

Education and Society
(Sections 0101 & 0201)

Fall 2003
Tuesday, 4:15 – 7:00 p.m.

COL, Room 3111
(3 credits)

Instructors

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TBD

Course Overview

Education and Society is a required course in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership (EDPL). As part of the course, students from different programs within the department, along with students from other departments and colleges within the university, consider the social origins, purposes, and consequences of education in modern societies. Students examine sociological, economic, political, historical and philosophical perspectives on the organization and control of educational opportunities, as well as discuss various social and educational issues revealed through these perspectives. A primary goal for the course is to discuss, debate, and identify enduring social and educational issues that cut across different areas of study, including higher education, leadership, policy, curriculum, and international education. Examples of issues considered in this course include:

- *Cultural values and beliefs.* Whose cultural values and beliefs should be preserved through the educational opportunities promoted by a society? In simple societies, where cultural beliefs and values are likely to be homogenous, this question is relatively unimportant, but in complex societies, where cultural beliefs and values are heterogeneous (even contradictory), the question raises important questions for educators and policymakers. Students consider this question by examining secular and religious goals for education..
- *Human capital and technical skills.* Education is a process through which individuals acquire human capital and society is thought to promote economic prosperity. From this perspective, education is both a private and a public good. How should these educational opportunities be distributed in society? What are the consequences of the distribution of educational opportunities for social mobility, social stratification, and social well-being? Students consider these questions by examining how countries structure and control opportunities to gain technical skills and knowledge.
- *Commercialization of education.* In a market-based, capitalist society, there are strong pressures to commercialize education and transform educational goods into commodities consistent with activities that occur within the economic sector. What are the consequences of the commercialization of education? How does the commercialization affect the nature of education and the ability of educational institutions to perform specific functions, such as promote our collective well-being. Students consider this question, as well as the competing goals that educators face in maintaining educational institutions and competing for resources.
- *Democratic education.* The state has an interest in the education of its members. Consequently, as societies become more complex, educational activities become increasingly influenced by governmental regulations and policies. What should education “look like” in a modern, democratic society? What principles should inform the content, organization, and distribution of educational opportunities? Students consider different philosophical arguments about the role of education in preserving and promoting the vitality of civic life in a democratic society.
- *Moral ends of education.* Education policies express a particular moral vision of society. Such a vision encompasses our understandings of our collective rights and responsibilities regarding education and the role of education in the distribution of social goods. In other words, education policy is more than a debate about “means” – it is also a debate about ends, a debate about the type of society that we wish to have and the role of education in its creation and preservation.

Approach

We divide the course into five parts: a brief introductory section in which we examine alternative arguments about the role of education in society and four sets of issue-specific readings: the role of education in preserving cultural values and beliefs, the role of education in promoting human capital and economic prosperity, the potential consequences of the commercialization of education, and the role of education in enriching our civic life. Classes are a combination of lectures and discussions designed to clarify assigned readings and to explore related educational and social issues. Writing assignments provide opportunities for students to apply ideas from the readings and class discussions to their respective areas of scholarship (e.g., higher education or curriculum) and to develop habits of discourse appropriate for graduate education. At the end of the course, students should be able to describe alternative conceptualizations of the functions (or purposes) of education in society, distinguish key educational and social issues associated with the organization and distribution of educational opportunities in society, and recognize policy-relevant themes that cut across areas of study within the department and the university.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete all of the readings, attend class regularly, and participate fully in class discussions. Students who cannot attend class for some reason should contact one of the instructors and make arrangements to acquire handouts and related materials from another student. There will be four required written assignments (3 graded, one not graded), as well as one optional written assignment for extra credit. Guidelines for written assignments will be given at least two weeks before the assignment is due. Please avoid handing in assignments late or requesting an incomplete for the course. Late papers may be penalized a letter grade unless approved by an instructor in advance. The assignments include:

- (1) *A 3 page, biographical position paper* on the purpose of education in society. The paper should identify a single person's (e.g., a social theorist, philosopher, political leader, policymaker, or advocate) position on the purposes of education. The individual may be historical or contemporary. The paper should (a) provide biographical information about the person, (b) clearly state a position backed by a source, and (c) include your assessment of the position and its legitimacy as a guide to policymakers. This paper will account for 20 percent of the course grade.

Or ...

A 3 page, analysis of an educational "artifact". Anthropologists analyze artifacts to shed light on the cultural beliefs and meanings associated with collective life and the functioning of specific social institutions. This paper should (a) identify a single educational artifact (e.g., a policy statement, curricular text, diploma, etc.), (b) describe the artifact and its use or educational significance, and (c) explain what the artifact suggests about the role of education in a particular society or

social setting. This paper will account for 20 percent of the course grade.

- (2) *A 1 page prospectus for the final paper.* The prospectus should clearly describe the topic for the final paper – a critical examination of the role of education in a specific society or social group. The prospectus will be ungraded and used to provide students feedback about their projects.
- (3) *A 6-7 page bibliography about a topic relevant to the course.* This assignment is an opportunity for students to identify sources for their final project. Sources should include a mix of published articles, texts, or reports relevant to the students' proposed final paper (roughly 10 sources). The bibliography should be consistent with an appropriate style manual (e.g., the American Psychological Association or APA), include brief abstracts for each source, and include a brief statement of the relevance of the source to the final paper. The bibliography will account for 35 percent of the course grade.
- (4) *A 15 page final paper.* The final paper is a summative project where students present a critical examination of the role or use of education in a specific society or social group. Students may focus on an aspect of education that is of interest to them and sheds light on one or more of the questions addressed by this class. The paper should be well-written, researched, and appropriately supported with sources. Examples of possible topics will be provided in class. This paper will account for 45 percent of the course grade.

Additional Information

Documented Disabilities. The University of Maryland encourages instructors to make accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss an academic accommodation, please contact one of the instructors as soon as possible.

Honor code. The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge for students to state and sign whenever they submit individual assignments or examinations as coursework. The University of Maryland Honor pledge reads:

“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”

The pledge is meant to promote and recognize one of the University's core values – academic integrity. The pledge has relevance for the way that we conduct ourselves in class and acknowledge the work of others in written assignments and classroom discussions. We encourage everyone to think about the honor code and how our individual and collective behaviors might further promote academic integrity both on campus and in our professional careers.

Required Material

The readings are outlined in the syllabus. You'll be able to purchase (at cost) the course syllabus from us during the first day of class. Other than the individual readings that we have assigned, we want everyone to acquire the following four books:

Bok, Derek. (2003). Universities in the marketplace. The commercialization of higher education. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. A relatively new critique of the consequences of commercializing education. Bok was the former president at Harvard University and is considered a thoughtful critique of trends in higher education.

Gutmann, Amy (1999). Democratic education, 2nd edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. A classic. Along with John Dewey's Education and Democracy, Gutmann's book is considered to be one of the most important statements on the role of education in fostering and preserving a democratic society.

Peshkin, Alan. (1986). God's choice: The total world of a fundamentalist Christian school. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A very thoughtful and skilled ethnographic study of a fundamentalist, Christian academy in the United States. Raises important issues about the role of education in a culturally diverse society.

Rosenbaum, James E. (2001). Beyond college for all: Career paths for the forgotten half. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Rosenbaum is a sociologist who studies the role of education in promoting social mobility and stratification. This book examines how different countries organize and control opportunities for acquiring valuable forms of human capital and technical skills.

Schedule of Readings

I. Theoretical Perspectives

Week 1: September 2nd

Course review, logistics, and preliminary discussion of the role of education in society. We'll review the syllabus and discuss the logistics for the course (e.g., books, course packs, etc.). We'll also have a discussion of the function of education in society, using prominent policy statements about education drawn from newspapers and other media. Our goal will be to "sketch out" the scope of educational activities in a modern society and the distribution of those activities across social institutions.

Week 2: September 9th

The functions of education in society. The readings for this week present alternative conceptualizations of educational activities in simple and modern societies. Jonathan Turner examines the relationship between education and society using an institutional framework. From this perspective, educational activities reflect broad societal beliefs about educational goals and processes, including how educational opportunities are to be distributed across different populations of students. Randal Collins sees education as a set of “cultural markets” that distribute socially desirable goods (e.g., social status, practical skills, and political power), whereas Michael Walzer presents a philosophical framework for understanding educational institutions and related policy issues. We use these readings to develop an initial conceptual framework about the functions (and possible dysfunctions) of education in society.

Readings for this week include:

Turner, J. (1997). Education. In The institutional order. Economy, kinship, religion, polity, law, and education in evolutionary and comparative perspectives (Chapters 12 - 13, pp. 226-255). New York: Longman.

Turner, J. (1997). Education in institutional context. In The institutional order. Economy, kinship, religion, polity, law, and education in evolutionary and comparative perspectives (Chapters 13, pp. 245-255). New York: Longman.

Collins, R. (1977). Some comparative principles of educational stratification. Harvard Educational Review, 47 (1), 1-27.

Walzer, M. (1983). Education. In Spheres of justice. A defense of pluralism and equality (Chapter 8, pp. 197-226). New York: Basic Books. Collins, R. (1977).

Week 3, September 16th

Informal structures of education. Educational activities take place through loosely structured, informal arrangements, as well through highly structured, formal arrangements between groups of individuals and groups of “specialists” or “professionals”. As societies become more complex, the balance between informally and formally structured educational opportunities shifts, with greater emphasis being placed on formally structured educational opportunities regulated or controlled by community leaders, professional associations, and state officials. The readings for this week provide several examples of informal educational systems, such as public rituals and customs, apprenticeships, and contemporary youth associations. We examine the role of these institutions in simple and complex societies.

Readings for this week include:

Colletta, N. J. (1975). Education without schools: Learning among the Ponapeans. Teachers College Record, 76, 625-637.

Graves, B. (1989). Informal aspects of apprenticeship in selected American occupations. In M. W. Coy (Ed.), *Apprenticeship: From theory to method and back again* (pp. 51-64). Albany, NY: SUNY.

Saxe, G. B. (1988). Candy selling and math learning. *Educational Researcher* (August-September), 14-21.

Resnick, L. B. (1987). Learning in school and out. *Educational Researcher* (December), 13-20.

Week 4: September 23rd

Formal structures of education. Formal structures of education date back at least to 2,500 BC, when, in ancient Sumaria, young boys gathered in “Tablet Houses” to learn how to become scribes and administrators for various rulers. However, it is not until more recently, with the development of relatively centralized political and economic structures, that formal educational systems emerge as the predominant institutional arrangement. We discuss aspects of this transformation, including the emergence of the state, the state’s interest in education, and the policy issues that emerge when comparing public and private interests, particularly in a democratic state. **First paper due at the beginning of class, either a 3-page biographical position paper or a 3-page analysis of an educational artifact.**

Readings for this week include:

Boli, J., & Meyer, J. W. (1987). The ideology of childhood and the state: Rules distinguishing children in national constitutions, 1870-1970. In G. M. Thomas, J. W. Meyer, F. O. Ramirez, & J. Boli (Eds.), *Institutional structure: Constituting state, society, and the individual* (Chapter 10, pp. 217-241). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Boli, J., Ramirez, F. O., & Meyer, J. W. (1985). Explaining the origins and expansion of mass education. *Comparative Education Review*, 29, 145-170.

Labaree, D. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34, 39-81.

II. Social Reproduction: Whose Values?

Week 5: October 1st

One of the most basic functions of schools is the reproduction of cultural values and norms. Although this function is often “taken-for-granted” in public schools, the reproduction of traditions, values, and beliefs is an essential and stated function for many private and charter schools. To understand this function – and its possible policy

implications – we’ll examine Alan Peshkin’s classic study of a fundamentalist, Christian school, God’s Choice. Peshkin’s study is unique both in the substantive and methodological insights that it provides readers. This week we consider the setting for the study, the underlying value structure, and various mechanisms of social control.

Readings for this week include:

Peshkin, A. (1986). God’s choice. The total world of a fundamentalist Christian school. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read chapters 1-5.

Week 6: October 8th

We continue our examination of Peshkin’s study of a fundamentalist, Christian high school. The readings for today shift attention to the students attending Bethany Christian Academy. We consider the values and beliefs expressed by students, as well as students’ understandings of conformity and expressions of deviance. **One-page prospectus due for final paper.**

Readings for this week include:

Peshkin, A. (1986). God’s choice. The total world of a fundamentalist Christian school. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read chapters 6-9.

Week 7: October 15th

This week we expand Peshkin’s analysis to consider the social tensions that arise in educational institutions that serve pluralist societies. We’ll consider early tensions between competing religious groups for control and influence of educational institutions in the United States, as well as the political and educational issues that arise if education is to provide a common set of educational experiences and promote the public good.

Readings for this week include:

Peshkin, A. (1986). God’s choice. The total world of a fundamentalist Christian school. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read chapters 10-11.

Salomone, R. C. (2000). The common school: Past as prologue. In Visions of schooling: Conscience, community, and common education (Chapter 2, pp. 10-41). New Haven: Yale.

III. Human Capital and Technical Skills

Week 8: October 22nd

A fundamental motivation for individuals to seek out educational opportunities is to acquire useful practical skills and technical knowledge. Economists refer to these

investments in education as investments in human capital because they are thought to enhance productivity and provide access to rewarding economic opportunities. We'll discuss the role of education in providing access to individuals to valuable forms of human capital and promoting economic development in society. The text for the next three weeks will be James Rosenbaum's, Beyond College. Rosenbaum's study examines how different societies structure vocational education, the consequences of these structures for social mobility, and how the distribution of these educational opportunities influences (and is influenced by) social stratification.

Readings for this week include:

Rosenbaum, J. (2001). Beyond college for all: Career paths for the forgotten half. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Week 9: October 29th

We continue our examination of how educational institutions influence access to economic opportunities. We consider different policies for organizing vocational education and opportunities to acquire human capital in the United States, Germany, Japan, and other countries.

Readings for this week include:

Rosenbaum, J. (2001). Beyond college for all: Career paths for the forgotten half. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Week 10: November 5th

A primary justification for education reforms in the United States is the presumed link between educational attainment and economic prosperity. But how strong is this link? Do investments in educational opportunities provide individuals with valuable practical skills and technical knowledge? Do public investments promote economic development and prosperity? We critically examine the link between education and economic growth, as well as the consequences of framing education policy as an economic good. **Annotated bibliography due at the beginning of class.**

Readings for this week include:

Rosenbaum, J. (2001). Beyond college for all: Career paths for the forgotten half. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Rothstein, R. (2002 January). Out of balance: Our understanding of how schools affect society and how society affects schools. Paper presented at the 30th anniversary conference of the Spencer foundation.

IV. Commercialization of Education

Week 11: November 12th

The more valuable the educational goods in a society, the more competition there is over the control and distribution of educational goods. In market-based capitalist societies, the pressure to “commodify” educational goods is tremendous, especially if investors believe that it is possible to make a profit or if educators perceive that commercialization gives them an edge in the competition for students and scarce resources. Using David Bok’s book, Universities in the marketplace, we will consider the “benefits” and “costs” associated with the commercialization of education.

Readings for this week include:

Bok, D. (2003). Universities in the marketplace. The commercialization of higher education. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Read chapters 1-6.

Molnar, A. (1995). Schooled for profit. Educational Leadership (September), 70-71.

Week 12: November 19th

Last week we considered the “benefits” and “costs” of commercialization; this week we consider Bok’s recommendations for how to discourage policies that promote commercial success at the expense of educational success. We’ll extend Bok’s analysis to elementary and secondary education, and we will discuss the scope and consequences of commercialization of education for society.

Readings for this week include:

Bok, D. (2003). Universities in the marketplace. The commercialization of higher education. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Read chapters 7-11.

Giroux, H. A. (1998). Education Incorporated? Educational Leadership (October), 12-17

V. Democratic Education

Week 13: November 26th

We shift this week to examining education from a moral and philosophical perspective. The question we’ll ask is what should be the form and purpose of education in a democratic society. This week we’ll review the basic framework for Gutmann’s argument, as well as her initial treatment of the purpose of primary education in a democratic society.

Readings for this week include:

Democratic Education, Introduction through Chapter 3 (pp. 3-94)

Week 14: December 3rd

The readings for this week extend Gutmann's arguments about primary education to post-secondary education. We'll discuss issues regarding the control of education, the distribution of educational opportunities, and what it means to participate meaningfully in a democratic society.

Readings for this week include:

Democratic Education, Chapter 4-7 (pp. 95-222)

Week 15: December 10th

We'll finish the Gutmann book and wrap up the course (or at least that's what I'll try to do). We'll focus on the epilogue of the book to pull together some of the theories that we identified in the first part of the course. We'll also use this time to evaluate the course and solicit your advice about how to improve it. **Final paper due at the beginning of class.**

Readings for this week include:

Democratic Education, Chapter 8 through the Epilogue (pp. 223-316)