Education and the American Dream

Spring 2006

Political Science 3319, sec001
Tuesday 6:20-8:50pm
Blegen 150, West Bank
Course code: 67986

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10-11, and by appointment

I. Introduction

What role does education play in American democracy? What role should it play? Does American education, particularly public education, live up to our hopes and expectations as democratic citizens? To fully understand what it means to be an American citizen one needs to examine the role of educational institutions in securing opportunity for all Americans and creating the democratic citizens of the future.

This course is intended as introduction to education politics and policy in the United States. It is designed for any student who might have an interest in exploring education, public policy, or American government. Topics will include equality of educational opportunity, educating democratic citizens, school finance, the role of political institutions in making educational policy, and efforts to reform and remake American education, including charter schools and private school vouchers. By the end of the course, students should have a basic understanding of the provision of education in the United States, including the ways in which education is governed and the institutions involved in that governance. Students should be able to critically reflect on the degree to which American education fulfills the sometimes-competing goals Americans have for our schools.

II. Required Texts

The following books are required and available at the campus bookstore:

5. A course packet is also required and available at the campus bookstore.

A small number of additional readings may be provided during the semester.

III. Course structure and requirements
Format. The course will consist of a mixture of lecture, class discussion, and in-class activities.

Grades. Your final course grade will be based on two non-cumulative, in-class examinations, one 8-12 page written assignment, and 5 in-class assignments. Each of these components will weigh in the final grade as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First exam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second exam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignment</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class exercises</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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Each exam is non-cumulative and will be given in class. The second exam will be given on the last day of classes. The exams will test your comprehension of the material covered in the readings and lectures as well as understanding of the underlying concepts.

To calculate your final grade for the course, simply add up your points and convert to a letter grade using the following scale:

A: Achievement outstanding relative to the basic course requirements
   A    93 points or more
   A-   90-92 points

B: Achievement significantly above the basic course requirements
   B+   87-89 points
   B    84-86
   B-   80-83

C: Achievement meeting the basic course requirements
   C+   77-79 points
   C    74-76
   C-   70-73

D: Achievement worthy of credit but below the basic course requirements
   D+   66-69 points
   D    61-65

F: Below 60 points

Class participation. Please come to class having completed the assigned readings. Regular class attendance is expected, as it will contribute to our discussions and investigations over the course of the semester. Lecture and class discussion material will be on the exams. All of the readings in the syllabus are required. Lectures and readings will not always overlap, and material from the assigned readings may be included in the exams, whether or not I have discussed it in class.
IV. Course Policies

**Academic Freedom and Responsibility.** All of the work presented in this course is expected to be your own. I will follow the University’s policies and procedures for academic integrity. Using information from a book, article, web page, another person, etc. without crediting the author is plagiarism. Quotations, paraphrased information, and use of others’ ideas should be properly cited in your written assignments. If you have questions about citation, please contact the Professor or one of the TA’s. More information is available at: [http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/StudentConduct.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/StudentConduct.html)

I will respect and follow University policies regarding sexual harassment, and I expect all students in the course to do the same. The Regents’ policy on sexual harassment can be found on the web at [http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html).

**Students with Disabilities.** I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please contact Disability Services (180 McNamara Alumni Center: 612-626-1333) to discuss your individual needs as early as possible in the semester. More information on disability services is available at [http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu](http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu).

**Late work and missed exams.** Make-up exams are possible only in the case of emergencies or for University-approved functions. In both cases students will need to provide me with documentation (either a note from a physician or from your coach or faculty sponsor). If you must miss an exam for an approved function, you must contact me before the scheduled test time. The make-up exam questions may be different from the regular exam, though the format will be the same. Any late papers will be counted off 1 point per day late.

Please do not come to class after the scheduled start time. We have very little time for each class session, and streams of latecomers are disruptive to the rest of the students in the class.

**University resources.** Students who feel they might benefit from test-taking services should contact the University Learning and Academic Skills Center at 109 Eddy Hall, East Bank (612-624-3323) or on the web at [http://www.ucs.umn.edu/lasc/](http://www.ucs.umn.edu/lasc/).

This class will use writing assignments. The Student Writing Center has TA’s and ESL specialists to help with your writing skills. The Writing Center is at 306 B Lind Hall, East Bank (612-625-1893) or on the web at [http://swc.umn.edu.html](http://swc.umn.edu.html).
V. Weekly Schedule and Assigned Readings

1/24 An educational crisis/ How we got here

A Nation at Risk (packet).

Jonathan Kozol Savage Inequalities, Chapter 4 (packet).


1/31 Policymaking and governance in American education

John Chubb and Terry Moe. 1990. Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-100).

2/7 The purposes of schooling


2/14 Education and equality of opportunity

Plessy v. Ferguson. (packet).


Brown v. Board of Education II. (packet).


Griffin v. County School Board. (packet).

Green v. County School Board. (packet).


Freeman v. Pitts. (packet).

2/21  The case of *Sheff V. O’Neill*

Money and educational opportunity


*Written Assignment Handed Out Tuesday, February 21*

2/28  School finance reform and the U.S. Supreme Court

*San Antonio v. Rodriguez.* (packet).


*Exam #1 in class Tuesday, February 28*

3/7  The nuts and bolts of school finance


*No class Tuesday, March 14 (Spring Break)*

3/21  Reforms 1: Teacher reform and systemic reform

*Rose v. Council* (packet)


3/28  Reforms 2: Charter Schools


4/4  **Reforms 3: Vouchers**

John Chubb and Terry Moe. 1990. *Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools*, Chapters 5-6 (pp. 141-229).


*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*. (handout).

*Written assignment due in class Tuesday, April 4*

4/11  **Reforms 4: High Stakes Testing**

Frederick M. Hess. “Refining or Retreating?” (in Peterson and West, pp.55-79).


*No Class Tuesday, April 18*

4/25  **Reforms 4 (continued): No Child Left Behind (Continued)**

*The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, summary (In-class handout).


*Exam #2 in class Tuesday, May 2*