

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Departments of Educational Policy Studies and History
Fall 2011

EPS 906/History 906
Proseminar on the History of Education
Topic: The History of School Reform
1-3 Credits

Monday, 2:25-5:25
Education 151

William J. Reese
Professor of Educational Policy Studies and History
Education 223
262-2812, 262-1760/1761 messages
Email: wjreese@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Education 223, Mondays, 11-12, 1-2 & by appointment

Course Description

This is an advanced history seminar on American public school reform since the nineteenth century. Over the last century, Americans repeatedly turned to the schools to address a host of social, economic, and political problems. The schools have often been asked to respond to a range of issues: from the acculturation of immigrants, to the maintenance or destruction of Jim Crow, to preparation for work, to citizenship, to an infinite range of issues related to childhood and adolescence.

What accounts for this American fascination with reform through the public schools? What explains the rise, nature, and success or failure of particular school reforms? To understand this recurrent effort to change, improve, and reform the individual and society through mass education, history offers perspective and perhaps some explanation of this tendency in our society.

The core of class meetings will be discussions of assigned readings. We open the semester with Carl Kaestle's standard history of the origins of public schools, and we conclude with Diane Ravitch's critique of testing and modern accountability movements. Over the course of the semester, we'll examine a wide range of educational reforms. Some deal with race, others with religion; some examine the source of traditional educational practices and the challenge of progressive ideas. In an effort to see the value

of different approaches to history, some of the books we'll discuss are monographs, focusing on a particular subject such as religion. Others such as our opening reading assignment by Kaestle are more synthetic and wide ranging.

Required Books

I placed orders for the following paperbacks at the UW Bookstore. Some may also be available more inexpensively at used bookstores and on the Internet. I have asked the librarians at Helen C. White to place a copy of each volume on reserve. In some cases, the library may have multiple copies of some of the titles.

1. Carl F. Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic
2. Benjamin Justice, The War That Wasn't
3. David Tyack, The One Best System
4. James D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South
5. Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School
6. Arthur Zilversmit, Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice
7. Pamela Grundy, Learning to Win
8. David Angus and Jeffrey Mirel, The Failed Promise of the American High School
9. John Rudolph, Scientists in the Classroom
10. Thomas Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty
11. David Tyack and Larry Cuban, Tinkering Toward Utopia
12. Diane Ravitch, The Death and Life of the Great American School System

Course Outline and Assignments:

Week #1 Introduction to the Course
September 12

Week #2 Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic
September 19

Week #3 Justice, The War That Wasn't
September 26

Week #4 Tyack, The One Best System
October 3

Week #5 Anderson, Education of Blacks in the South
October 10

Week #6 October 17	Cremin, <u>The Transformation of the School</u>
Week #7 October 24	Zilversmit, <u>Changing Schools</u>
Week #8 October 31	Grundy, <u>Learning to Win</u>
Week #9 November 7	Angus and Mirel, <u>The Failed Promise of the American High School</u>
Week #10 November 14	Rudolph, <u>Scientists in the Classroom</u>
Week #11 November 21	Sugrue, <u>Sweet Land of Liberty</u>
Week #12 November 28	Research
Week #13 December 5	Tyack and Cuban, <u>Tinkering Toward Utopia</u>
Week #14 December 12	Ravitch, <u>Death and Life</u>

Student Responsibilities and Course Requirements

The formal course requirements include weekly preparation of assigned readings, class attendance and participation, and the completion of one 15-20 page double-spaced paper (inclusive of endnotes and bibliography). There are no examinations. If you have any questions about the readings or paper, please contact me at your earliest opportunity.

The quality of your class participation will account for 70% of your final grade. The paper will be worth 30%. A one to two page typed prospectus, which will not be graded, is due no later than October 17. This prospectus will provide a one to two paragraph rationale for the paper, the main question you are trying to answer, and a tentative bibliography of sources. A hard copy of the paper is due on Thursday, December

15, at noon, EPS or History department mailbox. Aspire to write a paper that could be published in a scholarly journal.

For your paper, please choose between the following. (1) You can write an appraisal of a particular reform effort or movement (e.g., the origins of the American kindergarten, the origins of Progressive Education, religious fundamentalism and education, high school reform since 1945, the creation science movement, among many choices) that is largely historiographical in nature. That is, your paper will rest upon your mastery of the major secondary sources and offer a sense of how best to interpret the subject. (2) Or, you can write a paper that is principally based on original, primary sources. This would require identifying a clear research question, the relevant archival/primary sources, and either challenge, revise, or reaffirm a dominant thesis in the larger historiography. It is permissible to write an essay that may become a chapter in a master's thesis or dissertation, but it cannot be a revision of already completed research and writing.

Whichever option you choose, please see me early in the semester to discuss your topic. You can also initiate that conversation via email. Each paper will be evaluated on its scholarly strengths: the clarity of the thesis, depth of analysis, elegance of presentation, use of sources, and persuasiveness.

There are many different style guides; historians tend to use the University of Chicago's A Manual of Style. Emerson said that a foolish consistency is one of the hallmarks of a petty mind, but documenting sources in a consistent manner remains essential.

Except for illness or other reasons recognized by the UW, extensions will not be granted either for the prospectus or the paper. In fairness to everyone, late papers will lose a half of a grade for every day late.

Deadlines:

October 17 (at class) 1-2 page prospectus on paper

December 15 (Thursday) Hard copy of paper due, noon, EPS or History mailbox
