

UEP 214

Equity and Access: The State of Public Education in Los Angeles Spring Semester, 2021

Instructor: Steve Zimmer
Location: Zoomverse
Date/Time: Wednesday Evenings 7:15-9:30 p.m.
Adjustments will be made for students in different time zones starting in week three.

Office Hours: Immediately after class and by appointment

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NOTE: PLEASE SEND ALL EMAILS TO BOTH ADDRESSES

Note About Spring Semester 2021:

We open this semester at an unprecedented and unthinkable time for our campus, our community, our city and our nation. We start our class on the evening following the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States. This transfer of power, anything but peaceful, follows four years of state-sponsored violence, trauma, bullying and oppression that has caused irreparable pain for so many of our sisters and our brothers.

We start our class as the CDC has announced that we have surpassed 400,000 deaths from COVID 19 across our nation. As we start our semester there are over 3 million COVID positive cases in California. There are over 100,000 cases here in Los Angeles which is now the worldwide epicenter of the epidemic. Oxy, UC, and Cal State are all closed for Spring Semester. Our public schools are closing in on a full year since campuses closed and instruction was reduced to distance learning.

None of us is untouched. But the disparate pandemic impacts for Black, Brown and Immigrant communities in Los Angeles is staggering. The disproportionate rates of infection, serious illness and death are the result of intentional disparities in access to housing, health care, nutrition and economic opportunity.

We start our class as we remain in the most important struggle for racial liberation in our lifetimes. Our personal, communal and national reckoning with white supremacy is inseparable from the present struggles for humanity, justice and truth in school curriculum, climate and culture. And until each of us is ok; none of us are ok.

These profoundly intersectional struggles are more important than any class, lecture, assignment or syllabus. So what does that mean for our community?

1. Nothing is more important than your health and well-being. The health and well-being of your family may be a close second.
2. Our own health and well-being is directly connected to our collective and communal health and well-being. Everything we do should be about elevating wellness and mitigating the stresses that we can control.
3. None of us are untouched. None of us are ok. But the impacts are not equal nor are they equitable. That understanding should drive our interactions and inform our consciousness about the space we take especially those of us who benefit from unearned privilege.
4. There are no answers. We are all (including myself) listeners and learners.
5. The syllabus is tentative. Everything is subject to change and adjustment as the semester progresses
6. Assignments are important, especially as they have been designed primarily as group projects. But they are not more important than your health and well-being.
7. Solidarity and generosity are far more important standards than any outcomes I hope to achieve through our assignments.
8. This is a pandemic. It's never happened before. There is no playbook. We are all figuring this out as we go. I ask for your patience and understanding as we do the very best that we can to find the right balancing.

Course Objectives

- **Build collective understanding of the savage disparities that comprise the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on students of color, students living in conditions of poverty, students with disability and other vulnerable students, families and communities.**
- **Build collective understanding of the impacts of systemic racism and white supremacy in the education system in Los Angeles and across the nation**
- **Build the collective understanding of the most urgent immediate questions facing public education in 2021 related to the pandemic and the struggle against racial oppression: what does or what can recovery, re-investment and reparation mean for public education in Los Angeles and beyond?**
- **Use the collective wisdom and experience of the class, information and ideas from the lecture/panel series, and public policy research projects to contribute to collective solutions and strategies to the most serious issues facing Los Angeles students, their families and their schools.**
- Understand root causes and current impacts of the present and historical inequities facing students living in conditions of poverty and segregation in Los Angeles
- Examine the challenges of leadership at every level in public education (student, parent, teacher, principal, community, district, state and national) and identify the necessary skills education leaders must possess to become agents for change both within and outside the public education system.
- Interact with leading public education experts in Los Angeles to gain insight from their expertise and experience in our efforts to understand and respond to the perceived crisis in public education

- Study and reflect upon important texts (both contemporary and historical) that inform equity, social justice and critical race perspectives on public education
- Understand the impact of poverty, systemic racism and conditions on classroom instruction and student achievement.
- Understand the impact of state and federal funding as well as the persistent (and intentional) budget crisis on LAUSD students, teachers and families.
- Understand the impact of teacher training, support and evaluation on student achievement and school progress
- Analyze the role and impact of teacher’s unions in Los Angeles and the nation
- Analyze the role and impact of parent and family engagement in schools and how this engagement affects student achievement
- Analyze the role and impact of charter schools for students enrolled in charters and on students enrolled in LAUSD

Important Education Texts:

- Podair, Jerald. 2001 **The Strike that Changed New York: Blacks, Whites and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis** New Haven Yale University Press
- Kerchner, Charles. 2008 **Learning from Los Angeles: Institutional Change in American Public Education** Cambridge Harvard Educational Press
- Carter, Prudence et al. **Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America Must Do Give Every Child an Even Chance** New York Oxford Press
- Ravitch, Diane. 2010. **The Death and Life of the Great American School System** New York: Basic Books
- Kozol, Jonathan. 1991 **Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools** New York: Random House
- Noguera, Pedro. 2008 **The Trouble with Black Boys: Reflections on Race, Equity and the Future of Public Education**
- Noguera, Pedro and Syeed, Esa, 2021 **City Schools and the American Dream 2: The Enduring Promise of Public Education**

- Rhee, Michelle. 2014 **Radical: Fighting to Put Students First** New York: Harper Paperback Books
- Goldstein, Dana. 2014 **Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession** New York, Doubleday.
- Howard, Tyrone. 2010 **Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools.** New York, Teacher College Press
- Paulo Freire. 1993. **The Pedagogy of the Oppressed:** New York, Continuum Books
- Delpit, Lisa. 1995/2006 **Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom.** New York, The New Press

A word about Texts:

I have decided not to require texts this semester because of the impacts of the pandemic. Texts for this class are designed as resources in the truest sense. But they are important. They will be a part of our shared and developing understanding of the critical issues we address in class. I encourage you to check out some of the texts online and consider purchasing the ones that speak to you the most. I have listed the texts that will be used in the weekly schedule, but remember that schedule is subject to change. Even if we don't use the full text as part of the class I promise you each of these texts will contribute to your understanding of the public education crisis. I trust you to balance your exploration as part of this class with other priorities and issues you are coping with in your life.

Education Blogs and Websites: I will ask you to read two websites daily: EdSource and EdWeek. Edsource is focused on California and is free. Edweek is national and there is a fee though there is an affordable student rate. Chalkbeat is another site that has current education pieces from a variety of perspectives. In addition to these sites I encourage you to check the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, the Washington Post on a regular basis. The Atlantic and Politico has also been doing additional education reporting.

Grades

Assignments and Grading

Class Engagement	10%
Weekly Reflection Papers (2)	20%
School Reopening, Recovery and Reparations Plan (group or individual proposal)	30%
Public Policy Proposal Group Project (paper and presentation)	30%
Final Reflection Paper	10%

- Weekly reflection papers are a 2-page reflection and analysis about any reading, speaker or class discussion/activity. There is no prescribed format for the reflection. I appreciate it when students connect the readings/activities to their own personal experiences in these reflection papers. Students can choose to write the two reflection papers at any point in the semester but they must be submitted on the week of the topic. **Reflection papers must be submitted by 6 p.m. on Friday. Please send a copy to both of my email accounts.**
- The **School Re-Opening, Recovery and Reparations Plan** will be due the class before Spring Break. You and/or your team will take on the role of the LAUSD School Board or the Superintendent. You have been awarded a \$1 Billion grant from the Federal Stimulus Package. Your job is to create an equity and justice driven proposal that will address the totality of student/family/school site/community needs **in order to open schools by April 1st and keep them open for the duration of the semester.** Your proposal will need to identify 5 discreet funding priorities and justify this investment based on the above-listed priorities. I will distribute a more detailed assignment during the 3rd week of class
- **The Public Policy Proposal Group Project** will be the focus on the second half of the semester. In a group setting your team will choose a vexing public policy dilemma that is deeply affecting student outcomes. In most cases the public policy issue will be related to the school system and/or a specific equity barrier that is affecting students' access to an outstanding public education.

The project will have three significant components. The first component will be a presentation to the class (this presentation may include additional members of the Oxy and LAUSD community). Student teams will have wide latitude in how to present their report, but my guess is that some type of power point and some narrative research

summary. The second group component will a community action component. Here, group members will either present the project findings or recommendations to either LAUSD Board staff, LAUSD Board Members, a Board or Committee Meeting, City Council staff or the staff of the Mayor’s Office. While the presentation may contain similar information to the in-class presentation (incorporating feedback from myself and your colleagues), I expect the group to employ lobbying and presentation strategies that we will go over in class during the semester.

The final component to the project will be an individual analysis paper that will cover both the issue and a detailed reflection about the group process you participated in throughout the semester. I will expect you to incorporate new research and sources into your paper, but you should use the group’s primary research as well. I will distribute a much more detailed description of the paper, but you can anticipate that it will be between 6-8 pages in length and will be due at the end of Finals.

Tentative Class Schedule

January	20th	Introduction, Overview and Opening Exercises
January	27	Introduction to Re-Opening, Recovery and Reparations EdWeek and EdSource Pieces Edsource and LA Times Video selections Guest Speaker: David Goldberg, Vice President CTA
February	3rd	The Crisis is Novel: Disparity is Endemic <u>Death at an Early Age</u> : Chapter One <u>Savage Inequalities</u> : Chapter One, Three and Four and Six Readings from EdSource and Edweek Discussion of Stimulus Budget Assignment
February	10th	The Current State of Public Education in Los Angeles 1st Panel: Los Angeles education journalists <u>Learning from Los Angeles</u> : Part One Stories from Edsource, Los Angeles Times and LAist
February	17th	Politics and Policy in Public Education Introduction to the practice and process of education policy How Questions of equity and justice are found and lost in the policy process

Chapter 1: City Schools and the American Dream
Chapters 1-3: Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools
Section 1: The Death and Life of the Great American
School System

February 24th:

Policy in Action

Determining Priorities for School Reopening and Ensuring
Equitable Funding means Equitable Access to Reopening
Resources

Section One: Closing the Opportunity Gap

Chapter Three: City Schools and the American Dream

March 3rd:

Presentations: School Re-opening, Recovery and
Reparations Plan

Group and Project Selection for Policy Project

SPRING BREAK

(The remainder of the schedule will be determined by our Group Projects)