

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dartmouth College</b> <b>Education 20</b> <b>Contemporary Issues in American Education</b></p>
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Summer Term 2014  
Period 10A: T & Th from 10:00-11:50  
X-period: W from 3:00-3:50  
101 Fairchild

Melissa Kagle  
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Office hours T 1-2, Th 12:30-2:30  
(Please sign up for a slot on my office door.)

### Course Description

This course gives students a critical introduction to the public institution they know best – the American school. You have already spent at least twelve years “studying” schools from the inside. Both teachers and students accept school as a part of life; they enjoy it sometimes; they complain about it sometimes, but only rarely do they analyze its structures and its goals. We will critically examine the social, political and economic role schools play and explore their achievements as well as their unfulfilled potential. To do this we will place our subject in their historical and social contexts and view them from the perspective of those who run schools and those who wish to change them. We will explore the big questions facing schools today: What are the limits and potentials of schooling in America? Do different people have different experiences of schools? How do current political forces shape education policy? And, finally, how can schools contribute to a more informed, just, and ethical society?

In this course, we undertake an honest and relentless inquiry into schooling in America, to question our collective assumptions about what schooling is and can be, and to expand our view of schools to include experiences very different from our own. By doing so, we can come to new understanding of the role schools play in American culture and how they can serve the public good.

### Course Requirements:

#### ***Attendance, Preparation and Participation (20%)***

This is a ***highly participatory*** class and your final grade will reflect your level of participation in all aspects of the course: whole group discussions, small group activities and written in-class assignments. As an education professor with practice and research interests in pedagogy, I subscribe to the theories that assert that learning is both active and socially constructed and this course is structured to act on those principles.

You must come to class with the reading completed and ready to participate orally and in writing. The quality of our discussions depends on each of you and I am specifically looking for evidence that you have done and understood the reading. Please keep in mind that thoughtful contributions are more important than “air time”. Given that different students have differing comfort levels with regard to speaking in large groups, make every effort to both foster a comfortable atmosphere and to incorporate varied means of “participation”. Along with whole group discussions, there will also be small group activities often with written components.

In the event of an unavoidable absence, please contact me by email ([Melissa.s.kagle@dartmouth.edu](mailto:Melissa.s.kagle@dartmouth.edu)) **prior** to class. You may be asked to do a make-up assignment in order to get credit for an excused absence.

Related to this are my expectations for classroom etiquette. These guidelines are offered as a way to aid in building a well-functioning classroom community in the short time we have together by keeping the focus during class time on our community here and minimizing electronic contact with your other communities during this time. Violations of these guidelines will result in a lower grade for this category.

- Arrive on time
- Turn off cell phones
- No texting
- No email
- No internet use
- Come prepared to spend the entire class period in the classroom
- Feel free to bring food/drink to class if it helps you to stay alert and focused

Also included in the participation grade (10%) are *unannounced short-answer questions* on the readings that you answer in a blue book. You may not consult the texts to answer these questions, but you are welcome to use up to a page of notes you prepare on the readings. These questions are similar to and will help you prepare for the exams.

### **Assignments (50%)**

There are three major assignments due over the course of the term, as listed below. Assignments must be submitted on time as specified in the syllabus.

**Are Schools Meritocratic? (20%):** In this paper you will develop an argument to answer the question of whether schools are or are not meritocratic based on three separate forms of evidence: your own experience with schooling, your partner's experiences with schooling and the course readings. (4-5 pages)

**Theorized Educational Autobiography (30%)** In this paper you will frame your educational experiences explicitly using several of the theories from the course readings. How does understanding of these frameworks help you to come to new insights about your own experiences with schooling? How will you use these insights to better understand schooling beyond your own experience? (8-10 pages)

### **Final Exam (30%)**

The final is a cumulative, essay exam.

### **Required Course Texts**

Most course texts are found on the course Canvas website.

Please purchase the following two books:

Rick Ayers & William Ayers, *Teaching the Taboo: Courage and Imagination in the Classroom* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2010)  
 John Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001)

## **Syllabus**

This syllabus is a working draft; the course Canvas site ([canvas.dartmouth.edu](https://canvas.dartmouth.edu)) will have any updates to this syllabus, as well as descriptions of assignments, electronic copies of readings, and other supplementary materials.

*Note: Readings are listed on the day you should be prepared to discuss them!*

## Part 1: Our Own Schooling and Schooling for “Other People’s Children”

Our views of schools are bound by our own experiences with schooling so that we come to view our own schooling as normative. In this section, we delve into our individual experiences with schooling to both ground our study of schools and to get a sense of the diversity of schooling experiences within the class. The goal of these introductory sessions is to begin to see our schooling with “new eyes” beyond our own experiences.

Schooling in the aggregate is determined by race, class, geography, and (dis)ability. In this section, we look at the specific experiences of those whose experiences differ from our own as a way to understand the purposes and functions of schools in wider society.

### Week 1 June 19, Our Schools

Thursday: Looking at schools with new eyes

*Readings:* Lortie, *Schoolteacher*; McCourt, *Teacher Man*; Gatto, “The Green Monogahela”

*Assignment:* School reports (directions on course Canvas site)

### Week 2 June 23, The School in Society

Tuesday: Democracy and Education

*Readings:* Dewey, *On Democracy*; Guttman, *Democratic Education*; Hochschild & Scovronick, “What Americans Want From Public Schools”

Thursday: Schools in a Global Context

*Readings:* Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World*; Anderson-Levitt, A. A World Culture of Schooling?; Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Centure of Native American Education*

### Week 3, June 30, Social Class

Tuesday: Social Class and Reproductive Schooling

*Readings:* Anyon, “Social Class and School Knowledge” pp 1-6, 31-37, and other sections as assigned; Devine, “Class Reproduction and Social Networks in the US.”

*Assignment:* Anyon Lesson Plan (directions on course Canvas site)

Thursday: Benefits and Anxieties of Privilege

*Readings:* Benjamin, “On Not Seeming Like You Want Anything: Privileged Girls’ Dilemmas of Ambition and Selflessness;” Khan, “Getting In;” Swalwell, “With Great Privilege Comes Great Power:’ Privileged Students’ Conceptions of Justice-Oriented Pedagogy.”

### Week 4, July 7, Social Class and Poverty

Tuesday: Coming to Terms with Differences in Schooling By Class

*Readings:* Delpit, “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children;” Rothstein, “Why Our Schools are Segregated;” Kozol, “Still Separate, Still Unequal”

- Wednesday X-Hour: Viewing of the film, “The Class”

Thursday: Experiences of Poverty

*Readings:* Kozol, "Death at an Early Age;" Mayer, *As Bad as They Say?*; Luttrell, "The Two-in-Oneness of Class" Isquith, "Paul Ryan's Dropout Delusion: Here's the Real Reason Kids Don't Graduate"  
[http://www.salon.com/2014/05/21/paul\\_ryans\\_dropout\\_delusion\\_heres\\_the\\_real\\_reason\\_kids\\_dont\\_graduate/](http://www.salon.com/2014/05/21/paul_ryans_dropout_delusion_heres_the_real_reason_kids_dont_graduate/)

*Guest Lecture:* Prof. Michele Tine

**Week 5, July 14, Meritocracy: Myths and Realities**Tuesday: Deconstructing Meritocracy

*Readings:* Johnson, "Schools: The Great Equalizer and the Key to the American Dream;" Stephen J. McNamee & Robert K. Miller, Jr. (2004). The Meritocracy Myth.  
<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v21/merit.htm>

Thursday: Is Tracking Meritocratic?

*Readings:* Oakes, *Keeping Track*; Kelly, "Social Class and Tracking Within Schools;" Fine & Weiss, "Before the Bleach Gets Us All"

*Due:* Meritocracy Paper, Monday, July 21, 5pm

**Part 2: Schools as a Site for Learning**

While schooling serves many functions in society, its main purpose is centered on teaching and learning. In this section, we look at the specific pedagogies schools pursue, both in the past and what future possibilities might be. At the end of this section, you will enact ideas about effective and transformative pedagogy by presenting a lesson in groups.

**Week 6, July 21, Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals**Tuesday: Role of Teachers in Schools

*Readings:* Giroux, "Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals;" Dewey, *The School and Society*; Freire, "The Banking Concept of Education," Ayers & Ayers, *Teaching the Taboo*, pages 1-6 and Chapter 1

Wednesday X-Hour: Guest Lecture, Sean Kang "Applying Cognitive Principles to Promote Durable and Efficient Learning"

Thursday: Teaching with Heart and Soul

*Readings:* Kumashiro, "Teaching and Learning through Desire, Crisis and Difference;" Ayers and Ayers, *Teaching the Taboo Chapters 7, 9 and Coda*

**Week 7, July 28, Curriculum**Tuesday: Content Area Pedagogies

*Readings:* Ayers and Ayers, *Teaching the Taboo, Chapters 2, 4 & 6*; Delpit, "Lessons from Teachers"

Thursday: Teaching to Exceptionality

*Readings:* Ayers and Ayers, *Teaching the Taboo, Chapter 8*; Hehir, “Eliminating Ableism in Education;” Weiner, “Challenging Deficit Thinking”

**Part 3: Schools as a Site for Identity Construction**

Because our formative years are spent within schools, they play an important role in how we come to view ourselves in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and who we might become in the world. In this section, we look at the processes of identity construction as it relates to schooling.

**Week 8, August 4, Schools and Identity**Tuesday Negotiating Identity in Schools

*Readings:* Pascoe, *Dude You’re a Fag*; Fine and Sirin, *Theorizing Hyphenated Selves*; Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*

Wednesday X-Hour: First Person Narratives of College Identity; Guest Lecture – Christina Gomez

Thursday: Aggressions and Micro-Aggressions

*Readings:* Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; McGee and Martin, “”You Would Not Believe What I Have to Go Through to Prove My Intellectual Value!” Stereotype Management Among Academically Successful Black Mathematics and Engineering Students

**Part 4: “Seeing like a State:” Schools & Policy**

In this section, we look at schools from the perspective of policy makers, with a particular focus on current federal education policy as embodied by the 2001 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as well as the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action in higher education. Our goal is to understand how policy levers have impacted schooling and what pressures influence policymaking for education.

We finish the course with a look at the possibilities for schools to fulfill their potential as a truly democratic institution that responds to the needs of the individual in balance with the common good. In this way, we can imagine schooling that moves even beyond the unfulfilled ideal of Horace Mann that schools be the “great equalizer” in a democratic society to schools as a site for transformation and new possibilities.

**Week 9, August 11, Current Education Policy**Tuesday: No Child Left Behind

*Readings:* Darling-Hammond, “From ‘Separate but Equal’ to NCLB;” Hess & Petrilli, “The Background of NCLB;” Mintrop & Sunderman, “Predictable Failure of Federal Sanctions-Driven Accountability for School Improvement – And Why We May Retain it Anyway”

Wednesday X-Hour: Guest Lecture Rebecca Holcombe, Vermont Commissioner of Education

Thursday: Affirmative Action and the Fisher Case

*Readings:* AERA Amicus Brief; Chang, “Post Fisher: The Unfinished Agenda on Student Diversity in Higher Ed;” Orfield, “Affirmative Action Hanging in the Balance”

**Week 10, August 18, New Directions for Schools**

Tuesday: Charters and Other Ideas

*Readings:* Neill, "The Idea of Summerhill;" Renzulli and Roscigno, "Charter Schools and the Public Good;" Ravitch, "60 Years After Brown v. Board, Will Congress Revive a Dual School System?" [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-ravitch/will-congress-revive-a-dual-school-system\\_b\\_5343445.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-ravitch/will-congress-revive-a-dual-school-system_b_5343445.html); Ayers, R., Letter to a Young Teacher: Reframing Teaching in No-Respect Times

Guest Lecture: Prof. David Kraemer, "The Science of Learning: Methods and Evidence"

*Due:* Theorized Educational Autobiography, Wednesday, 5pm