of technology, I find that the over-use of technology in the classroom can inhibit learning and community building. I greatly prefer for students to take notes with pen and paper rather than with laptops. My experience is that laptops disrupt the ability of students to participate in class discussion. Smart phones and other electronic devices are equally distracting. Please turn them off before entering class. If you need to use a laptop to take notes, please see me individually.

*Assignments:* Community is dependent upon accountability and honesty. **All assignments must be submitted on the day they are due.** An assignment will be considered late otherwise. If late, your grade for an assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade. Requests for extra time due to legitimate conflicts (illness, family tragedy, etc.) must be made in advance and must be documented. It is each student’s responsibility to be familiar with the University’s policies on plagiarism, cheating, and academic integrity. You can review these policies via the following link: http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html

**Disability Accommodations**

If a student needs to request an accommodation due to a disability, it is the student’s responsibility to communicate such a request to me as soon as possible.

**SCHEDULE**

Week 1: History, Geography and Philosophy of American Education

May 22: Introductions/Syllabus/What is education to you?

May 23: Orators and Philosophers

* Readings: Plato, Book 7 (Allegory of the Cave), St. Augustine, *The Greatness of the Soul*

May 24: The Debate(s) among Historians

Week 2: Access and Democracy (K-12)

May 27: The Colonial Schools

May 28: Common Schools

May 29: Schooling for Indigenous Populations

May 30: Schooling for African Americans

* Secondary Reading: James D. Anderson, “Northern Foundations and the Shaping of Black Rural Education, 1902-1935,” *History of Education Quarterly* 18 (Winter 1978), 371-96.

May 31: Discussion

* Secondary Reading: Chapter 1, “Progress or Regress” in Tyack, David; Cuban, Larry. *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform.* Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Week 3: Curriculum and Knowledge (K-12)

June 3:Democracy and Progressive Education

* Secondary Reading: William J. Reese, “The Origins of Progressive Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 41:1 (Spring 2001), 1-24.
* Class Document Analysis: Excerpts from John Dewey and George Counts

June 4: Religion in Education

* Secondary Reading: Jonathan Zimmerman, “Religious Education in Public Schools,” from *Whose America?*
* Class Document Analysis: *Scopes Trial*

June 5: History and Civics

* Secondary Reading: Jonathan Zimmerman, “Ethnicity and History Wars,” from *Whose America?*
* Class Document Analysis: Mexican Studies (today), Film “Precious Knowledge,”

June 6: Liberatory Education

* Russell Rickford, “Introduction,” from *We Are an African People*
* Class Document Exploration: Freedom Schools

June 7: Preparation for Paper #1

* Watch Film: “Waiting for Superman”

Week 4: Access and Democracy (Higher Education)

June 10: The Colonial College

June 11: Land Grant College

June 12: Women’s College

June 13: African American College

June 14: Discussion

* Secondary Reading: Geiger, R.L. “The Ten Generations of American Higher Education” [revised] in R. O. Berdahl, P. G. Altbach, and P. J. Gumport, eds. *Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century*. 3rd Edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011, 37-68

Week 5: NO CLASSES, June 17-21

Week 6: Curriculum and Knowledge (Higher Education)

June 24: Ebony and Ivy

* Secondary Reading: Craig Wilder, “Prologue: Connecticut Yankee at an Ancient Indian Mound,” and “On the Bodily and Mental Inferiority of the Negro” from *Ebony and Ivy*
* Class Document Reading: Georgetown Report

June 25: Liberating Higher Education

* Russell Rickford, “The Black University and the ‘Total Community’” from *We Are African People*
* Martha Biondi, “Revolution in the Beginning” from *Black Revolution on Campus*
* Primary Document Exploration: Third World Strike @ SFSU

June 26: Truth and Science

* Secondary Reading: Julie Reuben, “Unity of Truth,” and “Value Free Science” from *The Making of the Modern University*
* Primary Document Reading: Vannevar Bush, *Science: The Endless Frontier: A Report to the President* (1945)

June 27: Politics and Morality

* Andrew Jewett, “The Politics of Knowledge in 1960s America,” *Social Science History*, Volume 36, Number 4, Winter 2012, pp. 551-581
* Primary Document Exploration: Anti-War Critiques, 1960s, UMICH

June 28: Preparation for Paper #2

* Watch Film: “Starving the Beast”