

**Union Graduate College
School of Education**

Seminar in School Reform

Spring Term EDS 550C

Thursdays 4:30 – 7:50

UGC Room 306

Instructor: Catherine Snyder

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Office Hours: On Request

Course Description

The Seminar in School Reform is designed to acquaint students with historical and current school reform issues. In order to gain an understanding of this topic, students will research and teach each other specific topics related to school reform. Students will design and write a realistic formal school reform proposal to meet the needs of students in the coming decade.

Course Objectives

The students will be able to

1. **evaluate** the school reform movement from a historical perspective
2. **analyze** current school reform topics from the perspective of an entering teacher
3. **work cooperatively** to teach their classmates about an aspect of school reform
4. **design** a school reform proposal

Pre-requisite courses: EDS 540, EDS 550A, EDS 550B, EDS 551, EDS 552

Concurrent Course: EDS 553

Readings

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books.

Articles to be assigned.

Class Schedule

Date	Class Topic	Homework	Presenter(s)
Week 1 Thursday, April 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to class • Presentation topics • <i>Waiting for Superman</i> 		
Week 2 Thursday, April 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and Activity: Inequalities in Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darling-Hammond, Ch. 1-3 • Reader Response (1) on Darling-Hammond including 3-5 questions for class discussion • Presentation Bibliography 	
Thursday, April 17	No Class		
Week 3 Thursday, April 24	Topics 1 & 2 1. Value Added 2. NYS/APPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles; Ravitch 171-73, 179-87; Darling-Hammond 218-19 • Presentation Bibliography • Presentation Outline* • Reader Response Paper (2) 	
Week 4 Thursday, May 1	Topics 3 & 4 3. NYC 4. RTTT/Obama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles; Ravitch Chs. 5 & 6 • Presentation Outline* • Reader Response Paper (3) 	
Week 5 Thursday, May 8	Topics 5 & 6 5. Common Core Standards 6. Technology/Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles; Ravitch, Ch. 2 • Presentation Outline* • Reader Response Paper (4) 	
Week 6 Thursday, May 15	Topics 7 & 8 7. Ed Foundations/TVHS 8. Business of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles; Ravitch Ch. 10 • Presentation Outline* • Reader Response Paper (5) 	
Week 7 Thursday, May 22	Topics 9 & 10 9. Coalition Ess Schools 10. Independent Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles • Reader Response Paper (6) 	
Week 8 Thursday, May 29	Topics 11 & 12 11. Charters 12. Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles; Ravitch Ch. 7, 174-177 • Presentation Outline* • Reader Response Paper (7) 	
Week 9 Thursday, June 5	Topics 13 & 14 13. International Europe 14. International Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Advanced Articles; Darling-Hammond Ch. 6 • Reader Response Paper (8) 	
Week 10 Friday, June 6	Course Wrap-up, Room 002 <i>Two Million Minutes</i> Guest Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Chs. 9 & 11 (recommended, not required) <p><u>Reform Paper</u> <u>Due Monday June 9</u> <u>8:00 am</u></p>	

*Presentation Outline – Due two weeks prior to your presentation date.

Seminar Expectations:

This is a graduate level seminar; as such the following expectations are in place:

1. This course is designed to be an educative tool as well as a professional learning community. It is the firm belief of the instructor that successful completion of the course goals is not possible without full attendance. Failure to attend a class places a student in jeopardy of failing.
2. Each student is expected to be in class on time. Being late more than once or twice places a student in jeopardy of failing the class.
3. Active participation in all course work and assignments is expected and required.
4. All class assignments must be completed on time.
5. A minimum grade of **B** is required in EDS 550C.
6. The instructor expects personal involvement with the questions and materials used in this course and an active commitment to professional growth and development.

Course Grading

Class Participation	20%
Reader Responses	25%
Presentation of an issue	30%
Reform Proposal	25%

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Class Participation (20%):

Students who receive an **A** for class participation make frequent positive contributions to the class by making thoughtful comments, raising important questions, or citing clarifying examples. They clearly have read the assigned material.

Students who receive a **B** for class participation make some positive contributions to the class and usually indicate by their responses that they have read the assigned materials.

Students who receive a **C** for class participation may be those who never or rarely speak in class discussions. They may also be those who do speak and dominate the discussion without listening to other positions or they display behaviors other than civil discourse designed to explore all views on a topic. It is often clear that a student has misread or misunderstood the assigned readings.

Reader Responses (25%):

Reader responses will be collected eight times during the trimester. Each student will hand in a total of **seven** responses. Students are not required to write a response on the day of their presentation. Each response should contain three parts:

1. define the issue (or an issue) presented in the readings
2. thoughtfully and honestly describe the writer's personal impressions and experiences with the issue
3. discuss the practical applications and limitations for classroom teaching.

Responses will be judged based on their coherence, insight and clarity of explanation. Length is not a concern; remember that a practicing teacher is usually very busy and must communicate efficiently. All reader responses must be word processed. 2 – 3 pages are sufficient.

Presentation on an Educational Issue (30%):

Students will work individually or in pairs to develop a 60 - 70 minute learning experience for their classmates that clarify the history, points of view and current state of a selected issue. Each individual/team will prepare in stages, submitting:

1. Bibliography
2. Presentation Outline
3. Advanced Articles
4. Lesson Plan

in advance of the presentation. Individuals or teams will also meet with the instructor in person or confer via email a week in advance to review the presentation. Articles for classmates to read must be made available electronically by the Friday before the presentation. **A detailed lesson plan of their presentation will be given to the instructor for grading purposes on the evening of the presentation.**

Reform Proposal (25%):

Each student will develop a plan recommending school reforms in the coming decade. The plan will include:

1. Six or more major areas of concern, such as teacher preparation, instructional technologies, and school funding.
2. Practical recommendations and realistic constraints. (For example, if funding is increased in one area, it must be reduced in another area.)
3. Four (or more) models of reform should be incorporated or referenced in the paper.
4. Because this is a reflective piece, a bibliography is not necessary. Of course, if you directly pull information from a source, please cite it. Length: no more than 6 pages. (Because of the amount of time given to grade final papers, I will stop reading after 6 pages!)

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