

HIST 1165 and EDUC 5453  
History of American Education  
Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30-5:00 pm  
Jonathan Zimmerman

Office Location: 3700 Walnut Street, Room 429

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This course will examine the growth and development of American schools, from the colonial era into the present. By 1850, the United States sent a greater fraction of its children to school than any other nation on earth. Why? What did young people learn there? And, most of all, how did these institutions both reflect and shape our evolving conceptions of “America” itself?

In an irreducibly diverse society, the answers were never simple. Americans have always defined their nation in a myriad of contrasting and often contradictory ways. So they have also clashed vehemently over their schools, which remain our central public vehicle for deliberating and disseminating the values that we wish to transmit to our young. Our course will pay close attention to these education-related debates, especially in the realms of race, class, and religion. When immigrants came here from other shores, would they have to relinquish their old cultures and languages? When African-Americans won their freedom from bondage, what status would they assume? And as different religious denominations fanned out across the country, how would they balance the uncompromising demands of faith with the pluralistic imperatives of democracy? All of these questions came into relief at school, where the answers changed dramatically over time. Early American teachers blithely assumed that newcomers would abandon their old-world habits and tongues; today, “multicultural education” seeks to preserve or even to celebrate these distinctive patterns. Post-emancipation white philanthropists designed vocational curricula for freed African-Americans, imagining blacks as loyal serfs; but blacks themselves demanded a more academic education, which would set them on the road to equality. Protestants and Catholics both used the public schools to teach their faith systems until the early 1960s, when the courts barred them from doing so; but religious controversies continue to hound the schools, especially on matters like evolution and sex education. How should our public schools address such dilemmas? How can the schools provide a “common” education, as Horace Mann called it, melding us into an integrated whole while still respecting our inevitable differences?

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Reading: Each week, I will assign about 100 pages of reading, from the following books:

James W. Fraser, The School in the United States: A Documentary History, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2014)

Carl Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (Hill and Wang, 1983)

Jeffrey P. Moran, The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002)

Jonathan Zimmerman, Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools (Chicago, 2022)

All of the required pages from these books will be posted on Canvas, but I'll also order copies of them at the Penn Bookstore for students who wish to purchase them. All of the other assigned articles and book chapters will be available on Canvas, as well. Please note: I expect you to do all the assigned reading, on time.

2. Point of View (POV) Papers: Every other week, I will ask you to hand in a brief (750-1,000 words, maximum) paper that responds to the prompt on the syllabus.

**Please email your papers to me no later than 9 a.m. on the date they are due.**

Please note: I do not accept late POV Papers.

3. Discussion Questions: On the alternate weeks, I'll ask you to hand in discussion questions that address the key issues or themes in the assigned reading. **Please email your discussion questions to me no later than 9 a.m. on the day they are due.** Please note: I do not accept late Discussion Questions, either.

4. On May 6, I'll ask you to submit a final paper on this theme: **You have been asked to produce a memorandum for Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, entitled "A Usable Past? How History Can Help Us Reform Our Schools."** Please submit your memorandum, which should draw upon specific details, examples, and themes from history to shape an argument about **contemporary education reform.** Please note: I do not accept late Final Papers.

5. Attendance: In this course, we want everyone to learn from each other. So it is imperative that you prepare for--and attend--every class, on time. If an emergency forces you to be tardy or absent, please notify me (by phone or e-mail) beforehand.

6. Office Hours: At a time of maximum dislocation, for so many of us, I want to shape my "office hours" around your schedule rather than mine. So please simply shoot me an email, whenever you would like to meet, and we'll pick a time that works for you.

7. Laptop Policy: In light of recent research showing that laptops distract other students—not just the laptop user—I have finally decided to prohibit them from

my classroom. If you have a learning issue that requires you to use a laptop, of course I will gladly make an exception. Otherwise, please don't bring one to class. 8.. Artificial Intelligence Policy: For reasons I described in the Washington Post (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/08/29/ai-student-policy-chatgpt-college/>), I encourage you to avoid using A.I. to write your papers and discussion questions. If you choose to do so, however, you must identify the A.I. "bot" that you used, just as you must note any written source (other than the assigned course materials) that you use. **Failure to do so will be considered plagiarism, which is the most serious form of academic misconduct.**

### GRADING

Weekly POV Papers and Discussion Questions: 50%

Final Paper: 30%

Discussion/Participation: 20%

### COURSE SCHEDULE

January 22: Course Introduction

January 24: Education in Puritan New England

#### **READING DUE:**

Fraser, School in the United States, pp. 1-10

January 29: The Common School Reform

#### **READING DUE:**

Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, chapters 1-3, 6-7

January 31: **POV PAPER DUE:** Suppose your community was debating whether to name a new school after Horace Mann. Would you support that proposal? Why or why not? What is the legacy of Mann and his "common school reform"?

February 5: The Progressive Reform

#### **READING DUE:**

William J. Reese, "The Origins of Progressive Education," History of Education Quarterly 41:1 (Spring 2001), 1-24.

Jeffrey P. Moran, "'Modernism Gone Mad': Sex Education Comes to Chicago, 1913," Journal of American History 83 (1996), 481-513.

Jonna Perrillo, “Beyond ‘Progressive’ Reform: Bodies, Discipline, and the Construction of the ‘Professional Teacher’ in Interwar America,” History of Education Quarterly 44:3 (Fall 2004), 337-63.

February 7: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE

February 12: Education and Race in the American South

**READING DUE:**

Booker T. Washington, “The Future of the American Negro” and W. E. B. Du Bois, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” in Fraser, School in the United States, 110-126.

James D. Anderson, “Northern Foundations and the Shaping of Black Rural Education, 1902-1935,” History of Education Quarterly 18 (Winter 1978), 371-96.

Adam Fairclough, “‘Being in the Field of Education and also Being a Negro...Seems...Tragic’: Black Teachers in the Jim Crow South,” Journal of American History 87:1 (June 2000), 65-91.

February 14: POV PAPER DUE: How did Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois differ in their views of Black education? And what do the subsequent histories by James Anderson and Adam Fairclough add to the Washington/Du Bois debate? What do you conclude about the meaning and legacy of this history?

February 19: Education and Imperialism

**READING DUE:**

David Wallace Adams, “Fundamental Considerations: The Deep Meaning of Native American Schooling, 1880-1900,” Harvard Educational Review 58:1 (February 1988), 1-27.

Jonathan Zimmerman, Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century (Harvard University Press, 2006), 23-50.

Jonathan Zimmerman, “Memoirs of a White Savior,” Liberties 3:1 (Fall 2022), 169-192.

Jeff Gammage, “‘Those kids never got to go home’” Philadelphia Inquirer, 13 March 2016.

February 21: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE (at least 4)

**GUEST SPEAKER: Jeff Gammage, Philadelphia Inquirer**

February 26: Immigration, Race, and “Americanization”

**READING DUE:**

Mary Astin, “The Promised Land”; Lewis Meriam, “The Problem of Indian Administration”; “The Asian Experience in California,” in Fraser, School in the United States, 174-193.

Zimmerman, Whose America?, chapter 1

Jonathan Zimmerman, “Ethnics Against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-Language Instruction, 1890-1940,” Journal of American History 88 (2002), 1383-1404.

February 28: **POV PAPER DUE:** How did schools try to “make Americans” in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? What role did ethnic Americans play in the process? And what can or should we learn from that history, to help us address diversity and assimilation today?

March 4 and March 6: SPRING BREAK

March 11: Religion and Schooling: The Battle over Evolution

**READING DUE:**

Moran, The Scopes Trial, 1-72, 171-179

March 13: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

March 18: The Great Depression and Education

**READING DUE**

George Counts, “Dare the School Build a New Social Order?” in Fraser, School in the United States, 234-239.

Robert Cohen, Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression (University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 85-130.

Diana D’Amico, “‘An Old Order is Passing’: The Rise of Applied Learning in University-Based Teacher Education during the Great Depression,” History of Education Quarterly 55:3 (August 2015), 319-345.

March 20: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

**GUEST SPEAKER: Robert Cohen**

March 25: The Cold War and Education

**READING DUE:**

JoAnne Brown, “‘A is for Atom, B is for Bomb’: Civil Defense in American Public Education, 1948-1963,” Journal of American History 75:1 (June 1988), 68-90.

William Graebner, "Outlawing Teenage Populism: The Campaign Against Secret Societies in the American High School 1900-1960," Journal of American History 74 (1987), 411-435.

Andrew Hartman, "From Hot War to Cold War for Schools and Teenagers: The Life Adjustment Movement as Therapy for the Immature," in Hartman, Education and the Cold War (Palgrave, 2008), 55-72.

**March 27: POV PAPER DUE:** A central theme in the history Cold War studies is "fear." Fear of what? When is fear a legitimate motivator for education, and when is it not? And how did fear affect the content and tone of Cold War schooling?

**April 1: The Civil Rights Revolution**

**READING DUE:**

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), in Fraser, School in the United States, 277-280.

Vanessa Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933-1969: Relationships between community and school," Harvard Educational Review 63 (1993), 161-182.

Ansley Erickson, "Building inequality: The spatial organization of schooling in Nashville, Tennessee after Brown," Journal of Urban History 38:2 (2012), 247-70.

Jonathan Zimmerman, "Brown-ing the American Textbook: History, Psychology, and the Birth of Modern Multiculturalism," History of Education Quarterly 44 (Spring 2004), 46-69.

**April 3: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

**April 8: "The Sixties" and Student (and Teacher) Rights**

**READING DUE:**

Tinker, et. al. v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969), in Fraser, School in the United States, 312-320.

Kenneth W. Starr, "From Fraser to Frederick: Bong Hits and the Decline of Civic Culture," University of California-Davis Law Review 42 (2009), 661-677.

Jonathan Zimmerman, "Historical Perspectives," in Zimmerman and Emily Robertson, The Case for Contention (University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 8-43.

Gael Graham, "Flaunting the Freak Flag: Karr v. Schmidt and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975," Journal of American History 91 (2004), 522-543.

**April 10: POV PAPER DUE:** How did student and teacher rights develop in the United States? What rights should students and teachers have in school? Why?

**GUEST SPEAKER: Mary Beth Tinker**

April 15: From No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds: The Federal Government and Education

**READING DUE:**

“From No Child Left Behind to the Common Core,” in Fraser, School, 360-390.

Jonathan Zimmerman, “Uncle Sam at the Blackboard: The Federal Government and American Education,” in To Promote The General Welfare: The Case for Big Government, ed. Steven Conn (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Jonathan Zimmerman, “Education in the Age of Obama: The Paradox of Consensus” in The Presidency of Barack Obama: A First Historical Look, ed. Julian Zelizer (Princeton University Press, 2017)

April 17: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

April 22 Teachers and School Reform

**READING DUE:**

Dana Goldstein, The Teacher Wars: A History of America’s Most Embattled Profession (Doubleday, 2014), 189-262.

Jonathan Zimmerman, “Why is American Teaching So Bad?” New York Review of Books, 4 December 2014.

Richard M. Ingersoll, et. al., “Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force,” Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania, October 2018.

April 24: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

**GUEST SPEAKER: Dana Goldstein**

April 29: The Federal Government, “Accountability,” and the Question of Testing

**GUEST SPEAKER: Jack Buckley**

May 1: Summing Up

May 6: **FINAL PAPER DUE:** You have been asked to produce a memorandum for Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, entitled “A Usable Past? How History Can Help Us Reform Our Schools.” Please submit your memorandum, which should draw upon specific details, examples, and themes from history to shape an argument about contemporary education reform.

