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Course Description

This course will provide students with opportunities to:

(1) Explore a range of perspectives on school reform and restructuring. This will include: why reform is needed; what reforms have been proposed; and what strategies for reform seem promising and why.

(2) Write an in-depth study of some aspect of school reform that relates to your professional interests.

(3) Develop a personal philosophy regarding school reform. This will entail clarifying what you believe about reform and why you hold those beliefs.

Course Readings


Course Calendar

**August 25: Overview and introduction to course**
Syllabus reviewed; assignments and grading policies outlined; course overview discussed.

**September 1: Why and what reform is needed? The progressive view.**

**September 8: Why and what reform is needed? The progressive view (cont’d).**

**September 15: Why and what reform is needed? The neoconservative view.**
*Reading:* Hirsch, pp. 1-175.

**September 22: Why and what reform is needed? The neoconservative view (cont’d).**
*Reading:* Hirsch, pp. 176-271; Wiggins, “The Futility of Trying to Teach Everything of Importance.”

**September 29: School reform: Some different issues to consider.**

**October 6: School reform: Some different issues to consider (cont’d).**
*Reading:* Lipmann, pp. 211-303; Wells, et al., Charter Schools as Postmodern Paradox: Rethinking Social Stratification in an Age of Deregulated Choice.

**October 13: School reform? We’ve been doing that.**

**October 20: School reform? We’ve been doing that (cont’d).**
*Reading:* Tyack & Cuban, pp. 110-142; Galletti, “Increasing the Capacity and Will to Accelerate Middle Level Reform.”
October 27: Challenging the assumptions.
  Reading: Berliner & Biddle, pp. 1-214.

November 3: Challenging the assumptions (cont’d).
  Reading: Berliner & Biddle, pp. 215-350; Chubb & Moe, “America’s Public Schools: Choice Is a Panacea.”

November 10: The big picture.
  Reading: Fullan & Steigelbauer, pp. 3-250.

November 17: The big picture (cont’d).
  Reading: Fullan & Steigelbauer, pp. 251-354; Anderson, “Cross-site Analysis of the Studies of Curriculum Reform.”

November 24: Revisiting an old analysis
  Reading: Sarason, “Prefaces” through p. 298.

December 1: Revisiting an old analysis (cont’d).
  Reading: Sarason, pp. 309-387; McQuillan, “Reform that Reproduced: The 1992 Committee.”

December 8: Some other views on school reform.

Course Requirements

Two-Page Critiques (30% of final grade)
  Every other week in the course of the semester (7 times) students will submit a 2-page, single-spaced (no longer) critique of the primary author being read during those two weeks. This should NOT be a summary of the author's work. Rather, it should be your focused analysis of some aspect of what the author had to say. This might include raising questions you feel the author needs to address or which the author’s work suggests for you; drawing on your own knowledge to challenge ideas and/or assumptions put forth by the author; making connections between that author and others we have read; focusing on a particular idea presented by the author and describing the implications of the idea for school reform; and so on.

Class Participation (15% of final grade)
  As a general rule, you will be expected not only to do the reading for class but to have thought about the reading. This might entail bringing questions to class that you’d like to raise, making connections with other authors we’ve read, and generally being an active and substantive contributor to class.

Class Planning and Debriefing
  Twice in the course of the semester, students will meet with me to plan the upcoming class. We will get together at some specified time (such as the Friday following class) to discuss what you feel would be important topics to cover in the next
class, teaching strategies that might be appropriate, and any other ideas you might have for how the class could most effectively be organized that week. This should take about a half hour to 45 minutes. You will not be teaching the class. Rather these meetings should offer you an opportunity to develop provocative questions or design activities which you feel will engage the class. In addition, after each class, the student who helped plan the class will meet briefly with me (no more than a half-hour), to reflect on the class itself. This will be included as part of your class participation grade. PLEASE NOTE: You will need to have completed the reading for that week before we meet to plan the upcoming class.

Final Research Paper (55% of final grade)

From the outset of this course you should think about what specific topic in the area of school reform you would like to research (e.g., class size, single-gender schools, experiential education, service learning, etc.). I strongly suggest you choose a topic that motivates you. Ideally, this research can serve as background information for your dissertation and its prospectus. By the time you finish the paper, you should know a great deal about the topic and should have a good idea for what research in that area says about your topic. The paper should be between 20-30 pages. It will be due one week after our last class (Wednesday, December 15th).