

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Departments of Educational Policy Studies and History  
Fall 2012

EPS 906/History 906  
Proseminar on the History of Education  
Topic: Cities, Suburbs, and Schools  
1-3 credits

Mondays: 2:25-5:25  
Education 215

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Mondays: 12:00-2:00 & by appointment

Course Description

This is an advanced graduate seminar on the history of cities, suburbs, and public schools in the twentieth century. Since the birth of mass public schooling in the nineteenth century, Americans have repeatedly turned to public education to address a host of social, economic, and political problems. Schools have often been expected to address public concerns ranging from poverty, immigration, and race and ethnicity, to work habits, moral training, citizenship, and social justice.

As historian Richard Hofstadter once wrote, America was born in the countryside but over time migrated to the city—and then, increasingly, to the suburbs. In every era since the antebellum period, cities have often been at the forefront of educational reform and innovation. Age-graded classrooms, high schools, competitive written tests, and the hiring of women as elementary school teachers were all once regarded as “reforms” and all were born in the nineteenth-century city. And reforms as far ranging as vocational education and special education, in the early twentieth century, or, more recently, charter schools and voucher experiments, have often been of special concern to urban school districts.

This course introduces students to some of the best historical literature on the history of urban and suburban schooling. That said, the history of suburban schools remains less well documented, though that gap in scholarship may close in the near future. An explosion of new scholarship, some of which we'll read this semester, is already challenging the hegemony of urban studies. In contrast, histories of schooling with a metropolitan focus remain rare.

### Required Books and Articles

The success of the course will depend upon our mastery of a number of common readings. The following paperbacks are available at the UW Bookstore; some may also be available more inexpensively at local used bookstores or via the Internet. A copy should also be on reserve at College Library at Helen C. White.

- 1) David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*
- 2) Stephen Lassonde, *Learning to Forget: School and Family in New Haven's Working Class, 1870-1940*
- 3) Ronald D. Cohen, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1960*
- 4) Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960*
- 5) Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban System: Detroit, 1907-1981*
- 6) Jerald Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean-Hill Brownsville Crisis*
- 7) Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*
- 8) Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt*
- 9) Dorothy Shapps, *School Reform, Corporate Style: Chicago, 1880-2000*
- 10) Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*

Assigned articles are available electronically via Madcat.

### Course Outline and Assignments:

Week #1                      Introduction to the Course  
September 10

Week #2                      Tyack, *The One Best System* & Carl F. Kaestle, "Common Schools before the 'Common School Revival': New York Schooling in the 1790s," *History of Education Quarterly* 12 (Winter 1972): 465-500  
September 17

(JSTOR) & William R. Johnson, “‘Chanting Choristers’: Simultaneous Recitation in Baltimore’s Nineteenth-Century Primary Schools,” *History of Education Quarterly* 34 (Spring 1994): 1-23.

Week #3  
September 24

Lassonde, *Learning to Forget*

Week #4  
October 1

Cohen, *Children of the Mill*

Week #5  
October 8

Zilversmith, *Changing Schools*

Also read James L. Wunsch, “The Suburban Cliche,” *Journal of Social History* 28 (Spring 1995): 643-658 (JSTOR); Becky M. Nicolaidis, “The Neighborhood Politics of Class in a Working-Class Suburb of Los Angeles, 1920-1940,” *Journal of Urban History* 30 (March 2004): 428-451 (SAGE); and Andrew Wiese, “The Other Suburbanites: African American Suburbanization in the North Before 1950,” *Journal of American History* 85 (March 1999): 1495-1524 (JSTOR).

Week # 6  
October 15

Mirel, *Rise and Fall of an Urban System* & Thomas J. Sugrue, “Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction Against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964,” *Journal of American History* 82 (September 1995): 551-578 (JSTOR).

\*\*\*One page prospectus for research paper due; see below\*\*\*

Week #7  
October 22

Podair, *Strike that Changed New York* & Thomas J. Sugrue and Andrew P. Goodman, “Plainfield Burning: Black Rebellion in the Suburban North,” *Journal of Urban History* 33 (May 2007): 568-601 (SAGE).

Week #8  
October 29

Kruse, *White Flight*

Week #9  
November 5

Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*

Week #10 November 12	Shipp, <i>School Reform, Corporate Style</i>
Week #11 November 19	Ravitch, <i>The Death and Life of the Great American School System</i>
Week #12 November 26	Research Papers
Week #13 December 3	Research Papers
Week #14 December 10	Research Papers

\*\* Paper due by noon on *Friday, December 14*; see instructions below\*\*

### Student Responsibilities and Course Requirements

The formal course requirements include weekly preparation of assigned readings, class attendance and participation, and the completion of one research paper. You will also make a presentation to our class, based on your research, near the end of the semester. More information on the format for the presentation will be provided in class.

There are no examinations. Your final grade will be based as follows: 70% for the quality of your class participation during the semester, and 30% for the research paper.

If you miss a class, you are required to submit a three-page written analysis of the assigned readings for that particular class.

Please come to see me early in the semester to discuss ideas for your research paper. You can also initiate a conversation about an idea for a project via email, before stopping by to discuss it further. After we discuss your topic, you must then submit a one page, double-spaced, typed prospectus for approval. The prospectus is due no later than October 8 (at class). The prospectus, which will not be graded, should include your name, title of the paper, a one-paragraph description of your proposed study, and a tentative bibliography.

## Instructions for Paper

A research paper should address a major question about the history of urban or suburban schools. Informed by the secondary literature, it should be based solidly on primary sources, documents and materials generated during the time period you are studying. The list of possible topics is endless. You can examine the social thought or philosophy of a particular educator, educational movement, or school practice, policy, or reform.

The time period covered in your paper should be restricted to the nineteenth or twentieth century. While the period from the 1980s to the present constitutes 'history,' compared to earlier periods relatively few bona fide histories of this era have been written. If you would like to study a subject post-1980, I'll be happy to work with you to frame your paper with the historical context in mind.

- The paper should be about 18-20 double-spaced pages of text, exclusive of end notes and bibliography.
- Every paper should have endnotes and a bibliography. Scholars use various style guides; historians tend to use the University of Chicago's A Manual of Style. A shortened version of the Chicago Manual appears at the back of many issues of the History of Education Quarterly. If you use a different style guide, just be consistent.
- The paper is due by noon on Friday, December 14. Please place a hard copy either in my EPS or History department mailbox, whichever is more convenient. Please do not send the paper as an e-mail attachment.

Except for illness or other reasons recognized by the UW, extensions will not be granted either for the prospectus or the written assignments. In fairness to everyone, late essays will lose one grade for every day late.

Each paper will be evaluated on its scholarly strengths: the clarity of the thesis, elegance of the prose, depth of analysis, and use of sources.

### Due Dates

October 8	Prospectus for written assignment
December 14	Hard copy due by <i>Noon</i> , either in <i>EPS or History department mailbox</i> . No email attachments please.