EDUC 309: Race, Class and Educational Policy  
Dr. Rachel Leventhal-Weiner  
Tuesday/Thursday, 1:30-2:45pm, Seabury S205

Office hours: T/Th 11am-12pm, McCook 321  
Writing group: Mondays 2-4, Gallows Hill Lounge  
Email: rachel.leventhalweiner@trincoll.edu  
Twitter: @rglweiner

Course Summary
How do competing theories explain educational inequality? How do different policies attempt to address it?  
In this class, we will review race/ethnic and social class inequality in American public schooling and connect stratification to existing education reform efforts. We will consider the origins of inequality along race/ethnic and social class lines. Students will work collaboratively on research and writing around policy solutions.

Course objectives
● Students will understand the origins of race and class based stratification in public schools  
● Students will learn/understand existing public policy solutions for educational inequality  
● Students will connect existing inequality to existing policy solutions in writing and in oral presentations  
● Students will examine effectiveness of existing policy solutions  
● Students will synthesize knowledge on inequality and policy by proposing new policy solutions  
● Students will debate effectiveness of policy solutions with classmates

Course requirements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation/attendance</th>
<th>20 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly questions</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White paper assignment</td>
<td>70 points allocated as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source search (15 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Teach-In</td>
<td>(15 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions Teach-In</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shortcut to class deadlines

Required readings
Copies of the books are available at the campus bookstore.


Other readings in hard copy or e-copy during the semester—see “MOODLE” on the syllabus.

How to Succeed in this course:

- Be present for class
- Be prepared for class
- Contribute thoughtfully to the class discussion
- Respect the input of your peers
- Contribute meaningfully to group work

Course expectations

- This syllabus will undergo changes over the course of the semester. Please always refer to the version posted on Moodle.
- I typically lead full class discussions even on days I lecture. As such, I do not post notes or Power Point slides online unless I use them in class. Do not email me to ask if you missed “anything important.” Students are responsible for material covered in missed class meetings.
- Before every class where reading is assigned, students must submit one question related to the reading to the following document. (See Weekly Questions guidelines under Course Requirements)
- Late assignments will be penalized 10% each day they are late with exceptions granted only for documented excuses or family emergencies.
- Grades are yours to earn, not mine to give. Decide now what grade you want to receive, and earn it. In this course, outstanding work (90-100%) earns an A, good work (80-89%) earns a B, adequate work (70-79%) earns a C, and unsatisfactory work (69% or below) earns D/F. Plusses and minuses will be assigned to indicate above or below average work in each grade category.

Regarding academic honesty: You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others and obligated to document every occasion when you use another’s ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, and share writing assignment drafts with peers for input and feedback. However, when you use another’s ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on any assignment, large or small, will result in failure for the entire course and referral to the Dean of Students.

Regarding Students With Disabilities: Students who think that they may need accommodations because of a disability are encouraged to meet with me privately by January 31, 2014. Students should also contact the Center for Students with Disabilities by this date to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For more information, please go to http://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/DisabilityServices/Pages/default.aspx

If you have any questions or believe assignments are ambiguous, please ask immediately. Post hoc interpretations of the syllabus or university policy will not be accepted as rationale for unfair or unacceptable grading.

Course Schedule
Week 1

January 21: FIRST DAY
- Review syllabus
- Assign letter of introduction (due noon on 1/24)
- Why race, class and educational policy? Why not other attributes? What are we including and what are we overlooking thinking specifically about race/ethnicity and social class?

January 23:
We start with an answer of sorts to the questions we asked on the first day of class. How have policies failed our kids?

Before class read:
Berliner, David C. 2013 “Effect of Inequality and Poverty vs. Teachers and Schooling on America’s Youth.” Teachers College Record. 115:12. MOODLE

In class:
- ESEA Waiver status from Ed Week
- Use data from the article to ask students questions.

Week 2

January 28:
Before class listen to: This American Life Episode #512: House Rules MOODLE
http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/512/house-rules
[Link to Propublica report: http://www.propublica.org/series/living-apart]

Submit before class: After listening to the podcast and drawing on your own knowledge, what piece of information came as a surprise to you and why?

In class:
- Using TAL podcast as a springboard--how would you explain existing inequality to a peer? What are some of the “facts” laid out about housing and education that would impact experiences of poor kids and kids of color? Looking at the assumptions you reflected on, how might these assumptions about inequality and education perhaps affect your views (or other lay people’s views) on inequality?
- In class writing: What assumptions have you held about inequality and education policy? (no stakes writing in class--to recognize some personal bias)
- Review some Writing/Research fundamentals
  - Audience
  - Genre

January 30: Understanding inequality broadly
Before class read:
Darling-Hammond, Chapter 2: Opportunity Gaps

In class:
- Where did we get the idea of schooling for all?
• How is the present system failing certain kids?

******************************************************************************

Week 3
Discussing explanations for race and class inequality in public schools. These review articles give a sense of the existing inequality and the explanations for inequality—too often we simply provide the statistics on inequality without thinking about WHY there might be differences.

February 4: Race and Class inequality in education
What are the main issues associated with stratification along either race/ethnic or class lines?

Before class read:
MOODLE

February 6: Race and class inequality in education
What do scholars suggest to improve opportunities for students in race/ethnic minority groups or among low SES groups?

Before class attend and read:
Mira Debs, PhD candidate in Sociology at Yale University. Parent Choice and Involvement on the Ground: A Qualitative Study of Families at Two Hartford Magnet Schools. Rittenberg Lounge in Mather. 12:15-1:15pm


******************************************************************************

Week 4
February 11: What is the policy climate like in the last ten years?

Before class read:
Ravitch, Chapters 1-4.

In class:
• How can policy equalize opportunity? Has it succeeded?
• Lecture/discussion of NCLB, Race To the Top, Common Core
• Peer review in class: Bring summary of article and thought essay for peers to read/comment.
• Visit from Rachael Barlow about data sources

Revisions to both pieces (with process note) due by February 14th.

February 13:

Before class read:
Ravitch, Chapters 5-9

In class:
- Distribute data assignment in class: Students grouped for chapters 5-9
- Talking data and educational policy
- How do education reformers use data in their work? How is it data distorted?
- How do we measure success in schools? What makes a "good" measure of success?
  - Reliability
  - Validity

********************************************************************************

Week 5

February 18: Talking data and educational policy

In class:
- Discuss evaluation of teach-in presentation—show rubric for presentations
- Data Teach-In Group meeting time in class:
  - Students will assemble in groups this week to discuss data used to substantiate claims in the wider education debate. Each group will be assigned a chapter of Ravitch’s Reign of Error and must prepare to teach “the facts” to their peers.

February 20: Data Teach-In on Reign of Error (Chapters 5-9)

In class:
- Teach in
- Have students evaluate their peers

********************************************************************************

Week 6

February 25: Policy and Poverty

Before class read:
Ravitch, Chapter 10

In class:
- Talking poverty in educational policy
  - How are poverty measures constructed?
  - How do we measure poverty in schools?
  - How does poverty affect low-SES or racial/ethnic minorities in schools?
  - Are we capturing the true impact of poverty?
  - Census graphic
  - Al Jazeera graphic
  - New York Times: Mapping Poverty
  - http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2014/01/05/poverty-map/?ref=us
- Thought essay in class: Ravitch makes it clear in her book that reformers think poverty is not an excuse. Knowing what you now know about the way we define poverty, how would you answer
education reformers who refuse to consider poverty’s impact on early childhood development and educational experiences? Use the Census graphic or Al Jazeera data for support in your essay.

February 27 TRINITY DAYS: NO CLASS

******************************************************************************

Week 7

March 4: Teachers and Education policy

Before class read:
Ravitch, Chapters 11-14.
Darling-Hammond, Chapter 7: Doing What Matters Most: Developing Competent Teachers
Hartford Courant Op-Ed:

In class:
- Why doesn't focusing on teachers work to improve race/class inequality?
- Media on teachers? American Teacher maybe?

March 6: Some solutions in practice

Before class read:
Ravitch, Chapters 15-20

In class:
- Other issues with enacting “good” reform: have students bring in a news article related to the other failed policy solutions below.
- Discuss: vouchers, charter schools, E-learning, school closure/turnaround

******************************************************************************

Week 8

March 11: From problem to solution

Before class read:
Ravitch, Chapter 21.

In class:
- What are the challenges? How do they enable constrain opportunities for underprivileged kids?
- Discuss Common Core implementation: potential in class guest

March 13: Discuss final assignment (split into groups)

Before class:
Review Ravitch, Chapters 21-32.
In class:
- What are the newest policies targeting race, class inequality to improve educational opportunity?
  - Common Core debate: pro and con stance
  - Geoffrey Canada solutions: Harlem Children's Zone
  - Promise Neighborhoods
  - Comer development project
- Distribute Solutions assignment: Allow students to choose groups and allow for group meeting time. Students should discuss how to identify people to interview and start thinking about their interview guide.

Over spring break: students to identify their source for their solution and to identify and invite their interviewee (cc me on their invitation or alert me when they have secured it).

**************************************************************************

Week 9
March 18 SPRING BREAK NO CLASS
March 20 SPRING BREAK NO CLASS

**************************************************************************

Week 10

March 25: Solutions, continued

Before class read:
Darling-Hammond, Chapters 5 and 6

In class:
- How did these cases establish goals? How did they measure success?
- Discuss interviewing/interview guide: Solutions proposal (each group member interview someone related to their solution—whole group will use four interviews)
- Group to compose interview guide together and approved by RGLW

March 27:
Integrating Hartford Schools: http://www.ctmirror.org/story/2014/01/07/numbers-integrating-schools-ct

In class:
- Group work about solutions
- Peer review of interview guide

**************************************************************************

Week 11

April 1:

Before class read:
Darling-Hammond, Chapter 8: Organizing for Success from Inequality to Quality in The Flat World

In class:
- Discuss: How do Ravitch and Darling-Hammond approach the issue of policy solutions? Are they focused on the same issues or different issues?

April 3:

In class:
- Solutions teach in

********************************************************************************

Week 12 (advising week)

April 8: Policy implementation
How does education policy happen at the local level? How does implementation work?

Before class read:
TBD

In class:
- Visit from Paul Holzer, CEO of Achieve Hartford

April 10: Policy implementation

In class:
- Public hearing TBD

********************************************************************************

Week 13 (pre-registration)

April 15: Qualitative coding (reading to be assigned)

In class:
- Interview transcripts due to Professor Leventhal-Weiner
- Rachael Barlow to discuss qualitative coding of interview transcripts

April 17: Conference/work session at Gallows Hill

In class:
- Students will gather at Gallows Hill to work with their groups and also conference as groups with Professor Leventhal-Weiner.

********************************************************************************

Week 14

April 22:
Before class read:
Darling-Hammond, Chapter 9

April 24:

In class:
   ● Presentations from working groups on policy solutions

******************************************************************************

Week 15

April 29:

In class:
   ● Presentations from working groups on policy solutions

May 1: Last day of classes
   Wrap up: Next steps for policy oriented work

******************************************************************************