

Historical Perspectives on U.S. Education

EDU 210/HIS 210: Spring 2024

Instructor: Prof. Deborah Michaels

Class: MWF 1-1:50pm HSSC N1112

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Course Description

How and why did the system of public schooling in the U.S.—and throughout the world by the 1970s—evolve into what we see today? When did schooling become compulsory and what explains the shift away from guild, family, or church-based education? Why do we put students in grades based on their age, not their interests or skill levels? Why do we require young people to learn certain subjects and not others? Why are teachers mostly white women in the U.S.? How are public schools funded and what have been the historical consequences of financing our national education system this way? The history of education provides us with the opportunity to investigate these questions by excavating the political, social, and economic contexts that informed how public schooling developed over time.

In this course, we take a chronological approach to this history, highlighting educational trends from the pre-colonial era up to the 21st century in the U.S. We identify the perennial tensions that have animated school controversies throughout these time periods, such as a parental rights versus the state's interest in educating youth, the separation of church and state, the desire to assess learning outcomes on a large scale while avoiding bias, who should teach our children and what we owe teachers, and the disparities in school funding across racially segregated neighborhoods despite the American ideal of equal opportunity. On this journey, we regularly pause to question the values and interests behind the practices and structures of public schooling: Whose interests are privileged and who is harmed by these ways of schooling?

Any honest history of U.S. education must confront how schools have been—and continue to be—sites of abuse and denigration for many students, minoritized for their race, ethnicity, social class, home language, gender and sexual identities, dis/abilities, and the intersectionalities of these identities. However, it is also imperative that we acknowledge and celebrate the resilience, creativity, cultural affirmation, and educational excellence that minoritized communities have fought for and actualized in educating youth. We will take stock throughout the course and rejoice in educational movements that sparked liberation, cultural affirmation, and mutual care.

A self-evident truth is that history keeps expanding. There are many topics of historical significance that we will regrettably not have time to cover in depth during our term together. Nonetheless, throughout the course, I invite you to bring into class discussion and into your assignments—especially your final research project—topics of interest to you and of relevance to your identities and experiences.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you/students will be able to (SWBAT):

- Talk about how your personal education has been shaped by the history of public schooling.
- Identify perennial debates in public schooling and explain why these controversies persist.
- Uncover the ideologies and interests behind the practices and structure of public schooling.
- Explain how particular school practices have historically and disproportionately harmed communities of color and other minoritized students.
- Describe and celebrate the hard-won educational victories and the heroes—most often from minoritized communities of color—who have moved us closer to educational excellence for all.
- Develop the historical skills to contextualize and interpret artifacts related to education.

- Draw on historical data to make compelling arguments for how to improve schooling today.

Equitable Access to Learning Opportunities¹

My aim is for our course to serve all students in our classroom community. I want each of you to feel that the diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives that you bring to our class are respected and valued and that your learning is supported inside our class space and outside through the wider college community's resources.

During the first weeks of class, we will develop a community agreement to establish how we intend to build together a classroom that allows us to feel safe in taking intellectual risks while respecting each other. As the professor, I acknowledge and take responsibility for the power I have to disrupt dynamics that are harmful or unproductive. As a human being with limitations, I invite you tell me if I have failed to recognize and adequately address an issue of harm or concern so that I can improve as an educator and make amends.

Please discuss with me any barriers to learning opportunities that you anticipate or encounter in our course as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate and reasonable accommodations. When needed and relevant, we will collaborate with Jae Baldree, the College Coordinator of Student Disability Resources [baldreej@grinnell.edu], who assists with accommodation plans for students with documented and undocumented dis/abilities.

Please note that if at any point in our course due to an in-class discussion, an assignment, interaction, or text you feel that your health or well-being are at risk, I encourage you to communicate with me and trust your body/mind/self-knowledge to tell you what you need. Learning and growth often involve discomfort, but we cannot learn from a place of dysregulation or trauma. Please communicate with me when you feel that an experience or assignment in our course is pushing you outside that productive learning zone. Thank you for your partnership in learning together this term.

Assigned Texts

The three books we will read for this course are all available as e-books through our college library subscriptions. I've listed complete citation information below for those books in the order that we will read them. Please note the shorthand that I will use to refer to these books in our course schedule: e.g., "AE Chp 2" refers to the second chapter of Urban & Wagoner's book *American Education*. **All other assigned texts will be available to download through PWeb/Documents.**

AE: Urban, Wayne J., and Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. 2013. *American Education: A History*. London: Taylor & Francis Group. ([Free e-book access](#))

ST: Williams, Heather Andrea. 2005. *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. ([Free e-book access](#))

TRI: Lomawaima K. Tsianina and T. L. McCarty. 2006. *"To Remain an Indian": Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. New York: Teachers College Press. ([Free e-book access](#)).

¹ Adapted from Prof. Cori Jakubiak's syllabus for EDU 250, Differentiating Instruction, 2023

Suggestions for How to Approach Course Texts:

What is the Big Idea here?

As we move through several centuries of education and schooling in this course, the multitude of dates and names can seem overwhelming. I do not expect you to memorize these details; rather, this course is interested in “big ideas”—enduring tensions or dilemmas in education in a pluralistic and democratic society, what factors contribute to continuity and change in our ways of educating youth, and the values and ideologies behind how we practice “schooling.”² The details do serve us as evidence for our claims about the history of education. But try to keep in mind the big-picture questions—for example, those questions at the start of our syllabus and the guiding questions on PWeb/Documents that I provide for individual readings. If you find that you are feeling bogged down by the readings or unable to identify the “big ideas,” please meet with me so I can help.

Historical Sourcing Questions:

Historians learn in their discipline to ask the following questions when encountering primary and secondary sources.³ By learning to habitually ask these questions, we can learn to interpret sources on various levels, i.e. not just what the author is telling us, but how their message likely resonated (or not) with different audiences in their time, the strengths and limitations of their perspective, and the intention behind the creation of their text. In short, asking the following questions as you read/encounter texts inside and outside our course is at the heart of critical thinking, and therefore imperative for any democratic society.

- What are the author’s purposes in this text and how do I know this?
- Who is the intended audience for this piece and how do I know this?
- Whose knowledge or stories are centered in this text?
- How reliable is the evidence that the author is providing for their claims? Do they corroborate their claims, provide a variety of perspectives, and include citation information for me to refer directly to their sources on my own?
- Whose knowledge or stories are marginalized or excluded?
- How do the author’s identities inform this text?
- How do my identities inform my response to this text?
- How might the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the text influence my interpretation of this text?

² I am borrowing the term “big ideas” here from *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), a book that is widely used by educators in the U.S. to develop effective lesson and unit plans.

³ Dr. Sam Wineburg at Stanford University has written extensively about “historical thinking.” He and other researchers used methods such as “think alouds” to reveal how trained historians think differently about texts than university students. See, for example, Wineburg, S. S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: charting the future of teaching the past*. Temple University Press.

Summary of Assessments

1. Ongoing Participation & Preparedness 10%
2. Personal History of Education 15%
 - First Take 5%
 - Revisited 10%
3. Reading Responses (2-pages each, 2 responses each 5%) 10%
4. Discussion Leading 15%
 - Individual reading notes 5%
 - Group meeting with me: group plan 5%
 - Discussion leading + activity 5%
5. Primary Source Analyses (2 analyses, 5% each) 10%
6. Final Research Project 40%
 - Proposal 5%
 - 5-page paper 15%
 - Poster + Presentation 20%

Assessments & Grading

For the assessments outlined below, I will provide more detailed guides and/or rubrics on Pweb/Assignments and/or in class.

1. Ongoing Participation & Preparedness (10%):

In this course, your voice and perspectives are central to our learning as a class community. We will engage in various forms of dialogue to challenge our understandings about schooling. For these reasons, your attendance and participation count significantly toward your final grade. To encourage participation for all learners, I regularly vary groupings in class, i.e. whole-class discussion, small-group, pairs, and individual quick writes. If you feel that your engagement with the course is not reflected in how our class is proceeding, please come speak with me so we can make adjustments.

2. Personal History of Education (15%):

Early in the course, you will create a draft history of your educational journey to date (5%). You can use a variety of formats, including timeline, film, or PowerPoint. Later in the course, you will revisit that first draft and relate your educational history to themes and texts from our course (10%). ***Please note:** If you have done a similar project for EDU 101, come talk to me so we can adapt the assignment to adhere to Academic Honesty rules.

3. Reading Responses (10%):

You will complete two (5% each) creative or analytic responses to course readings that inspire, infuriate, or resonate with you in another way. You can choose which readings you want to respond to for these two assignments, however:

- You must complete the reading responses within two weeks of when the readings were due;
- Your first response is due before Spring Break (but you can elect to complete both prior to the break);

- The readings you choose for these two assignments cannot be the same texts you engage with for your Discussion Leading assignment.

4. Discussion Leading (15%)

You will sign up with at least one other person to lead during class time an activity or discussion that helps us not only understand but analyze across our course texts. In preparation (10%) for this assignment each group member will: (1) contribute notes on the readings, (2) meet with each other at least once before meeting with me to write up a plan, (3) develop teaching materials for leading the lesson, and (4) meet with me as a group to review your plan. You will then (5%): (1) implement your discussion plan/activity during a pre-designated 30-minutes of class time and (2) each team member will write a brief reflection on how the discussion went.

5. Primary Source Analyses (10%)

During several class sessions, we will be exploring primary documents in the Iowa Room, the archives located in the basement of Burling Library. You write two analyses (5% each), choosing at least one primary document or a related group of documents from the archive for each analysis. You will explain in writing or another format how your source extends, challenges, and (likely) complicates themes from our class. We will learn about and practice fundamental historical inquiry skills in some of our class sessions, so don't worry if you've had no previous experience in historical research methods.

6. Final Research Project (40%)

For the final project, you will conduct secondary-source and primary-source research on a topic of interest to you and connect your project to themes and texts in our course. You will create this project with the general public in mind as your audience. You will have several deadlines and opportunities for feedback to help you pace your progress: a proposal (5%), a written analysis e.g. 5-page paper (15%), and a poster and presentation (20%).

Grade Scale:

94 and up	A	76 to 79	C+
90 to 93	A-	70 to 75	C
87 to 89	B+	60 to 69	D
84 to 86	B	59 and below	F
80 to 83	B-		

Course Policies & Tips

Attendance Policy

I will record attendance throughout the term because of the central role that participation plays in this course. However, if you are ill, please prioritize your health, rest, and do not attend classes. Caring for your health also entails your emotional and spiritual well-being: I support you in following days of religious observance as they pertain to your faith community and in responding to family emergencies. If you cannot attend class, please let me know in advance (as you are able). **You may be absent 3 times without excuse or penalty.**

If you miss 10 classes or more, you will not pass the course. The reason for this policy is that our course is designed so that much of our learning happens in community during class time, which cannot be adequately substituted with outside assignments or office hour visits. Fortunately, this extreme situation can usually be avoided through partnering with Academic Advising and/or dropping the course. When I suspect that a student is struggling or has repeatedly missed class without contacting me, I generally send an alert to Academic Advising so that they can extend additional support.

Submitting Assignments

- All students are permitted ONE 72-hour extension on any assignment deadline that does not involve group work or a class presentation. Simply email me prior to the deadline stating that you are taking the extension for X assignment. Note that you cannot divide up this extension across multiple assignments.
- Please upload papers as a Word document, 12-point Times New Roman or (roughly) the equivalent. Include at the top of your document: your name, the date, the course code (i.e. EDU/HIS 210), and the name of the assignment. Provide an original, relevant title for your paper or project.
- All citations and references must be in a consistent, commonly accepted format of your choice (i.e. Chicago Style, APA, Turbrian). For citation guidance, see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
- Please use the following convention for naming your assignment files: [Your Name_210_Name of Assignment]. For example, if Marna Kovac were the student author of paper 1, they would name their file KovacM_210_Paper1.
- Unless noted otherwise, all assignments should be submitted to PWeb/Assignments. If PWeb gives you a problem, email me the assignment as an attachment.

Late Submission Policy

Late work will be reduced by 10% for the first day of lateness, beginning 10 minutes after the deadline, and then 20% for each additional day of lateness. The only exceptions are in cases of: (1) documented accommodations, (2) religious or athletic conflicts, (3) illness that leads to hospitalization, and (4) family emergencies.⁴

Work Expectations Outside of Class Sessions

The college policy on workload per credit hour sets out the expectation that a 4-credit course will require students to spend on average 6-9 hours per week on course assignments, not including in-class time. If you are taking considerably less or more time than that for our course, please sign up for my office hours, and we can discuss strategies of learning that might help shorten or deepen your study time.

Academic Honesty, Intellectual Integrity

"When you submit a piece of work (whether a paper or paper draft, report, examination, homework, computer program, creative project, or other assignment) for a grade, you are claiming that its form and content represent your own original work produced for this assignment, except where you have clearly and specifically cited other sources (Grinnell College's *Academic Honesty handbook*, 2023-24, p. 4)." Please refer to the college's [Academic Honesty handbook from 2023-24](#) to inform yourself about the latest policies. With LLMs (Large Language Models) that are used in AI (Artificial Intelligence), the landscape for academic integrity has become more complicated than ever. Please make note of the college's new policies regarding LLMs. For our purposes in this class, using generative AI tools to compose writing for any assignment is not permitted: I want to hear your voice, not a bot's. Please check with me first if you anticipate using AI tools in any way for our course assignments. If, for example, you use AI to find sources, it is your responsibility to check each of those sources for accuracy, relevance, and even their existence. You must provide appropriate attribution for any permitted aspect of your work that involved AI.

⁴ Adapted from Prof. Sara Francisco's syllabus for SOC/ANT 291 methods course.

Preparation, Class Discussions, & Our Class Culture

Please come to class having read (or viewed, listened to) the course texts that are due that day. During class sessions, I will expect you to be able to summarize key ideas from the texts and make connections to other class texts and discussions. I have assigned course texts in a chronology that is recursive: i.e. each week builds on the prior knowledge you will have garnered from previous texts and discussions in our course.

Your taking time outside of class to engage with our course texts is vital to our productive discussions in class. Another pre-condition for meaningful class discussions is a supportive, safe classroom environment. I aim to foster with you a classroom that encourages each of us to bring our viewpoints, questions, and experiences to the table with care and respect for each other. This balance requires that we listen actively to each other, as well as take risks to speak out. I encourage you to ask follow-up questions of your peers and me and to practice summarizing what you understand someone else to be saying before making a counterargument. Questions and tentative ideas are always welcome in our discussions. Effective class dialogue is an exercise in inclusion and active listening. Here is a summary of what past students have identified as keys to productive class discussion. We will review, add to, and edit this list as we create our class contract.

- *Doing the readings/engaging with the texts before class, and coming with notes, highlights, etc.*
- *Listening carefully to your peers while they are speaking.*
- *Expanding on and making connections to others' ideas.*
- *Referring to, quoting, and/or citing page numbers from course readings.*
- *Adjusting how much you talk so that everyone has a chance to contribute meaningfully.*
- *Inviting new voices into the conversation, e.g. "In small group, Z had a really interesting point..."*
- *Posing clarifying questions to your peers and me.*
- *Coming to my office hours to ask for help deciphering the texts and to brainstorm different formats and guidelines for class dialogue that allow you to feel seen, heard, and respected.*
- *Supporting each other by doing the readings and participating when your peers are leading discussions.*
- *Organizing with each other to form study groups, checking in on one another, and offering peer-to-peer feedback on drafts of your assignments in and outside of class.*

Use of Electronic Devices

I encourage anyone with a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to bring it to class (preferably fully charged due to limited outlets). If you do not have access to a laptop, please let me know that, and I will do my best to procure one for you to use at least during our class time. Out of respect for our mutual learning, please only use your devices to do activities that are related to our course and at appropriate times (e.g. not reading ahead or working on an assignment for our course during class discussion or lecture). Phones should be silenced unless you are awaiting an urgent text/call. Laptop screens create a physical barrier and obstruct dialogue: please put down or tilt the screen when we have group discussions whenever possible. Thank you.

My Office Hours & Class Communication

Please check your email and our Pweb site for updates. I generally check my email twice on weekdays, but not on weekends, so please plan accordingly, especially before assignments are due. I encourage you to sign up for my office hours: <https://calendly.com/profmichaels>. I enjoy the opportunity to talk with you outside of class, and I am happy to discuss course readings, upcoming assignments, education research, and the Education Studies Concentration and TEP (Teacher Education Program). Let me know when you've arrived for your appointment by knocking on my door or waving hello, even if I'm meeting with someone else. If your schedule conflicts with my available office hours, don't hesitate to email me with alternative times between 9am-5:30pm, M-F.

Academic Resources

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the many resources available to you on campus. For example:

[Academic Advising](#) provides many kinds of academic support through peer tutoring, time management strategies, and individual accommodations when appropriate. For support with disabilities and/or neurodivergence, contact Jae Baldree, coordinator of [student disability resources](#), at baldreej@grinnell.edu Tel. 641-269-3124 (direct line).

[First-Generation and Low-Income Resources \(FIGLI\)](#) has a food pantry, a loaner laptop program, a textbook lending library, mentoring lunches, travel funds, and emergency funds for first-gen/low-income students. The FIGLI Associate Director is [Maggie Bells](#), whose office is in the CSSRJ.

The Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center offers one-on-one instruction at any stage of any academic project. [Make an appointment here.](#)

Library Resources: Kayla Reed [reedkayla@grinnell.edu] is the liaison librarian for education courses on campus. She is happy to help you find resources relevant to your assignments. To help you identify databases and journals that contain relevant materials to History of Education or are even completely dedicated to this discipline, go to the [EDU/HIS 210 course guide](#) on the library's webpages. Yet another option available to you is [Library Lab](#): sign up to get individual help with your specific research needs.

[The Vivero program](#) hires and trains students to help other students with digital projects. This is an excellent resource to get help with digital platforms that you might use for assignments for our course, e.g. WordPress, Omeka, ArcGIS, etc. Go to the Burling Library Media Room (basement level) for drop-in help Sunday-Thursday, 7-9pm.

DASIL (Data Analysis and Social Inquiry Lab): located on the ground floor of HSSC on the opposite side of the tower from the Global Café, [DASIL](#) provides help analyzing data and creating visualizations of that data. You do not have to be a stats or STEM person to use this resource! They can help you create stunning, animated representations of change over time in the history of education or simple bar graphs or pie charts to represent educational statistics (e.g. attendance rates) across years. Drop in during open hours or look to make an appointment for help with a specific kind of software by referencing the schedule on their website.