Class: UEP 212, 213
Policy Debates and Controversies in Public Education

Instructor: Steve Zimmer
Location: Fowler 112
Date/Time: Wednesday Evenings 7:15-9:15 p.m.
Public Lecture times may vary but will always be on Weds Evening

Office Hours: Immediately before or after class and by appointment

Contact Info: szimmer@lausd.net
zimmers@oxy.edu
213-241-6387 (office)
323-360-1656 (cell)
NOTE: PLEASE SEND ALL EMAILS TO BOTH ADDRESSES

Course Objectives

- Use the collective wisdom and experience of the class, information and ideas from the lecture/panel series, and action research projects to contribute to collective solutions and strategies to the most serious issues facing Los Angeles students, their families and their schools.
- Understand and analyze the most current and controversial issues facing public education in the United States and how those issues play out on the ground 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 on student achievement.
- Analyze the role and impact of charter schools for students enrolled in charters and on students enrolled in LAUSD.
Required Texts:


Carter, Prudence and Welner, Kevin *Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America Must Do to Give Every Child an Even Chance* New York Oxford Press

Rhee, Michelle *Radical: Fighting to Put Students First*

Strongly Recommended Texts:


Jonathan Kozol. 1989. *Savage Inequalities*

Important Public Education Texts

Theodore Sizer 1992. *Horace’s Compromise*

Pedro Noguera. 2003 *City Schools and the American Dream*

Marion Orr and John Rodgers. 2010 *Public Education for Public Engagement*

A word about Texts: I know I required a lot here. This is not the type of class where you will be reading word for word from texts. But they are important. This is especially true when the author is visiting the class. 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. Additional articles and texts will be required. These will be posted on Moodle and/or distributed in class. You will also be required to monitor *The L.A. School Report* and *The Los Angeles Times* education blogs. Check emails and moodle regularly for update.
Grades

Assignments and Grading (2 credits)
Class Attendance and Participation 20%
Weekly Reflection Papers (4) 40%
Issue Analysis Paper 40%

Assignments and Grading (4 credits)
Class Attendance and Participation 20%
Weekly Reflection Papers (4) 20%
Issues Analysis Paper 20%
Action Research Project (paper and presentation) 40%

- Weekly reflection papers are a 1-2 page reflection and analysis of the lecture, panel or class discussion/activity. I really, really like it when students include readings and/or their own personal experiences in these reflection papers. Students can choose to write the four 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 Issues Analysis Paper is an in-depth look at one of the public education issues addressed during the class lecture, panel and/or discussions. The paper must be approximately 5-7 pages in length and include at least three sources beyond the class material. A more detailed assignment will be distributed at a later date. The Issues Analysis Paper is due by Friday, October 24th at 6 p.m.

- The Action Research Project is for 4 credit carrying students only. It is a comprehensive analysis of a major public education issue. The paper portion of the project should be between 10-15 pages in length and must include some form of field work or primary source research. Group Projects will be presented in the last two weeks of class and papers are due the last day of final exams. A much more detailed description will be distributed and a class meeting about the project will take place in early October.
Tentative Class Schedule

August 27th  Introduction, Overview and Opening Exercises

September 3rd  First Panel: The L.A. Education Journalists
Howard Blum, The Los Angeles Times
Annie Gilbertson, KPCC/NPR
Vanessa Romo, The Los Angeles School Report
Readings: Selected readings and articles on Moodle

September 10th  Introduction to Politics of Public Education
Moodle Reading: “The Takeover Artist” by Ed Leibowitz The Los Angeles Times Magazine
Part One: Improbable Scholars

September 17th  Public Lecture: Dr. David Kirp
Readings: Moodle readings on David Kirp including recent New York Times Op-ed piece
Part Two: Improbable Scholars

September 24th  Introduction to the Public Education “Reform” Movement
Note: Class will be a loose discussion format as some class members will be celebrating the holiday.
Moodle Readings: Excerpts from Michelle Rhee and Wendy Kopp
Film Excerpts

October 1st  The Evolving Role of Teacher’s Unions
Readings:  Part One: The Strike That Changed New York
Readings on the Vergarra Case

October 8th  Guest Speaker: Alex Caputo-Pearl
Readings:  Part Two: The Strike That Changed New York

October 15th  Panel: The Impact and Significance of the Vergarra Case
Readings: Moodle and Web articles on the significance of the Vergarra Case, Ruling and Appeal

October 22  Introduction to the Significance of the Opportunity Gap in Los Angeles and Beyond
Readings:  Part One: Closing the Opportunity Gap
LAUSD Equity Resolutions
*Issue Analysis Paper Due on October 24th*

Readings: Part Two: Closing the Opportunity Gap and other readings to be announced

November 5th: Introduction to the Conversation on Choice and Charter Schools  
Readings: Part One: Radical  
Part One: Death and Life of the Great Public School System

November 12th: Panel/Speaker on the Impact of Charter Schools and Choice in Los Angeles

November 19th: (Tentative) Panel on Procurement Justice

November 27th: No Class (Film Viewing)

December 4th: Project Presentations

December 11th: Project Presentations and Class Reflections
Class: UEP 212, 213
Policy Debates and Controversies in Public Education

Instructor: Steve Zimmer
Location: Fowler 112
Date/Time: Wednesday Evenings 7:15-9:15 p.m.
Public Lecture times may vary but will always be on Weds Evening

Office Hours: Immediately before or after class and by appointment

Contact Info: szimmer@lausd.net
zimmers@oxy.edu
213-241-6387 (office)
323-360-1656 (cell)
NOTE: PLEASE SEND ALL EMAILS TO BOTH ADDRESSES

Course Objectives

- Use the collective wisdom and experience of the class, information and ideas from the lecture/panel series, and action research projects to contribute to collective solutions and strategies to the most serious issues facing Los Angeles students, their families and their schools.
- Understand and analyze the most current and controversial issues facing public education in the United States and how those issues play out on the ground 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 on student achievement.
- Analyze the role and impact of charter schools for students enrolled in charters and on students enrolled in LAUSD.