

SYLLABUS: EDS 201(k)

AMERICAN EDUCATION

Oxford College of Emory University

SPRING SEMESTER 2011

INSTRUCTORS: Dr. Joseph Moon & Dr. Karen Martucci

Dr. Karen Martucci
Office: 103 Seney Hall
E-mail: kmartuc@emory.edu
Office Hours: Mon-Fri. 9-5 by appt.
Phone: 770-784-4631

Dr. Joseph Moon
Office: 203 Candler Hall
E-Mail: Joseph.moon@emory.edu
Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 9-5 by appt.
Phone: 770-784-8391

CLASS MEETINGS

Monday, Wednesday, 2:00-3:15
East Village Seminar Room: Beta

REQUIRED TEXTS

Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage Inequalities*. New York: Harper Collins, (Chapter 1-3)

Gatto, John Taylor (2005). *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*. Canada: New Society Publishers. (Chapter 1, 2, and 4)

Selected readings:

Additional journal articles, book chapters, news media and documents will be available on E-reserves through the Oxford Library or indicated on Blackboard.

Course Overview:

This course will survey some of the historical, social, cultural, and political factors that influence issues and practices in American Education. Topics to be covered include history of US education, current models of public education, topics in public policy, curriculum, and various innovations intended to enhance the effectiveness of American Education. Students will examine these topics through lecture, oral reports, films, class discussions, a midterm research project, field experiences in local schools, several short writing assignments, and a final essay-type examination.

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Understand the significant historical events that shaped American education;
- Understand contemporary school reform initiatives and be able to provide informed arguments for and against them;
- Relate their field experiences in local public schools to the issues covered in assigned readings and lectures; and course content.
- Understand the role of society, culture and politics in shaping contemporary American education.

Accommodations

Drs. Moon and Martucci are committed to doing whatever is necessary to make this learning experience accessible and optimal for people who may have any disability related needs, whether visible or invisible. Please bring your special needs to the attention of one the instructors at the beginning of the semester, if there is anything we can do (such as providing materials in alternative formats, assuring physical access to class sessions, or being sensitive to interaction difficulties that may be posed by communication and/or learning disabilities).

Course Policies

Attendance: You are encouraged to attend all class meetings. More than three absences will result in the lowering of your final grade by three points, and each successive absence will result in an additional 3-point deduction. Emergencies will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Make-up work/Incompletes: All assignments are due on the dates listed in the syllabus. Any deviation from posted due dates must be approved in advance by the instructors. You are expected to communicate any issues to us in a timely manner.

Grade Disputes: Unless there are computational errors, no grade will be revised.

Honor Code/Plagiarism: The Oxford Honor Code will be in effect for the entire course. Plagiarism is a violation of the honor code; if at any point you are unsure how to cite correctly another individual's work, please see one of your instructors. A copy of the honor code can be viewed at:

http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/

**The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Professional Dialogue/Interaction: Since we will be discussing important and sometimes controversial topics, we are committed to create a class environment that is comfortable and open for all students and their opinions. Debate and disagreement must be civil and respectful. Also, cell phones must remain off during class. Please be time on time for class.

Class Schedule: Note that homework/reading assignments are listed on the class session **before** they are due.

Course Requirements

1. Understanding your educational influences = **2 points**

This short autobiographical paper is meant to help you explore the various parts of your identity and experience that shape your opinions and beliefs about education and its role in society. The autobiography requires no research beyond your own experience and perhaps some discussion with parents or family members. Detailed guidelines for your autobiography are provided in this syllabus. (p.14)

2. Written Response to *Savage Inequalities* (chapters 1-3) or *Dumbing Us Down* = **20 points**

Your submission must be typed, double spaced in 12 point font, 2500 – 3000 words. Details on this assignment are posted on Blackboard under ASSIGNMENTS. Additional information will be provided.

3. Tutoring Field Experience and Journal Reflections – TPSL: You will tutor children or help teachers in local school classrooms, as assigned. You must spend a minimum of 16 hours at your site over the course of the semester. More information will be provided about tutoring sites, orientation times, and tutoring preferences by the TPSL coordinator. Be certain to respond promptly to any communication from Ms. McLaughlin, Director of Student Development at Oxford College. You must maintain a regular, weekly tutoring time and receive a satisfactory evaluation from a cooperating teacher at your local school/agency. You will maintain a journal and link your observations to class content. The 5 journal entries are noted on the syllabus. No late journal entries will be accepted. Journal Entries = 20 points, TPSL experience = 20 points, **overall 40 points**

4. Midterm research project (submitted electronically in Blackboard with hard copy turned in at designated class) = **Project= 45 points**

In order to be exposed to a broader range of topics and issues in American Education, you will select a topic/issue and write a short paper that analyzes the topic/issue, presenting different perspectives and competing related arguments where appropriate, and your concluding opinion or perspective. Detailed writing guidelines will be provided and discussed in class.

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

5. Oral Presentations – The topic for your midterm research paper will form the basis for your Oral Presentation. Students will prepare a 5-7 minute presentation that enables the class to understand the key elements and controversies. Students will be evaluated on the overall quality, clarity and completeness of the presentation, as well as the effectiveness of their presentation.

Oral presentation = 10 points

6. Comprehensive Final Examination = **30 points**

7. Class attendance, active participation and contribution to discussion = **15 points**

Total point value = 170 points

Instructional Development

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Assignments

| | Possible Points | Earned Points |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Class attendance, active participation and contribution to discussion | 15 | |
| 2. Educational Autobiography Paper (2 points) DUE Jan 23 | 2 | |
| 3. Written <i>Response to Savage Inequalities</i> or <i>Dumbing Us Down</i> Must be typed, double spaced, in 12 font, 2500n- 3000 words. Details on this written assignment are posted on Blackboard under Assignments. DUE: 2/13 | 20 | |
| 4. Tutoring Field Experiences and Journal Reflections – TPSL Journal Reflections (5 total journal entries at a maximum of 4 points each, to be evaluated on clarity, reflective quality of content, incorporation of relevant course topics as appropriate); regular site attendance; and positive supervisor evaluation. Tutoring Experience | 20 20 | |
| 5. Midterm Research Project Outline due 2/29 (8 pts), finished paper due 3/28 (45 pts). Students will prepare a 5-7 minute presentation that allows the audience to understand the key elements and controversies of what was learned. | 8 45 | |
| 6. Oral Presentation of Research Project | 10 | |
| 7. Final Ex | 30 | |
| TOTAL POINTS | 170 | |

| Grade | Standard | % Range |
|-------|----------|---------|
| A | 4.0 | 160+ |
| A- | 3.7 | 153-159 |
| B+ | 3.3 | 148-152 |
| B | 3.0 | 141-147 |
| B- | 2.7 | 136-140 |

| Grade | Standard | % Range |
|-------|----------|---------|
| C+ | 2.3 | 131-135 |
| C | 2.0 | 124-130 |
| C- | 1.7 | 119-123 |
| D | 1.0 | 112-118 |
| F | 0 | 0-111 |

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Course Schedule

| CLASS | DATE8 | TOPIC | READINGS | ASSIGNMENT DUE |
|-------|---------|---|---|--|
| 1 | 1/18/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions, Expectations, Syllabus | Read syllabus for understanding/questions | The Sociology of American Education |
| 2 | 1/23/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Study American Education? | READ: Joel Spring p. 3-26 : History and Goals of Public Schooling | Educational Autobiography due in blackboard and in class |
| 3 | 1/25/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of Primary and Secondary Education in the U.S. Part One • TPSL Orientation | Read: Urban and Wagoner 71-91 112-123 196-203 226-232 250-255 265-276 | |
| 4 | 1/30/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History Continued: Part Two | Read: Chapters 1-3 from Kozol, <u>Savage Inequalities</u> | |

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

| | | | | |
|---|---------|---|---|--|
| 5 | 2/1/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan Kozol Assignments for TPSL <p>Ms. McLaughlin distributes TPSL assignments</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapters 1, 2, 4, Gatto, <u>Dumbing Us Down</u>; prepare for in class debate | |
| 6 | 2/6/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gatto's Dumbing US Down: Class discussion/debate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Nelson, Critical Issues Chapter 6, Religion and Public Schools | |
| 7 | 2/8/12 | Religion and Schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read "A Nation at Risk The Imperative for Educational Reform 1983, in James Fraser, A Documentary History, p.342-350. | |
| 8 | 2/13/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Nation at Risk <p>In class film, <i>The bottom Line in Education</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read e-Reserve NCLB Act of 2001, Executive Summary • READ Ravitch, in Death and Life of the American School System, NCLB : Measure and Punish p.93-111 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kozol/Gatto Paper Due |
| 9 | 2/15/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCLB • | <p>Read Critical Issues p 56-70</p> <p>Joel Spring, American Education 159-165</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine research project topic-paragraph description due |

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

| | | | | |
|----|---------|---|---|--|
| 10 | 2/20/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Schools | Springs American Education, p 170-172 http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-294.html : browse http://www.homeschool.com | |
| 11 | 2/22/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home School • Vouchers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting For Superman Participant's Guide p127-161 and 189-200. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal Entry #1 Due |
| 12 | 2/27/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting for Superman | TBD | |
| 13 | 2/29/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Librarians on Research • Meetings with DM and DM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joel Spring, p 86-115 Student Diversity and Multicultural/Multilingual Education | Research paper outline due |
| 14 | 3/5/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race Culture and Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards based Reform, Nelson et al. p.125-144 | |
| 15 | 3/7/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Stakes Testing | Homework: TBD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal Entry #2 Due |

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

| | | | | |
|-----|----------|---|---|----------------------------|
| off | 3/12 -14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No class. Happy Spring Break! | Read: Rethinking Debate Across the Curriculum; Assess. and Eval. Data, Urban Debate League Programs | |
| 16 | 3/19/12 | Debate as An Inner City Strategy | TBD | |
| 17 | 3/21/12 | Gates and role of Private foundations | Review your journal entries | |
| 18 | 3/26/12 | TPSL discussion | Read Peter Sacks, Tearing Down the Gates p.92-107 | Journey Entry #3 due |
| 19 | 3/28/12 | Social Class Divide & Educational Access | <i>Principal for a Day</i> case study | Midterm Research Paper Due |
| 20 | 4/2/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financing Education | Homework: US Dept of Education (ED) homepage http://www.ed.gov/index.html | |
| 21 | 4/4/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Department 2 presentations | Spring, Chapter 8 The profession of teaching p.200-220. | |
| 22 | 4/9/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Preparation | Homework: Research Chinese and Indian systems of education | Journal # 4 Due |

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

| | | | | |
|----|---------|---|--|---|
| 23 | 4/11/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Two Million Minutes</i> | Read all your TPSL Journals and prepare to discuss your TPSL observations making linkages to in-class topics | |
| 24 | 4/12/11 | TPSL | http://teachforamerica.org/ “Our Mission” link | |
| 25 | 4/16/12 | TFA | TBD | |
| 26 | 4/18/12 | presentations | TBD | Journal #5 Due |
| 27 | 4/23/12 | presentations | | Last Oral Presentations TPSL Ends |
| 28 | 4/25/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Review/Evaluations | | |
| 29 | 5/4/12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled: Final Examination: Wed., May 4, 9-12 p.m.: | | |

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Spring, 2012

How to write TPSL Journal Reflections

Journaling is a process that allows you to think critically about your tutoring experience. Journal reflections require you to examine **what is happening, why it is happening, what you can do about it, and how it affects you/others**. Journal reflections, while they do contain your personal thoughts and observations, are not diaries. You are not merely recording the day's events.

For this class, journal reflections should be *no more than three, double-spaced pages*. The majority of your journals should stem from incidents or topics you encounter in the classroom, but if you cannot develop an original idea, please see the list of suggestions below.

Journal entries to be submitted on Blackboard. ***No late journals will be accepted.***

Your reflections will inevitably contain personal thoughts and will only be read by the instructors. Unless the information contained is deemed to be dangerous to you or others, it will not be shared with anyone else. You may share your thoughts with your peers, but it is best to do this verbally to prevent accidental or intentional plagiarism.

Journal reflections are one of the most important parts of making meaning of your tutoring experience. Your writing is a way to link classroom events to what we are reading and what is happening in the broader field of education. Most importantly, it is **a** way to think about how the experience is affecting *you*.

As mentioned, it is important to move beyond a re-telling of your day. Honesty and a willingness to challenge your ideas are extremely useful for successful journal writing. The following is an excerpt from a reflective journal guide for service-learning, and the ideas are appropriate to writing about your tutoring:

"Several ways in which you can move beyond a mere chronology of events:

Detailed description as if to an outsider. Often you will use your journal to record detailed descriptions of some aspect of your internship environment, whether physical, behavioral, or organizational. When you write them, you will not have a clear idea of what you will make of these details, but you will sense that they might be important later. These descriptions should sound as if you were describing them to someone who was never there...

Tentative explanations. Speculate as to why something that you have observed firsthand is as it is. You might derive your explanation from a lecture you have heard, a book you have read, or your own reservoir of "common sense." Having posited an interpretation, you will want to continue with your detailed observations on the topic to see if you want to stick with your hypothesis or alter it. Journals allow you to change your mind.

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Personal judgments. Use your journal to make judgments about something in your... environment. There may be people's actions that you find unpleasant, ways of doing things that are not as you would do them, work environments in which you would not want to remain. These judgments will help you learn about yourself, your values, and your limits. Journals allow you to speak your mind."

There are some general questions you will want to consider at the heart of every journal reflection. Please do not just answer these questions, but try to weave them into the journal in a way that best supports your observations.

- What are some critical questions I can raise about issues, people, and myself, based on what I observed?
- What did I see, experience, and feel? Are these things similar to what others saw, experienced, and felt as a result of the same situation?
- What excites me? Troubles me? Impresses me? Disturbs me? Inspires me? Surprises me? Challenges me?
- What am I learning about myself through this experience?
- Did any of my actions have an impact? What more or different things could have been done to alter the outcome of a situation?

Suggested Items for Classroom Observations:

- **Physical Space:** Comment on the organization, structure, cleanliness, and set-up of the physical space. What do the walls, bulletin boards, desks, bookshelves, student work, windows, etc. tell you about the teacher, students, and school?
- **Classroom Climate:** Are students engaged in class? How do you know? Does the class have a generally "positive" or "negative" feel? Does everyone want to be there? How does the teacher treat the students, and vice versa? How do the students interact with each other? How is the classroom climate similar or different than what you expected?
- **Curriculum:** What are the students learning? Are they grasping the concepts and participating in class? How do you know? Is the curriculum chosen by the teacher, department, school, or state? Do the teacher and students enjoy the subject matter? Is the subject matter considerate of diversity and multiculturalism?
- **Instructional Strategies:** What type of instruction does the teacher favor? Does the type of instruction vary based on lesson, day, or topic? How do you think students learn best? Are there noticeable differences between how individual students respond to different methods? If you are planning to teach some day, what new strategies are you learning? Are there any you would adopt or reject in your own teaching?
- **Management/ Discipline:** Are there any student disturbances during class time? How does the teacher handle behavior problems or interruptions? Are the students receptive? Are there rules posted in the classroom? Are they followed by students and referred to by the teacher? Is the administration involved in classroom management? Does the school feel safe?

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

- **Relationship with Students:** How are you interacting with students? Do you wish you were doing more or less? Do they know why you are in the classroom? Does your presence excite or bother them? How do they respond when you help them? What are you learning about yourself as a student and a teacher as a result of working with them?
- **Relationship with Teacher:** How do you relate to your cooperating teacher? What is the best piece of advice he/she has given you? What are you learning to do, and what are you learning *not* to do?
- **Change Over Time:** What has changed since you've been observing? Participation? Attendance? Relationships? Academic achievement? Why do you think these things changed: time of day, time of year, new teaching methods, new school policies, etc?

Grading of Journals:

Successful journal entries may earn a maximum of 4 points. To receive the 4 points your written reflection must vividly and clearly describe the observed events or conditions, and must make a thoughtful connection to one or more of the course readings or lectures, or topics we've discussed in class. Your reflection must evidence critical thought about relevant issues and concerns, and, where appropriate, should take into consideration multiple points of view. A journal receiving 1-3 points will contain good observations, be reasonably well written but, in the instructor's judgment, fails to some degree to make connections to course content, evidence critical thought, or convey useful insights based on this experience. In all cases, your writing must be clear, well organized, and grammatically correct. Minimum length 150 words. (Total points = 20)

Midterm Research Project

The midterm research project is designed to allow you to explore a particular aspect of education in America. Students may choose from a list of topics provided by the instructors (see list of topics later in this syllabus), or may suggest another topic related to Education in America that interests them. Topics suggested by students must be approved by the February 15 deadline. A one-paragraph description of the topic and the areas to be covered must be submitted for approval on or prior to 2/15.

Guidelines for Midterm Research Project:

- 3500 – 4000 words, double-spaced, with one inch margins.
- Use APA or MLA style when including quotations. For both styles, remember that punctuation is placed outside quotation marks and parentheses.
- APA Example: According to Karp, No Child Left Behind is a "short-term solution to a much more systemic issue of school organization and bureaucracy" (p. 15).
- Include at *least five* quotations/citations from resource material.

**The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

- This is a formal paper. You should use precise, academic language and avoid slang, contractions, and colloquialisms.
- State your topic and the approach you are taking with your paper in your first paragraph.

Your research should include at least 3 sources.

Outline of research paper due: 2/29; finished research paper due: 4/4

Grading:

The midterm Research Project will be graded using a 45-point scale.

42 – 45 Truly outstanding, insightful, thorough, skillfully written

38 - 41 Strong paper, well written, all guidelines met

34 – 37 Good paper, some typos, some weaknesses evident in content.

31 – 34 Fair paper, most guidelines met, content is lacking in parts, writing errors

0 – 30 Poor paper, flaws evident in content, low quality of writing, guidelines not met

Guidelines for Educational Autobiographies

- **Educational Autobiography (1500 words) Due in Blackboard with hardcopy brought to class 1/23 .**

You will write a short autobiographical paper describing your own education to-date, from age 4 through your present age. Your educational autobiography will be due at the second class session (January 23) and requires no research or outside sources beyond your own experience and perhaps some discussion with parents or family members. In it, you will describe your own national, ethnic, social and educational heritage, and how the elements of this heritage influence your thoughts on education. This autobiographical paper is meant to help you explore the various parts of your identity and experience that shape your opinions and beliefs about education and its role in society. Papers should address:

- introductory account of your national, regional, cultural, familial, and educational history
- the most formative experiences and the most influential individuals of your education
- ways in which your education was unique and ways it was similar to that of your peers

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

-what your education has taught you about yourself and your place in the world

Specific areas to consider might include: **ethnic roots:** country of origin, immigrant ancestors/relatives, racial identification; **family structure:** models of academic achievement and goals of parents and family; **-socioeconomic status:** neighborhood, class status relative to classmates and playmates; **geographical region(s)** of your upbringing and schooling: country, region, and city; **your school experience:** with teachers, peers, quality of school environment; **traditions and customs:** divergence or convergence of family customs with school; **spiritual or religious practices:** religious activity or practices in school; **family values:** work ethic, educational expectations, support mechanisms; **encounters with those culturally different from you:** travel, intercultural encounters; **informal education:** mentoring or afterschool clubs, teams, programs

How to write the Kozol/Gatto paper (Due: 2/13)

- pages, double-spaced, with one inch margins, 12 point font.
- 2500 – 3000 words.
- This is a formal paper. You should use precise, academic language and avoid slang, contractions, and colloquialisms.

This paper should be more than a "book report" where each chapter is summarized. What central problem does the book address? What inspired this particular book? What are the key points raised by the author? (again, do not do a chapter-by-chapter retelling). What themes recur throughout the book?

For this paper you are not required to include outside sources. If you choose to do so, they must be cited properly (using a consistent citation style such as APA or Chicago style).

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Suggested Research Topics for EDS Midterm Research Project

Spring 2012

- Trace the history of public education in Georgia, describing its evolution through significant eras, events and issues, including, but not limited to colonial period, reconstruction, nineteenth century, civil rights era and recent decades.
- Describe the history and development of education of persons with disabilities in America from 1950 to the present, including key political milestones, issues and strategies for improving access and quality.
- Select a person, persons, (Booker T. Washington, WEB Dubois) or event (Civil Rights Movement, NAACP, integration) related to African American education or exemplars in the United States. Determine historical context of person/event; contributions to American education, feature critics/criticism.
- Examine the issue of literacy, including the topics of functional literacy, cultural literacy, and the implications of literacy for America.
- Who was John Dewey and how did his philosophy influence the Progressive Education movement and education today? Who were Dewey's critics, then and now?
- Trace the history of Native American education in the United States, and conclude with current challenges of Native American education.
- What was Horace Mann's contribution to public education in the US?
- What are the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)? What problems did it address? Inherent controversies?
- Study the high rates of dropout with US secondary schools. Why is it occurring? What happens to dropouts?
- School violence is a growing problem in American education. What are its causes? What are hopeful solutions?

- Examine the proposal to shift public schools in the US to a year round model. Are there relevant international models? Pro's and Con's of extending school year?
- What is the Montessori method of education? How did it begin? Identify critics of this method and evidence of success/failure.
- Presently in the US, primary and secondary education is compulsory vary state by state. Should US education be required? What is the most effective compulsory education age (16? 17? 18?)? Include research and supporting statistics.
- Classroom discipline is a major issue and subject of debate among American educators? Is there a case to be made for the return to corporal punishment? What are effective strategies for managing classroom and schoolyard discipline?
- What rights do parents have in the US to getting their differently-abled or disabled child needed special services (autistic, blind, reading disability, cerebral palsy, etc)?
- How is globalization affecting American education at the primary and secondary level?
- Trace the controversy regarding teaching evolution in public classrooms in the US. What is the state of this argument at present?
- What is the function of teacher's unions in the US? What are the advantages and disadvantages to unionization for schoolteachers?
- What is the state of values education, character education, and citizenship education in American public education?
- How are immigrants to the US treated in public primary and secondary education? What are special challenges facing this population? Include evidence of successful models.
- Over-crowding of school is a challenge in many public school systems. What are effects of over-crowding on the effectiveness of the educational process? What are causes? Solutions?
- Is teacher pay positively related to effective teaching? Describe both sides of this debate, take a position, and support it with evidence.
- What are KIPP schools, how did they originate, and are they succeeding? Include criticism and evidence to support your claims.
- US educators are deeply concerned about the “achievement gap” - disparity in academic performance between groups of students. Research the achievement gaps most evident in US public education today. Provide causes and solutions.

- Michelle Rhee and Randi Weingarten have conflicting views of ways to improve American education. Trace the story of these two leaders in US education, the nature of their disagreement, and select (and defend) the point of view you determine is more persuasive.
- Diane Ravitch, a leader in the accountability movement, has changed her position in recent years and has emerged as a major critic. What influenced Ravitch to shift her position? Who are Ravitch's critics today?

You may identify your own research topic with instructors' prior approval.

** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*