

ED 118
Schooling and Multicultural Society
 Winter 2008

Course Instructors:

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Class Meetings:

Schorling Auditorium
 School of Education Building

Tuesdays and Thursdays
 2:30 – 4:00 pm

Additional room for breakout
 groups and smaller group work:
 Whitney Auditorium
 School of Education Building

Email:

We will use email to communicate with you; we encourage you to do the same with us, and with others in the class. Please check your email regularly for announcements, information, and updates. We expect you to be up-to-date on all course communications when you come to class.

You can write to any one of the instructors at her individual email address (see above) or you can write to us as a group at ed118instructors@umich.edu.

Note: To make the management of email easier and more reliable, attachments should be titled with a conventional label, e.g.: <form1_name.doc>, <autobiog_name.doc>, or <quiz2_name.doc>.

Course Focus and Goals

This course focuses on education in the multicultural society of the United States. From the founding of common schools in the nineteenth century, and the drive to provide mass public schooling, the purposes of education in this country have been conflicting and the outcomes of schooling complicated. Americans have wanted a great deal of their schools, but equipped them weakly to achieve those aspirations. Diversity has been at the center of the American educational story, as society has continued to struggle with competing goals of assimilation and differentiation, opportunity and competition. The American dream that promises a better life through education has played out unevenly for different groups. Over time, as the struggles of a diverse society were compounded in schools, Americans have expected more and more of their educational system. And as purposes multiplied, critique widened as well. Meanwhile, the opportunities and outcomes for different groups diverged.

Our aim is to help you develop new understandings of the role and nature of schools and teaching, as well as to construct alternative perspectives on and approaches to examining educational issues.

No other societal institution as extensively affects each person's life as does schooling. And no other institution so profoundly reflects and shapes who we are, as individuals and as a society. Throughout your life, you will continue to be engaged with education—as a voter and taxpayer, as a citizen, maybe as a student, perhaps as a parent, and even possibly as a professional in education or in some field that intersects schools. You might become a teacher, or you might work in policy, or in government. Perhaps you will work with youth in some other context. To understand more about schooling in this multicultural society is likely to be useful for a host of different reasons. You may find yourself critical of a class or a school, and you may want to advocate for change. You may want to evaluate the education platform of different presidential candidates. You may be faced with a key local millage vote. You may also work in education. Learning about education in this culture is also important personally because it can help you understand who you are and how you have come to be who you currently are, as well as to know more about the educational experiences of others different from you.

Learning about schooling, however, poses some special challenges. You have already spent almost 13,000 hours in school. It is familiar. You know what teachers do—or so it may seem. You know what works and what does not—or so you think. You cannot help but assume that your experiences are like those of others. Teachers, classrooms, schools—you have an insider's experience with education. And of course this experience is an asset in trying to learn about education. But, at the same time, the fact that schooling seems so commonplace to each of us is also what makes it difficult to learn about.

In this course, we will investigate three main questions:

1. *What are the purposes of schooling, and for whom?*

We will investigate what the purposes were at the time that common schools began, and how these purposes have changed over time, or not. How do different purposes connect or conflict? How are purposes common or differentiated across youth in American society? We will consider the reasons for and consequences of Americans' expectations of schooling.

2. *Teaching and learning: How do schools work, and for whom?*

In this section, we will seek to understand how purposes of schooling play out inside of classrooms. We will examine evidence about opportunities and learning for different groups of students, and consider explanations for these differences. Because instruction is at the core of the enterprise, we will consider the dynamics of educational opportunity as teachers and students interact about particular content. Our analysis will move closely inside of classrooms to see how what students bring affects what happens in class, and the nature and role of instruction in that process. We will investigate learning, and what is involved in fostering it.

3. *What is involved in improving schools?*

Almost everyone has an idea about how to improve education. In this section, we will investigate some of the most widely-held notions about how to make schools work better. We will use what we have learned in the first two sections of the course to appraise the promise of these designs and analyze evidence about their effects.

Course Resources and Activities

To investigate these questions, we will read; analyze and interpret texts, evidence, and experience; work and think with others; and write. Below we describe our explicit goals for your engagement with each of these modes of learning.

Reading: We will read a wide variety of texts, including empirical, conceptual and historical work about schools, teaching, learning, and about different people's experiences of all of these. To develop the resources and to probe different sorts of sources, we will also read fiction and journals of culture and ideas; newspapers, philosophy, and even dictionaries. We will examine artifacts of popular culture, including films, cartoons, and advertisements. The work of the class will depend on

reading interactively, on bringing both collective and individual goals to reading, considering, and reconsidering texts. In its most straightforward expression, this involves bringing questions to think about while preparing to read something, reading a text, and reflexively placing what one has read in the context of both the texts and one's own experiences. You are also resources for one another, both as a function of your differences and one another's responses to what we read.

Analyzing and interpreting: We will ask you to make and appraise arguments and interpretations. Creating thoughtful arguments requires making conjectures and offering justification for them. Sometimes justification comes from the texts—specific references to an argument that an author has made well. At other times, justification is based on the logical analysis of a term or set of ideas. Using the dictionary can help in scrutinizing terms and their nuances or etymology. Still other arguments are grounded in data. One goal this semester is to extend and apply your analytic and interpretive skills in the context of questions about education.

Working and thinking with others: Building the culture of the class so that genuine inquiry is possible will take all of our efforts. Because we rely on everyone's contributions, one responsibility you have is to come to class with the readings prepared, and to bring questions, insights, and issues.

We will also work together to develop the norms for the class. How we listen to one another, assist with the formulation of an interpretation, question, and challenge will affect the quality of what we can do together. Listening carefully, treating ideas with respect and interest, raising and responding to questions, sharing the floor—all these will matter in constructing an environment where satisfying and challenging intellectual work can take place. Listening generously requires that you assume that others' ideas and claims are made for good reasons, and it is crucial to thinking well. Another part is to be skeptical, to consider what is missing or logically flawed. Using both—generosity and skepticism—contributes to careful unpacking of ideas and to good thinking.

Writing: This course involves a significant amount of writing of different kinds. Writing is an important vehicle for exploring and clarifying ideas, for trying out interpretations and arguments, and for representing ideas and communicating with others. The course will provide occasions to focus on and develop new aspects of your writing, and the writing assignments are structured to provide guidance and resources, as well as the opportunity for comments and suggestions.

These four kinds of work—reading, analyzing and interpreting texts, evidence, and experience; working and thinking with others; and writing—are more than ways to learn the material of this course; they are also among its goals. To be clear, we want your experiences in this course to help you improve your capacities with each of these, learning new ways of thinking, using language, and reasoning, and new skills in your engagements with others who are different from you.

Course Requirements

Short assignments:

You will complete 10 short assignments focused on the readings and ideas we are working on in class. These short assignments will help you examine evidence, consider ideas, and assemble material for our work and for your essay. Each assignment is available as a form on CTools. You will download the form, type your response, and bring the paper copy to class (do not upload your homework responses onto CTools). *To receive credit for an assignment, you must turn it in at the beginning of class on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted.*

Midterm exam: February 19 - 21

The midterm exam will be distributed on February 19 and due on February 21. It will be a take-home assignment, designed to be written in a couple of hours like an exam, but with a two-day window in which to complete it. Being able to structure the time and place for writing should reduce the pressure on your thinking and your work on the midterm. The exam will focus on an aspect of purposes of schooling and how these play out in classrooms, and will assess the analytic skills you are developing in the course.

Investigation project paper: Part 1 due February 7; Part 2 due March 13; Final draft due March 27

You will conduct a guided firsthand investigation of teaching and learning, which will be the focus of your paper, developed in parts. The investigation will be supported through work we will do together in class. You

will get feedback separately on each of the parts, which you will be able to use in constructing the final version of your paper. The final paper will be a maximum of 2000 words in length and will include supporting artifacts to be included in an appendix. Evaluation will be based on evidence of (a) basic understanding of the issues involved; (b) quality of connections drawn between and among the readings and your firsthand investigation; and (c) the clarity and precision of your writing.

Final exam: April 18, 4:00 – 6:00 pm

The final exam will be comprehensive over the entire course. You will take it in class, during the regular exam period. Two weeks before the final exam, we will distribute a list of possible problems and tasks. You will be able to prepare for each, working with others if you choose. You may make notes, gather ideas, and practice skills. The actual examination will consist of a subset of those tasks and problems, with small details altered from those on the study guide. The exam will be open book, open notes, and you may also bring your study guide to the exam.

Grading and Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

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| Paper | 40 points |
| Short assignments (10) | 30 points |
| Midterm exam | 30 points |
| Final exam | 30 points |
| Class participation | 20 points |

Grades are intended to give you a sense of the quality of a particular piece of work: roughly speaking, a B means that you have done a good job with the writing, the ideas, and the organization of the work; a C conveys that the work lacks some important qualities and has some problems, while an A means that the work is exemplary in some key ways: the writing is particularly clear, the ideas thoroughly treated, the organization of the presentation well considered and effective.

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| Total possible points = 150 | |
| A = 142 – 150 | B- = 120 - 124 |
| A- = 135- 141 | C+ = 115 - 119 |
| B+ = 130 - 134 | C = 110 - 114 |
| B = 125 - 129 | C- = 105 – 109 |
| | D = 90 - 104 |

A few comments about evaluation in this course: We want your experiences in ED118 to contribute to your growing capacity to do excellent work. To support that, we are asking you to analyze, consider alternative perspectives, write, construct and consider arguments, and talk.

You can use your work in this course to help you to improve your sense of what good work consists of, and how to produce it. This includes writing good sentences and paragraphs, using words carefully, treating ideas with discipline and respect. We will strive to make these standards as concrete as possible, and to make visible strategies for achieving them. As you develop your sensibilities, you will be able to do more and more as your own critic and editor.

One obvious reason to take writing seriously is that your career as a student depends on it. Whatever field you enter, you will not be able to earn your degree unless you can write good papers and exams, complete projects and write up labs clearly. Evaluation is a tool in learning and teaching. Providing scaffolding for your work, and direct and focused feedback on what you produce, are concrete ways to help you develop skills and sensibilities, and to be successful in your studies here at the University of Michigan.

A second reason to take your work seriously is that the ability to write and communicate is fundamental to your effectiveness personally and professionally. Good use of language and clarity of thinking is unfortunately less common than it ought to be. Much writing is littered with jargon, clumsy, and obscure. Some problems are technical or literary: incorrect grammar, a passion for the passive voice, and needless words. Many other problems are intellectual: arguments that wander, implausible

assumptions, paragraphs that do not cohere, and a failure to consider other views respectfully. People who communicate in such ways are less able to make connections with others, be persuasive about things they care about, or simply to think well.

Please bear in mind that our comments will be directed towards particular things you have produced, not about you. Improving your work is a joint endeavor, composed of what we can offer you by way of help and feedback, and how you use our guidance and that of your classmates.

Books and Course Materials

1. Mondale, S. & Patton, B. (2001). *School: The Story of American Public Education*. Boston: Beacon Press.
2. Paley, V. (1979). *White Teacher*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

These two books will be available at Ulrich's, Michigan Book & Supply, and the Michigan Union Bookstore:

Ulrich's Bookstore
voice (734) 662-3201

Michigan Book & Supply
voice (734) 665-4990

Michigan Union Bookstore
voice (734) 995-8877

The books are also available from Amazon.com. Neither book is expensive.

3. Coursepack available at Excel Test Preparation Coursepacks and Copies, 1117 South University, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 Tel (734) 996-1500
4. Additional materials will be available on CTools www.ctools.umich.edu