

E55.2070: Public Problems: Introduction to Education and Social Policy

Spring 2008

Tuesdays, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

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Office Hours: Mondays, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. and by appointment

This course takes a multidisciplinary approach to the study of education policy. The course draws on the literature in sociology, history, and political science to investigate some of the most pressing education policy issues of the past fifty years, with particular attention to current policy debates. The issues to be examined this semester include the achievement gap, affirmative action, school choice reforms, and urban education reform with a particular focus on New York City. The first aim of the course is to provide a solid, introductory grounding in these particular policy debates. The second goal is to furnish students with the historical grounding and analytical tools they need to examine the education policy issues of particular relevance and interest to them in their own fields of study.

GRADED REQUIREMENTS

- **Class Participation:** 25% of grade (including two self-assessments, due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, March 4th and Tuesday, April 22nd)
- **Weekly Reading Questions or Responses:** 15% of grade
- **Final Paper:** 60% of grade (due on Monday, May 5th at 4:00 p.m.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

1. *Office Hours:* I have regularly scheduled office hours and am available by appointment. I am also regularly accessible by e-mail and by phone. I will make every effort to respond as promptly as possible to all e-mails.
2. *Class Attendance and Participation:* Class attendance is required for this course. If you must miss or arrive late to a class for any reason, please let me know in advance. I expect that everyone will participate in seminar discussion. I also expect that this participation will be based on an informed familiarity and thoughtful engagement with the assigned reading.
3. *Class Participation Self-Assessment:* Twice over the course of the semester (Tuesday, March 4th and Tuesday, April 22nd) you will be asked to turn in short self-assessments of your class participation, which I will take into account when I assign your grade

for class participation at the end of the semester. This assignment also will provide the opportunity for you to convey any concerns you have about your participation and the dynamic of the class and any goals you would like to set for yourself regarding your participation. It also will allow me to provide written feedback to you on your participation.

4. *Weekly Reading Questions or Responses*: Students have weekly reading questions or responses due every Tuesday by 10:00 a.m., beginning on week two of the semester. You will have one week during the course of the semester – which you can choose – during which you do not need to submit a post. Please post approximately five questions or a 1-2 paragraph response to the week’s readings to the course Blackboard site. You will not get credit for late submissions. To sign onto Blackboard, sign onto your NYU e-mail account, go to the tab marked “Academics” on the top right-hand corner of the screen. Under the “Classes” section, our class should be listed. Click on our class listing to take you to the Blackboard site. Then, go to the “Communication” section, then, “Discussion Board,” and click on “Reading Questions and Responses, January 29” (for example). Then click “add a new thread” and submit your posting. You will also see directions for how to read and respond to the postings of others in the class. I encourage you to read the questions/responses of others before you post your own – so that you can also include responses and/or follow-up questions. You are not responsible for responding to others, although you are encouraged to do so. Hopefully, having the questions/responses of others accessible to you on the website will be useful to your own thinking. The main goal of this assignment is for you to engage critically with the material and to come to class with a set of questions and responses guiding your exploration of the texts in the course. Response paragraphs can be engagements with any aspects of the reading. If you choose to submit reading questions: This kind of question asking is the goal of much academic work, and coming up with good questions that guide and shape your research is often the most difficult part of academic projects (like dissertations). I regard this as a substantive exercise. I am asking you to engage with the work and to really ask questions that provide purpose, that you leave the text with, and that you would like to discuss further.
5. *Final paper*: The final paper is due on Monday, May 5th at 4:00 p.m. It will be a substantial research paper of approximately 20 pages in length (double-spaced, in 12-point font). Students will have two options for this paper. The first option is open-ended, and allows students to apply the ideas and lenses of the course to an education policy debate of their choosing. The second option is a response to the following: You have just been elected mayor of New York City, and you now have control of the New York City public school system. Using the lenses of the course, what would you propose to substantially improve the quality of schooling in the city? We will talk more about this paper assignment in class. I encourage you to talk with me and with others in the course about your papers. I will be happy to discuss outlines of your papers with you, although I will not read paper drafts.

6. *Deadlines*: All course deadlines are firm. *I will not grant extensions* on the term paper, except in the case of absolute emergency. For each day that the paper is late, the paper grade will be lowered by one-third of a grade (e.g., an A- becomes a B+ if a paper is one day late). Papers are also considered late if they do not meet the time deadline (papers due at 4:00 p.m. are due *promptly* by 4:00 p.m.).

REQUIRED READINGS

There are 6 required books for this course. The books are available at the campus bookstore. There also is a required coursepack for the class, which is available at Unique Copy (252 Greene Street). The coursepack is a selection of readings, and readings found in this coursepack are marked “(CP)” below. All books and the coursepack are also available on reserve at Bobst Library. These books are:

David Tyack and Larry Cuban. *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

[Bobst call number: LA216 .T92 1995]

Stephen Steinberg. *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

[Bobst call number: E185.615 .S744 1995]

Lisa M. Stulberg. *Race, Schools, and Hope: African Americans and School Choice after Brown*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2008.

[Bobst call number: TBD]

Diane Ravitch. *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools*. 2000 edition. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

[Bobst call number: LA339.N5 R38]

Richard Kahlenberg. *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

[Bobst call number: LB2844.53.U6 K34 2007]

Pedro Noguera. *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.

[Bobst call number: LC5131 .N64 2003]

COURSE OUTLINE

JANUARY 22: Introduction

JANUARY 29: School Policy and Reform Overview: Change and Continuity in American Public Education

David Tyack and Larry Cuban. *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995. Please make sure to read the Epilogue, too.

FEBRUARY 5: Race and Education: Approaches to the Achievement Gap

Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips. "America's Next Achievement Test: Closing the Black-White Test Score Gap." *The American Prospect* (November 30, 2002).
http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=americas_next_achievement_test

John Ogbu. "Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning." *Educational Researcher* 21: 8 (November 1992): 5-14.

Claude M. Steele. "Thin Ice: 'Stereotype Threat' and Black College Students." *The Atlantic Monthly* 284: 2 (August 1999) 44-54.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99aug/9908stereotype.htm>

FEBRUARY 12: Race and Education: Framing the Affirmative Action Debate

Stephen Steinberg. *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and Epilogue

Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom. *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997. Chapter 14 and Conclusion (CP)

Derrick Bell. "Chapter 6. The Unspoken Limit on Affirmative Action." Pages 140-161 in *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*. New York: Basic Books, 1987. (CP)

FEBRUARY 19: Race and Education: Political and Legal Developments in Affirmative Action in Higher Education

Anthony S. Chen and Lisa M. Stulberg. "Beyond Disruption: The Forgotten Origins of Affirmative Action in College and University Admissions, 1961-1969." Working Paper

2007-001, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan.
http://fordschool.umich.edu/research/working_papers.php

J. Harvie Wilkinson III. "Chapter 10. The Argument" and "Chapter 11. The Decision." Pages 253-306 in *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and School Integration, 1954-1978*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. (CP)

Grutter v. Bollinger et al. and *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.* 23 June 2003 Supreme Court majority opinions. (to be distributed)

FEBRUARY 26: School Choice: History and Legal Status of the Voucher Reform

Milton Friedman. "Chapter 6. The Role of Government in Education." Pages 85-107 in *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962. (CP)

Christopher Jencks. "Giving Parents Money to Pay for Schooling: Education Vouchers." *The New Republic* 163: 1 (4 July 1970): 19-21. (CP)

Robert C. Bulman and David L. Kirp. "The Shifting Politics of School Choice." Pages 36-67 in Stephen D. Sugarman and Frank R. Kemerer (Eds). *School Choice and Social Controversy: Politics, Policy, and Law*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999. (CP)

Text of the opinion of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (27 June 2002). (to be distributed)

MARCH 4: School Choice: An Overview of the Charter School Debate

Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno V. Manno, and Gregg Vanourek. *Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. Chapters 1, 3, 7 and 12 (CP)

UCLA Charter School Study. *Beyond the Rhetoric of Charter School Reform: A Study of Ten California School Districts*. Los Angeles: UCLA Charter School Study, 1998.
<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/docs/charter.PDF>

Eric Rofes and Lisa M. Stulberg. "Conclusion: Toward a Progressive Politics of School Choice." In Eric Rofes and Lisa M. Stulberg (Eds). *The Emancipatory Promise of Charter Schools: Toward a Progressive Politics of School Choice*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. (CP)

MARCH 11: School Choice: Charter School Assessment as a Case Study in Evaluating Controversial School Reform

F. Howard Nelson, Bella Rosenberg, and Nancy Van Meter. *Charter School Achievement on the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers, 2004.

<http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/NAEPCharterSchoolReport.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. *The Nation's Report Card: America's Charter Schools, Results from the NAEP 2003 Pilot Study*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2004.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2005456.pdf>

Diana Jean Schemo. "Charter Schools Trail in Results, U.S. Data Reveal." *New York Times* (August 17, 2004): A1. (find through Lexis/Nexis)

Debra Viadero. "AFT Charter School Study Sparks Heated National Debate." *Education Week* (September 1, 2004).

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/09/08/02chartstudy.h24.html?print=1>

Lydia Rainey. *Making Sense of Charter School Studies: A Reporter's Guide*. March 2007. National Charter School Research Project. http://www.ncsrp.org/cs/csr/view/csr_pubs/12

MARCH 18: NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK

MARCH 25: School Choice: History, Politics, and Broader Meanings of Choice

Lisa M. Stulberg. *Race, Schools, and Hope: African Americans and School Choice after Brown*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2008.

APRIL 1: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Historical Frameworks

Diane Ravitch. *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools*. 2000 edition. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. Chapters TBA.

APRIL 8: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Al Shanker and Teachers' Unions

Richard Kahlenberg. *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Chapters TBA.

APRIL 15: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Local School Choice Politics and Policies

Guest speaker: Dirk Tillotson. Chief Operations Officer, NYC Center for Charter School Excellence

Readings TBA

APRIL 22: Urban Education Reform: The Case of New York City: Current Reforms

Guest speaker: Professor Diane Ravitch. Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in the Professions, New York University

Readings TBA

APRIL 29: Urban Education Reform: The Challenges and Possibilities of Urban Schooling & Course Wrap-Up

Pedro Noguera. *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.