Course Syllabus
THE AMERICAN SCHOOL
Educ 301C Spring 2020
Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:50 and 2:30-3:50
Instructor: Judy K. Lamb
Office Hours: By appointment.
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Course Overview
This course examines the goals, structure, and policies of public education in the United States from philosophical, historical and research perspectives. We will focus on these in terms of some of the most challenging issues in education today. Our study will look at the origins of these issues as well as the tensions that arise when the different constituencies associated with schooling (students, parents, teachers, teacher associations, communities, politicians, as well as state and federal Government agencies) interpret the purposes of schooling in America. Readings and discussions will reflect the interdisciplinary focus of the course and draw from history, political philosophy, policy studies, educational and sociological research, practice and law.

Course Text
There is not one specific text for this course. Instead there will be readings from a wide variety of texts that will inform class discussions, be research sources, and provide additional informed perspectives on course topics. Readings will be available on ARES or provided by the instructor. We will make use of relevant articles from Education Week and the St. Louis Post Dispatch and numerous other news and education publications.

Class Attendance and Participation
As this course will be conducted as a seminar, your attendance and active participation is essential. It is important that you read and prepare all assignments and come ready to discuss the topics and essential questions for each class. Cell phones and laptops should not be used during class time, unless prior approval has been given. If you miss more than two classes, your participation grade will reflect your absences.

Assignments:
Each week you will select, read, and respond to a news article about a current issue, debate, concern, or event that is impacting the American education scene today. A copy of the article should be attached to your 1-2 page response and turned in at the beginning of class each Thursday. Your response paper should include your name, class date, title or headline of article, author, published date, and the source. Be sure to briefly summarize the main idea, note any evidence of bias and faulty reasoning, and relate the article to research or other course readings that support or challenge the ideas expressed in your article. Follow with your own reactions and thoughts as well as any questions the article raises for you. A copy of the format for your response paper is attached to this syllabus.

Working in small groups throughout the semester, you will research the quality of education provided by regional school districts Each group will be responsible for studying the political, social, cultural,
geospatial and economic elements that impact the communities that are home to their assigned school district. **Reports of findings, discussions of issues, and collaboration on a final presentation will be required.** Detailed instructions, structure and elements and issues to be researched will be discussed the second week of the course.

3. **Midterm Paper and Presentation**
   The history and evolution of the American school has been the result of the critical analysis, conscientious research and instructional expertise of people whose ideas and passion for providing the best education possible for all students have left imprints on our schools and on our thinking about education. The purpose of the midterm assignment is to become acquainted with some of these “people of influence” from the beginnings of the American school to the present. From the list provided, choose one person to research for your paper and presentation. **Prepare a paper and power point presentation to be shared with the class.**
   Your presentation should be no more than 10 minutes. You will need to provide an infographic, or informational handout to support your presentation. Your paper should be 3-5 pages, single spaced and include a list of sources used in your research (minimum of three). Be sure to discuss the significance of your individual/subject in terms of the impact on the American school. **Due date for both paper and presentation is February 25.** Some presentations will be given in the following class meetings because of the time constraints of the 90-minute class.

4. **Comparison of Education Systems Around the Globe**
   The United States’ education system is always being compared to others around the globe. You will have the opportunity to choose a country whose education system you would like to understand in terms of how it functions, what populations it serves, and how it may or may not be similar to ours here in the United States. **You will research the education system and share your findings with the class in a brief five-minute presentation. Plan to provide an infographic or informational handout about your country to support your presentation.**

5. **Final**
   Your final will be a take-home exam paper. You will receive the exam and instructions on **April 23, and it will be due by 4pm on April 30.** You may also turn it in any time before that date.

**Grading Percentages for Course Requirements**
15% Participation in class discussion and learning activities
20% Weekly Education News Article Response Papers
15% Small Group School District Research Project
20% Midterm Presentation and Paper
10% Global Education Systems Comparison Presentation
20% Final Exam

**Academic Integrity:** Students at Washington University are expected to adhere to the expectations and policies for academic integrity in all course work.

**Disability Rights Information:** Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 5-4062 on the lower level of the Women’s Building. The DRC is responsible for approving and arranging all accommodations for University students.
Course Schedule and Assignments

WEEK 1
January 14  Introduction and Overview of Course
What are the current issues and ongoing challenges of the American school?
How are they changing the school scene?
Readings for next class:
W.F. Tate IV. ED Research on Schools, Neighborhoods, and Communities, 2012 “Introduction”
R.D. Kahlenberg, The Future of School Integration “Introduction”
R.D. Kahlenberg, Chapter 5 “The Challenge of High-Poverty Schools” by Mantil, Perkins, and Aberger.
Weekly Article Review. (follow the Article Review format found at the end of this syllabus)
January 16 What Are the Variables and Factors Impacting the Equitable Learning, Health, and Achievement of Students Across America?
Discussion of readings
Debrief of our weekly education news article reviews.
Introduction of School District Research Project
Readings for next class:

Week 2
January 21 Challenges Facing the American School
What are common factors contributing to the failure of schools?
View Video Documentary: “Waiting for Superman”
January 23 Sources of Frustration and Failure for Students
How do failing schools impact families, communities and other institutions? Does "place" matter?
Discussion of Odis Johnson reading and "Waiting for Superman"
Debrief of weekly education news response papers

Week 3
January 28 What Do We Really Know and Believe About American Schools?
Our understanding of American schools requires a knowledge that has considerable breadth and depth.
More than ever we need to have a true picture of students and schools as they are today.
Readings for next class:
January 30 History, Purposes and Goals of Public Schools What were the early goals and purposes of schooling? The Common Schools? Are they the same ones we have today? If not, what has changed and why?
Readings for next class:
Articles about local education issues found in the St. Louis Post Dispatch . Choose from those on Ares, or ones in the newspaper this week, or choose one from the instructor’s article folder.

Week 4
February 4  The Education Beat: What does the media coverage tell us about current goals, challenges, and values for public schools today? How does news coverage inform and impact perceptions and understanding of local education issues and goals of education in the region? Is there
balance or bias in the reporting? Are there a variety of perspectives presented? What does the reader learn?

Debrief of education news articles.


**February 6** Equal Access to Educational Opportunities How have major court decisions and laws changed the look of education in public school classrooms over the recent years? How has NCLB fallen short of expectations? How is the ESSA expected to address those problems and issues of the NCLB?

**Choose Person of Influence for Midterm Presentation.**

**Readings for next class** Choose an article on topic from the Education Week._

**Week 5**

**February 11** Student Diversity Issues and Challenges How do schools accommodate diversity in race, ethnicity, recent immigrant status, gender, sexual orientation, religious preference and cultural background as well as students with disabilities and giftedness.


**February 13** Power and Control of the Local Public Schools Who has the power to control the local schools? What role do school boards play? Who are the members of the school board? Who else has the power to impact the local school? Who makes financial decisions?


**Week 6**

**February 18** Location and the “Geography of Opportunity” What kinds of information can we gain about the context and location of a school?  
Guest Speaker: Dr. Mark Hogrebe, Director of the St. Louis Regional Database Project._

**February 20** School District Research Project Teams’ discussion of findings thus far in the study of their school districts.

**Week 7**

**February 25** Midterm Presentations on People of Influence in Education

**February 27** Midterm Presentations on People of Influence in Education

**Week 8**

**March 3** More Midterm Presentations People of Influence in Education


Stephen W. Raudenbush. “Can School Improvement Reduce Racial Inequality?”


**March 5** The Changing Picture of the American School. Which reforms will make a difference? Which will go beyond the school yard to the neighborhood and community?

Share weekly education articles on various reform efforts and plans locally and around the country.

WEEK 9
March 10 Spring Break
March 12 Spring Break

Week 10
March 17 Teachers: The Work, The Life. How should we define “highly qualified teachers”? What skills, knowledge and preparation should they have? Who determines salaries, working conditions, legal rights and liabilities?

March 19 Teaching: The Challenges and Responsibilities
What must they know and be able to do to meet the needs of each of their student? How do the many laws and mandates impact their instruction and learning environment? What are the debates around curriculum and textbooks?

Guest speaker.
Readings for next class: Joel Spring, American Education 14th ed., Chapter 10, “The Courts and the Schools”.

Week 11
March 24 Law and the American School: A review of court cases and laws changing education. Discussion of the issues addressed, the questions raised, the freedoms or actions affected, and the implications for students, teachers, parents, administrators and school boards

Readings for next class:
Peter Shrag. “United States, America’s Orgy of Reform.” And


“Ranking Countries by the Worst Students” by Jill Barshay, The Hechinger Report (U.S. News)

March 26 Criticisms and Comparisons The United States education system has always been subject to criticisms by and comparisons to other countries around the globe, but which of these were warranted or appropriate and which were not? Why will there always be differences in philosophy, structure, instruction and outcomes?

Assignment for next class: Prepare presentation on education system of the country you have chosen to compare to the United States.

WEEK 12
March 31 A Look at Education Systems Around the Globe How much do education systems reflect their particular cultures, unique context and demographics? What are the limitations of the comparisons that are often made of different countries and their education systems?

Student presentations on education systems of countries around the globe.

April 2 Continuing our Look at Education Systems Around the Globe

Student presentations and an informed discussion of the differences and attributes of various education.

Readings for next class:
Choose an article about alternative or innovative schooling options being considered or already in existence OR report on a TED Talk on Education Innovation.
WEEK 13
April 7 Alternatives to the “Traditional” Concept of the American Public School. From virtual schools to home schooling, how do alternatives address the learning needs of students and state standards and assessments.

Workshop school district profile group project. Teams will have time to work together to review the requirements and organization of their reports.

April 9 Workshop School District group project
Teams will have time to work together to finalize the requirements and the organization of their reports.

WEEK 14
April 14 School District Profile Presentations
April 16 School District Profile Presentations

WEEK 15
April 21 School District Profile Project Presentation
April 23 The Future of the American School What will we do as informed, civic-minded, future taxpayers, parents and community leaders to preserve and ensure all students have access to high-performing schools?

Final Exam is handed out.

April 30 Final is due. Please turn in your Final no later than 4pm on April 30 to Seigle Hall 107, Education Department or 153, my office.
AMERICAN SCHOOL 301C
Article Review Format

Please use the following template for your weekly education news article response/reviews.

Your Name
Article Response number (you will generally have one a week)
Class Date Due

Title of Article
Author
Source
Published Date

Use the following headings to organize your comments.

I. Summary: Write a summary of article (approximately one paragraph).

II. Evidence of bias or faulty reasoning.

III. Other Perspectives on Topic: Relate the article to other research articles or course readings that support or challenge the ideas expressed in your article. (These other readings may be chapters assigned, the supplementary readings on Ares, or others you have found that are pertinent to the topic.) Be sure to cite the reference used.

IV. Personal Response to Article: Include your personal reactions, thoughts, and questions regarding the information and ideas expressed in the article.

Length should be 1-2 pages single-spaced.
Be sure to attach a copy of the article to your paper.