

HIST 463 and EDUC 599  
History of American Education  
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-3:30 p.m.  
Jonathan Zimmerman

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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 (Harvard, 2002)

I will also assign articles and book chapters, which will be available on “Canvas.” 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 note: I do not accept late POV Papers.

3. Discussion Questions: On the alternate weeks, I'll ask you to hand in at least three discussion questions that address the key issues or themes in the assigned reading. Please note: I do not accept late Discussion Questions, either.

4. 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.

5. 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 disability that requires you to use a laptop, of course I will gladly make an exception. Otherwise, please don't bring one to class.

## GRADING

Weekly POV Papers and Discussion Questions: 50%

Final Exam: 30%

Discussion/Participation: 20%

## COURSE SCHEDULE

January 16: Course Introduction

January 18: Education in Colonial America: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE** “Virginia Statutes on the Education of Indian Children Held Hostage”; “South Carolina Statute on Conversion of Slaves to Christianity”; “Massachusetts’ Old

Deluder Satan Law”; Benjamin Franklin, “Autobiography,” in Fraser, School in the United States, 4-9.

N. Ray Hiner, “The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into: Educational Analysis in Seventeenth-Century New England,” History of Education Quarterly 13:1 (Spring 1973), 3-22.

E. Jennifer Monaghan, “Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England,” American Quarterly 40: 1 (1988): 18-41.

January 21: NO CLASS

January 23: The Common School Reform

Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, chapters 1-3, 5-7

**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”?

January 28: The Progressive Reform

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.

January 30: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

February 4: African-Americans in Slavery and Freedom

Frederick Douglass, “The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas”; 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, 96-101, 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.

Joan Malczewski, “Weak State, Stronger Schools: Northern Philanthropy and Organizational Change in the Jim Crow South,” Journal of Southern History 75:4 (November 2009), 963-999.

February 6: **POV PAPER DUE**: Compare the Anderson and Malczewski interpretations of African-American education after the Civil War. How do the

authors arrive at such different conclusions? Which interpretation is stronger? What do you conclude about the meaning and legacy of this history?

February 11: Education and Imperialism

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

Clif Stratton, Education For Empire (University of California Press, 2016) 85-117.

Jonathan Zimmerman, Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century (Harvard University Press, 2006), 181-210.

February 13: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE

February 18: Immigration, Race, and “Americanization”

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 20: 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?**

February 25: Religion and Schooling

Moran, The Scopes Trial, 1-72, 171-188

February 27: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE

March 4, March 6: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

March 11: The Great Depression and World War Two

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

Zimmerman, Whose America?, chapter 3

Zoe Burkholder, “‘A War of Ideas’: The Rise of Conservative Teachers in Wartime New York City, 1938-1946,” History of Education Quarterly 55:2 (2015), 218-243.

**March 13: POV PAPER DUE: How did American schools address the Great Depression and World War Two? And what should our schools teach during times of economic calamity and war? In your answer, please draw upon all three assigned readings.**

March 18: The Cold War and Education

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.

Zimmerman, Whose America?, chapter 4

**March 20: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

March 25: The Civil Rights Revolution

Septima Clark, “Ready from Within”; Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas; Kenneth B. Clark, “How Children Learn about Race”; Daisy Bates, “The Long Shadow of Little Rock: Reflections on 1957,” in Fraser, School in the United States, 272-289.

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.

Zimmerman, Whose America?, chapter 5.

**March 27: POV PAPER DUE: How did the civil rights movement change American schools? What can or should we learn from this history, that can shed light on contemporary American dilemmas over race and education?**

April 1: “The Sixties” and Student (and Teacher) Rights

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

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 3: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**

April 8: Education, Religion, and the Rise of the “Christian Right”  
Zimmerman, Whose America?, chapters 6-8

April 10: **POV PAPER DUE: What should American schools teach about religion, evolution, and sex? And how can history help you formulate an answer?**

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

“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, July 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

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

Andrew Hartman, “Teach for America: The Hidden Curriculum of Liberal Do-Gooders,” Jacobin (Winter 2012), at <http://jacobinmag.com/winter-2012/teach-for-america/>

April 24: **POV PAPER DUE: What role have teachers played in the recent history of school reform? What role should they play? And what can or should we learn from the teacher experience, to help us improve schools for everyone?**

April 29: International Comparisons: How Does America Measure Up?

Amanda Ripley, The Smartest Kids in the World, and How They Got That Way (Simon and Schuster, 2013), 1-103.

May 1: **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE**