The Politics of American Education

Fall 2015

GOV-1368 (FAS) and SUP-447 (HKS)

Instructor: Paul E. Peterson, Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government
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Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00pm – 3:00pm
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Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am – 12:00pm
Class Location: Harvard Hall 202
Sections: Sections will be created after the course begins. Times and locations of section meetings will be based on enrollment.

FAS Course Website (CW): https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/4763
[please note this will be the MAIN course website and though a course website for SUP447 exists, it will ONLY offer the current syllabus]

Requirements:
1. Short in-class quizzes covering assigned material for the day and class participation 20%
2. Policy Memo 20%
3. Midterm Examination 20%
4. Final Examination 40%

About this Course
This course seeks to answer the following question: How did a school system, once the envy of the world, stumble so that the performance in math, science, and reading of U.S. students at age 15 fell below that of students in a majority of the world’s industrialized nations? Exploring that question, we identify the personalities and historical forces—the progressives, racial desegregation, legalization and collective bargaining—that shaped and re-shaped U.S. school politics and policy. Then, we seek answers to a second question: What are the best ways of lifting the performance of American schools to a higher level? To explore these questions, we look at ideas and proposals of those who want to save our schools—be it by reforming the teaching profession, holding schools accountable, or giving families more school choices.

Shopping: A class shopping meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 1 at the
Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) specifically aimed at HKS students but all are welcome to stop in. It will be held in Land Hall from 1:15 to 1:45 and 2:00 to 2:30.

**Section Leaders:** Leslie Finger  
Email: lfinger@fas.harvard.edu  
Office Hours: TBD  

Carlos Xabel Lastra Anadón  
Email: carlos.lastra.anadon@gmail.com  
Office Hours: TBD

**Section Meeting Times and Locations:** TBD

**Reading and Other Course Material Availability:**

Although required reading does not necessarily include the entire work, substantial passages are assigned from the following **BOOKS that are available for purchase at the Harvard Coop and on reserve at Lamont:**


**VIDEOS:** For most class periods, students are expected to watch the assigned video lecture presentations of the material assigned for that class period. Videos are to be viewed **BEFORE** class. Links will be available on the FAS course website. Access all the videos via this page or via the YouTube links below:  
https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/4763

All **OTHER REQUIRED READINGS** that are available online are linked in the syllabus to their electronic version (some require PIN login to the Harvard Library System). For those readings that are not available online, please download a copy from the course’s website (CW) listed above.

**To facilitate class discussion, computers are not to be opened during class, except by permission.**

You are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. Standard citation practices must properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you in your work. You should ensure that written work is the result of your own research and writing.

**Collaboration Prohibited**
Students should be aware that in this course, with the exception of group assignments or projects, collaboration of any sort on any work submitted for formal evaluation is not permitted. This means that you may not discuss your problem sets, paper assignments, exams, or any other assignments with other students. All work should be entirely your own and must use appropriate citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, lectures, discussions, etc., that you have consulted to complete your assignments.

Program on Education Policy and Governance Colloquia Series: Students are invited to attend the fall and spring series. All colloquia are held from 12:00PM-1:30PM unless otherwise noted. A light lunch is provided. For more information on the series, please visit: [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/colloquia.htm](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/colloquia.htm)
Topics and Readings

September 3 (Thursday): First Class Meeting – Overall discussion of course

September 8 (Tuesday): Introduction: The Challenge
Video: The Challenge and Part I on Methods lecture
   1. The Challenge – Part 1 (10:07)
   2. The Challenge – Part 2 (08:30)
   3. The Challenge – Part 3 (13:03)

Required Readings:

September 10 (Thursday): School Boards
Video: School Boards
   2. School Boards – Part 2 (06:41)

Required Readings:
   1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 21-36. Also, see tables in the Appendix.

September 15 (Tuesday): Rosh Hashanah – No Class

September 17 (Thursday): The Progressives
Video: The Progressives
   1. Progressives – Part 1 (10:51)
   2. Progressives – Part 2 (07:03)
   3. Progressives – Part 3 (11:04)

Required Readings:
   1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 36-50. Also, see tables in the Appendix.

**September 22 (Tuesday): Yom Kippur – No Class**

**September 24 (Thursday): Methods**

*Video: Methods*

1. Methodology – Part 2 (12:34)
2. Methodology – Part 3 (17:16)
3. Methodology – Part 4 (09:35)

*Required Readings:*

2. “Understanding Statistics Tutorial”, 2004, ECS and McREL. Read up to “Correlation with Multiple Variables”

**September 29 (Tuesday): Desegregation**

*Video: Desegregation*

1. Desegregation – Part 1 (11:46)
2. Desegregation – Part 2 (20:06)
3. Desegregation – Part 3 (10:20)

*Required Readings:*

1. Peterson, *Saving Schools*, pp. 51-76.
4. Stefanie DeLuca, “All Over the Map” *Education Next, Fall 2007, Vol. 7, No. 4*
   [http://educationnext.org/all-over-the-map/](http://educationnext.org/all-over-the-map/)

**October 1 (Thursday): Legalization**

*Video: Legalization*

1. Legalization – Part 1. (07:05)
2. Legalization – Part 2. (07:03)
3. Legalization – Part 3. (17:09)

*Required Readings:*


**October 6 (Tuesday): Collective Bargaining**

*Video: Collective Bargaining*

2. Collective Bargaining – Part 2 (11:36)

*Required Readings:*

1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 105-119, 126-128.
2. Ravitch, Life and Death, pp. 169-181 (stop at the new paragraph on 181).

**October 8 (Thursday): Mid-Term Examination**

**October 13 (Tuesday): Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

*Video: Teacher Recruitment and Retention*

1. Recruitment – Part 1 (10:09)
2. Recruitment – Part 2 (14:55)

*Required Readings:*

1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 119-123.

**October 15 (Thursday): Teacher Compensation**

*Video: Teacher Compensation*

1. Compensation – Part 1 (04:15)
2. Compensation – Part 2 (06:11)
3. **Compensation – Part 3** (07:58)

**Required Readings:**


**October 20 (Tuesday): Reforming Teacher Pay**

*Video: Reforming Teacher Pay*

2. *Alternative Compensation – Part 2* (11:05)

**Required Readings:**

1. Ravitch, *Life and Death*, pp. 192-194

**October 22 (Thursday): Class Size Reduction**

*Video: Class Size Reduction*

2. *Class Size Reduction – Part 2* (11:52)
3. *Class Size Reduction – Part 3* (09:20)

**Required Readings:**


**October 27 (Tuesday): Equity and Adequacy in Expenditure**

*Video: Equity and Adequacy in Expenditure*

2. *Equity – Part 2* (19:06)
3. *Equity – Part 3* (08:34)
Required Readings:
4. *Serrano v. Priest*, 18 Cal.3d 728 (1976) (Serrano II); This is a California Supreme Court Ruling. Serrano II: [http://law.justia.com/cases/california/cal3d/18/728.html](http://law.justia.com/cases/california/cal3d/18/728.html)
5. Shep Melnick, “Paved with Good Intentions: OCR’s ‘Equity’ Guidelines”, *Education Next*. Link to be added

October 29 (Thursday): The Federal Role

*Video: The Federal Role*

Required Readings:
1. Peterson, *Saving Schools*, pp. 87-103

November 3 (Tuesday): School Accountability

*Video: School Accountability*
1. *School Accountability – Part 1* (15:12)
2. *School Accountability – Part 2* (09:39)
3. *School Accountability – Part 3* (16:50)

Required Readings:
November 5 (Thursday): National Standards and the Common Core

Video: National Standards and the Common Core
1. Common Core – Part 1 (16:15)
2. Common Core – Part 2 (16:40)

Required Readings:
3. William Howell, “Results of President Obama’s Race to the Top” Education Next, Fall 2015, Vol. 15, No. 4 http://educationnext.org/results-president-obama-race-to-the-top-reform/

November 10 (Tuesday): Student Accountability

Video: Student Accountability
1. Student Accountability – Part 1 (07:45)
2. Student Accountability – Part 2 (05:21)
3. Student Accountability – Part 3 (20:07)

Required Readings:
1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 183-190, 178-183.

November 12 (Thursday): School Choice Theory

Video: School Choice Theory
2. School Choice – Part 2 (09:53)
3. School Choice – Part 3 (11:03)

Required Readings:
2. Ravitch, Death and Life, pp. 113-128.

November 17 (Tuesday): School Vouchers

Video: School Vouchers
1. School Vouchers – Part 1 (15:02)
2. School Vouchers – Part 2 (09:33)
3. School Vouchers – Part 3 (19:42)

Required Readings:
1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 203-209.

November 19 (Thursday): Charter Schools

Video: Charters
2. Charter Schools – Part 2 (15:43)

Required Readings:
1. Peterson, Saving Schools, 209-221.
2. Ravitch, Death and Life, pp. 132-147.

November 24 (Tuesday): TBD

November 26 (Thursday): Thanksgiving—No Class
December 1 (Tuesday): Digital Education

Video: Digital Education

1. Digital Education – Part 1 (15:15)
2. Digital Education – Part 2 (19:18)
3. Digital Education – Part 3 (27:00)
4. Digital Education – Part 4 (11:59)

Required Readings:
1. Peterson, Saving Schools, pp. 229-263.
3. Clayton M. Christensen and Michael B. Horn, “How Do We Transform our Schools? Use Technologies that Compete Against Nothing” Education Next, Summer 2008, Vol. 8, No. 3 http://educationnext.org/how-do-we-transform-our-schools/

December 3 (Thursday): Conclusions

Video: Conclusions

1. Mini Conclusion – Part 1 (10:06)
2. Mini Conclusion – Part 2 (07:45)
3. Mini Conclusion – Part 3 (09:26)
4. Mini Conclusion – Part 4 (11:06)

Final Examination:  TBD