

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Departments of Educational Policy Studies and History
Fall 2008

EPS 906/History 906
Proseminar on the History of Education
Topic: Cities, Suburbs, and Schools
1-3 credits

Tuesdays: 2:25-5:25
Education 242

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Course Description

This is an advanced graduate seminar on the history of cities, suburbs, and public schools in the twentieth century. Since the birth of mass public schooling in the nineteenth century, Americans have repeatedly turned to public education to address a host of social, economic, and political problems. Schools have often been expected to address public concerns ranging from poverty, immigration, and race and ethnicity, to work habits, moral training, citizenship, and social justice.

As historian Richard Hofstadter once wrote, America was born in the countryside but over time migrated to the city—and then, increasingly, to the suburbs. In every era since the antebellum period, cities have often been at the forefront of educational reform and innovation. Age-graded classrooms, high schools, competitive written tests, and the hiring of women as elementary school teachers were all once regarded as “reforms” and all were born in the nineteenth-century city. And reforms as far ranging as vocational education and special education, in the early twentieth century, or, more recently, voucher experiments, have been the special concern of urban school districts.

This course introduces students to some of the best historical literature on the

history of urban and suburban schooling. That said, the history of suburban schools remains less well documented, though that gap in scholarship hopefully will close in the near future. An explosion of new scholarship, some of which we'll read this semester, is already challenging the hegemony of urban studies, though metropolitan histories of schooling remain rare.

Required Books and Articles

The success of the course will depend upon our mastery of a number of common readings. The following paperbacks should be available at the UW Bookstore and perhaps at other area bookstores; some may also be available more inexpensively at local used bookstores or via the Internet; and, in some cases, the library has multiple copies of some of these works. A copy should also be on reserve at Helen C. White.

- 1) David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*
- 2) Stephen Lassonde, *Learning to Forget: School and Family in New Haven's Working Class, 1870-1940*
- 3) Ronald D. Cohen, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1960*
- 4) Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960*
- 5) Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*
- 6) Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban System: Detroit, 1907-1981*
- 7) Jerald Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean-Hill Brownsville Crisis*
- 8) Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*
- 9) Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt*
- 10) Jeffrey Henig et al., *The Color of School Reform: Race, Politics, and the Challenge of Urban Education*
- 11) Dorothy Shapps, *School Reform, Corporate Style: Chicago, 1880-2000*

In addition to these books, assigned articles are available either through JSTOR or through electronic reserve, via the Helen C. White library. See below.

Course Outline and Assignments:

- Week #1
September 2 Introduction to the Course
- Week #2
September 9 Carl F. Kaestle, "Urban Education and the Expansion of Charity Schooling," 30-61, in *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (electronic reserve); and Tyack, *The One Best System*
- Week #3
September 16 Lassonde, *Learning to Forget*
- Week #4
September 23 Cohen, *Children of the Mill*
- Week #5
September 30 Zilversmith, *Changing Schools*
Also read James L. Wunsch, "The Suburban Cliche," *Journal of Social History* 28 (Spring 1995): 643-658 (JSTOR); and Andrew Wiese, "The Other Suburbanites: African American Suburbanization in the North Before 1950," *Journal of American History* 85 (March 1999): 1495-1524 (JSTOR).
- Week # 6
October 7 Nicolaidis, *My Blue Heaven*
Also read Jack Dougherty, "Bridging the Gap Between Urban, Suburban, and Metropolitan History," in William J. Reese and John L. Rury, eds., *Rethinking the History of American Education* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 245-59 (electronic reserve).
- ***One page prospectus for research paper due; see below***
- Week #7
October 14 Mirel, *Rise and Fall of an Urban System*
- Week #8
October 21 Podair, *Strike that Changed New York*
- Week #9
October 28 Kruse, *White Flight*
Also read Becky Nicolaidis, "How Hell Moved From The City to the Suburbs," in Kevin Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The New Suburban History* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 80-98 (electronic

reserve).

Week #10
November 4

Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*

Week #11
November 11

Henig et al., *Color of School Reform*

Week #12
November 18

Shippo, *School Reform, Corporate Style*

Week #13
November 25

Research Papers

Week #14
December 2

Research Papers

Week #15
December 9

Research Papers

** Paper due on December 12; see instructions below**

Student Responsibilities and Course Requirements

The formal course requirements include weekly preparation of assigned readings, class attendance and participation, and the completion of one research paper. As a prelude to writing your paper, you will be asked to present a 5-7 minute presentation to our class near the end of the semester.

There are no examinations. Your final grade will be based as follows: 70% for the quality of your class participation during the semester, and 30% for the research paper.

Please come to see me early in the semester to discuss ideas for your research paper. You can also initiate a conversation about an idea for a project via email, before stopping by to discuss it further. After we discuss your topic, you must then submit a one page, double-spaced, typed prospectus for approval. The prospectus is due no later than October 7 (at class). The prospectus, which will not be graded, should include your name, title of the paper, a one-paragraph description of your proposed study, and a tentative bibliography.

Instructions for Paper

A research paper should address a major question about the history of urban or suburban schools. Informed by the secondary literature, it should be based solidly on primary sources, documents and materials generated during the time period you are studying. The list of possible topics is endless. You can examine the social thought or philosophy of a particular educator, educational movement, or school practice, policy, or reform.

The time period covered in your paper should be restricted to the twentieth century. While the period from the 1980s to the present constitutes 'history,' compared to earlier periods relatively few bona fide histories of this era have been written. If you would like to study a subject post-1980, I'll be happy to work with you to frame your paper with the historical context in mind. But relatively little has been written by historians on that period.

- The paper should be 18-20 double-spaced pages of text, exclusive of end notes and bibliography.
- Every paper should have endnotes and a bibliography. Scholars use various style guides; historians tend to use the University of Chicago's A Manual of Style. A shortened version of the Chicago Manual appears at the back of many issues of the History of Education Quarterly. If you use a different style guide, just be consistent.
- The paper is due by noon on Friday, December 12. Please place a hard copy either in my EPS or History department mailbox, whichever is more convenient.

Except for illness or other reasons recognized by the UW, extensions will not be granted either for the prospectus or the written assignments. In fairness to everyone, late essays will lose one grade for every day late.

Each paper will be evaluated on its scholarly strengths: the clarity of the thesis, elegance of the prose, depth of analysis, and use of sources.

Due Dates

October 7 Prospectus for written assignment
December 12 Hard copy due by *Noon*, either in *EPS or History department mailbox*. No email attachments please.