Meeting Time: Varies (see reading/assignment schedule)
Location: Varies (see reading/assignment schedule)
Office Hours: By appointment

Required Readings

Additional readings listed in the syllabus are posted under the resources section of our Ctools website.

Course Description
Critically examines selected contemporary reform efforts in education from the perspective of one or more of the foundation disciplines. Aims to develop in the career educator a broader and deeper understanding of the tensions between ideas and practice in dynamic social environments.

Course Overview
Arguably teachers are the people best positioned to influence “educational reform” as they have under their direct control the means and opportunities to work with students. Yet, teachers must contend with several (often competing) forces seeking to reform schools and schooling. The pervasive and ubiquitous sense that schools and student outcomes must change is based in large part on legacies of ideas about how and why change should happen. Despite what has been referred to as “policy churn” (Cuban), there has been a persistent gap between policy and practice. This course is designed to equip teachers to participate in the debates about reforms and position them to influence that gap. We examine some of the ideologies and levers used in past and current reform efforts with the intent of raising critical awareness of the dynamic environments in which teachers work.

Course Goals
This course aims to strengthen your ability to:
- Describe key frameworks, concepts, and basic assumptions in educational reform efforts;
- Develop understanding of the perspectives represented in reform debates and the various levers relied upon in reform agendas;
- Identify and explain tensions and implications of particular levers of reforms; and
- Write knowledgeably about education reforms from a broader perspective.

Course Scope
This course is divided into two sections. In the first section, we examine the purpose of schooling. We take a historical approach to building your understanding some of the underlying ideas that influence current reform movements.

In the second section, we shift away from philosophical considerations to study various levers used in reform movements. This section provides you with examples of ways policy makers and
researchers have approached efforts to change schools in America. We focus on building familiarity with key levers including policy, school systems, schools as organizations, teacher preparation and evaluation, matters related to instruction, and data-based interventions. In this section, the purpose is not to decide which is the best lever; rather, the purpose is to critically consider the aims and implications of the approaches. What remains stable and what actually changes in the pursuits of educational reform?

**Course Assignments**

1. *Participation in class discussions (15% of final grade).* Seminar discussions are designed to help you draw out major issues across assigned readings, and situate particular readings in with respect to debates and key issues in education reforms. To allow for some customization of reading assignments, I will sometimes ask students to read, discuss in small groups during class, and report out to the whole group on different articles. This exercise is meant to further help students develop confidence in identifying, analyzing, and speaking about the reforms and considerations for practice. Attendance is expected in all class sessions. Grading will reflect the degree to which you come to class prepared to critically discuss assigned readings and thoughtfulness demonstrated in statements made and questions asked.

2. *Connections (2 total, each worth 12.5% of final grade).* The purpose of this assignment is meant to help develop your communication skills and will be graded based on relevancy, clarity, and style. You will identify connections that you see between topics we address and current movements in the press or media (Federal, State or local levels). Students will prepare materials that inform colleagues of key issues, provide analysis and incite debate about the topic of choice. Estimate approximately 5-15 minutes for conversation. 1 Connection can be a group (no more than 4 persons) and 1 Connection is an individual effort. Students will submit a 300-500 reflection on their connection.

3. *Performance-based Demonstrations (2 total, each worth 30% of final grade).* Demonstrations are intended to assess your ability to apply concepts and core themes from the course in the context of work activities and situations encountered by some exceptional teachers. Please note that you will also be responsible for providing constructive and collegial feedback to your peers.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date (12pm on CTools unless otherwise noted)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prepared statement to School Board (individual)</td>
<td>January 17th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Testimony about Teacher Evaluation in Michigan (individual)</td>
<td>January 24th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development Session (group)</td>
<td>Feb 3rd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connections (individual/group)</td>
<td>Both complete by January 31st</td>
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Course Policies

Participation and attendance. Discussions during seminar sessions are a critical element of this course and attendance is expected in all sessions. Unexcused absences will affect your participation grade.

Submitting assignments. Please upload text-based versions and reflection components of assignments to the Assignments section of the CTools course website by 12pm on the due date. Late assignments are not accepted. Extenuating circumstances can be accommodated with advance notice.

Grading. Grading for this course uses the Rackham Graduate School’s grading system:

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<th>Letter grade</th>
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Representing others’ research. As part of engaging with the readings and the core themes of this course, I expect you to explicitly draw on ongoing conversations in academic and public discourse in our discussions and in your writing. When you draw on ideas in others’ research in your written assignments, please be sure to attribute that work correctly. For guidance about how to do this, please see the American Psychological Association’s Publication’s Manual. For more information about the UM’s academic integrity guidelines, see: http://spg.umich.edu/policy/303.03

Use of electronic devices. Appropriate use of electronic devices is also a part of your professional participation in our class. Using laptops or cell phones as tools for your learning is acceptable, as long as it is not distracting to your colleagues or your instructor. Examples of acceptable use of electronic devices include making records of your practice and consulting resources for work in class. Non-instructional texting, phone calls, social networking, shopping, and other non-instructional use of these devices are not acceptable in this class at any time, and will result in a reduction in your participation grade. If you are concerned about your ability to meet this professional expectation, please discuss your concern with me. Please let me know if there is an emergency that affects your need for using a phone during class time.

Accommodations. If you have a documented disability or other learning needs and you would like accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible to make appropriate arrangements. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.
Course Topics and Readings

Readings are listed in suggested reading order

Session 1 Thursday, 12/5 3:00-6:00pm/Rm 2229
Introductions and forming a professional community
Required reading:
- No required readings

Section 1: Purpose of Schooling

Session 2 Tuesday, 12/10 1:00-4:00pm/Rm 2218
Democratic ideals
Required reading:

Guiding questions:
(1) What ideas and conflicts informed the formation of public education?
(2) What are the disputes about relations between school and society?
(3) What problems did the authors (i.e., Dewey & Mann) propose that schools should solve? How did each think schools would solve those problems?

Session 3 Thursday, 12/12 1:00-4:00pm/Rm 2229
Aiming for equality
Required reading:

Guiding questions:
(1) Horace Mann, known to be one of the lead proponents of mandatory public education in America (referred to as the Common School) wrote in his 12th Annual Report, “Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (pg. 87). How well are we doing living up to this ideal?
(2) Drawing on the critiques presented by the authors, which of the goals Labaree outlined seems to be winning and which seems to suffer? What does this suggest for reform efforts?
Section 2: Levers of reform

CLASS CANCELLED MON 1/6 (Polar Vortex)

Session 4 Wednesday, 1/8 9:00am-12:00pm/Rm 2327 (Brownlee)
Policy and infrastructure
Required reading:

Recommended reading:

Guiding questions:
1. What does it mean to define a problem and use policy as a solution? What are some of the examples outlined by Cohen & Moffitt and Mehta? What role does politics play in shaping the definition of problems?
2. What are some of the ideas that have influenced education reform in the past? According to Cohen & Moffitt and Mehta, what lessons from past efforts should teachers pay attention to when considering current reform efforts?

Session 5 Wednesday, 1/15 1:00-4:00pm/Rm 2224
Standards-Based Reforms
Required reading:
  • Achievement Network: Focusing on How: Guidance for School and District Leaders on Supporting Teachers Through the Transition to Common Core.

Guiding Questions:
1. What can we learn about standards-based reforms from the three cases outlined by Mehta (Maryland, Michigan, and Utah)? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches? Are there any useful lessons to be applied to the implementation of Common Core?
2. To what extent does Common Core offer an answer to Fuhrman’s critiques and call for “coherent” policy development? To what extent is it a possible answer to her call for systemic reform (without political reform)?

Session 6 Friday, 1/17 9:00a-12:00pm/Rm 2218
School Systems
Required reading [66 total pgs]:


Guiding questions:
1. What does it mean to suggest that a “system” might overcome the problems that prevent high-quality education for all students? What is a “systems view” of reform?
2. What are the promises of systemic reform? What stands in the way?
3. How might system level reform affect the work of teaching? Would these be positive or negative influences?

Recommended:
- Ann Arbor Public School System Board Meeting
  7-11pm Regular Meeting District Library, 4th Floor, 343 S. Fifth Ave., Ann Arbor
- Summary of McKinsey & Co report:
  http://www.mckinsey.com/Client_Service/Social_Sector/Latest_thinking/Worlds_most_improved_schools.aspx

Prepared statement (IB School in Ann Arbor or Michigan Adopt Common Core) due 9:00a [FRIDAY 1/17]

Session 7 Wednesday, 1/22 1:00-4:00pm/Rm 2224
School as organization
Required reading [[105 pgs total]]:
- CREDO 2013 National Charter School Study Executive Summary Report pg. 2-28
- Mehta, Ch. 8 & 9, pg. 190-268

Guiding questions:
1. What are the strengths of using charter schools as a strategy for reforming education in the US? What are possible downfalls?
2. In what ways do charters offer support for Mehta’s calls to “invert the pyramid”? In what ways do they provide evidence against his argument?
3. Drawing on evidence and personal anecdote, is it better to create an alternative organization (charter school) than to reform an existing traditional school?

Recommended Reading
- Press Release of your choice regarding CREDO report release:
  -WSJ: http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323998604578565971195631736
Session 8 Friday, 1/24 9:00a-12:00p/Rm 2218
Teacher preparation
Required reading [[53 pgs total]]:
- National Council Teacher Quality (NCTQ) Teacher Prep Review: A Review of the Nation’s Teacher Preparation Programs. pg 1-35

Guiding questions:
1. When it comes to building a stronger teaching profession in the United States, what role should teacher preparation play? What is needed to realize this vision?

Recommended:

Testimony due 9a [FRIDAY 1/24]

Session 9 Monday, 1/27 9:00a-12:00p/Rm 2346
Teacher evaluations
Required reading [[30 pgs total]]:
- Dean Ball Testimony Michigan State Joint Education Committee Mtg. (Sept 2013) Re: Final Recommendations from Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE), pg. 1-7
- Watch Dean Ball’s presentation on MCEE’s recommendation (4:54 min): http://youtu.be/mG81bbZavAk

Guiding questions:
1. Mehta argued that teaching was a “semi-profession.” Is the current movement to reform education through “stronger” teacher evaluations likely to lead to a stronger profession? Explain why or why not.

Recommended:

• For more on Dean Ball’s involvement and Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness check out:
  http://www.soe.umich.edu/news_events/news/article/the_michigan_council_for_educator_effectiveness/


*Session 10 Tuesday, 1/28 9a-12p Rm. 1228*

Required reading [[26 total pgs]]:
  • Mehta, Ch. 10 pg. 269-294

Guiding questions:
1. If Mehta is right and change is “afoot,” what are things that you may want to pay attention to in the next 5 years?
2. In concluding this text, would you recommend other teachers read it? Why or why not? What insights does it offer individual teachers about relations between policy and practice and hopes for reform?

*Session 11 Wednesday, 1/29 1:00-4:00p/Rm 2224*

Data-based interventions [31 total pgs]

Required reading:

Guiding questions:
1. What is a data regime according to Henig?
2. If Henig and Mehta were having a conversation, what points would they likely agree on? What points might they disagree about?
3. What suggestions can we make for data use (and possibly professional development about data use) that will help us better hit the mark in the context described by Henig?

*Session 12 Monday, 2/3 Rm 2334*

Presentations: Professional development

*Presentations in-class*