

# Pittsburgh

## Educational Theory and Policy 401: Introduction to Comparative Education

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Hours: 11-12, Monday & Wednesday

There are two complementary goals of this class. One is that it should provide students with some of the information and concepts useful for comparing different school systems, their cultural contexts, and educational outcomes in the world today. A second goal of the course is to help students sharpen their own research and analytic skills to the point where independent, comparative insight about American education is possible. If the class "works," students thus should be able to form judgments about which aspects of a nation's education are unique to a particular context (e.g. to the U.S.) and which aspects represent features found generally in other schools throughout the world. This ability is important for educators who want to improve schools anywhere, either through teaching or policy. The double goals of the class guide its structure. On most Mondays and many Wednesdays there will be lectures on five texts (which class members are expected to study thoroughly beforehand). These are:

Merry White, The Japanese Educational Challenge (Free Press, 1987).

Joseph Tobin, D. Wu, & D. Davidson, Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China, and the United States (Yale University Press, 1989)

Max Eckstein and Harold Noah, Secondary School Examinations: International Perspectives on Policies and Practice (Yale University Press, 1993)

Ronald Dore, The Diploma Disease: Education, qualification, and development (University of California Press, 1976).

Ingemar Fagerlind & Lawrence Saha, Education and National Development: A comparative perspective (Pergamon Press, 1989)

Review and discussion questions will be distributed on each of these readings. On most Fridays the class will divide into two smaller discussion groups to permit greater participation in the analysis of the class texts. Please note that participation in these discussions is a course requirement. Based on the class discussions and review questions, there will be three short-answer quizzes. Approximate dates for these will be February 4, March 4, and April 6. These quizzes each make up 20% of the final class grade.

The second goal of the class - sharpening research and analytic skills - is pursued through collaborative activities in small, 2-3 person project teams. Teams will meet on most Wednesdays, usually in class but, when necessary, in the library or computer lab. The product of the collaboration will be a student-produced encyclopedia. Each team will chose a pair of countries for comparative study. Through their original research, each team is responsible for producing a rough draft and a final draft of some aspect of education in their chosen countries. These need to be completed by the date specified in the attached schedule, because the final product will be printed, photocopied, read, and discussed by the entire class. The final draft must be completed on a disk, either in P.C. or MacIntosh format, in addition to a hard copy (about eight pages, single spaced). A class-produced encyclopedia will be sold at cost in the University Bookstore. An open-book quiz on April 29, based on discussions of the encyclopedia, will be worth 15% of the final class grade. Instructors' evaluations of the project count for the remaining 25% of the course grade.

## Weekly Reading and Discussion Assignments

Each week, students should come prepared to discuss the following readings, paying particular attention to questions distributed in class.

- Jan 17: pps. 1 - 49, The Japanese Educational Challenge.
- Jan 24: pps. 50 - 109, The Japanese Educational Challenge.
- Jan 31: pps. 110 - 191, The Japanese Educational Challenge.
- Feb 7: pps. 12 - 71, Preschool in Three Cultures.
- Feb 14: pps. 72 - 125, Preschool in Three Cultures.
- Feb 21: pps. 126 - 221, Preschool in Three Cultures.
- Feb 28: all pages selected from Secondary School Examinations.
- March 14: pps. 1 - 50, The Diploma Disease.
- March 21: pps. 51 - 97, The Diploma Disease.
- March 28: pps. 3 - 63, Education and National Development.
- April 4: pps. 67 - 122, Education and National Development.
- April 11: Discussion of class-produced Encyclopedia chapters.
- April 18: Discussion of Encyclopedia chapters.
- April 25: Discussion of Encyclopedia chapters.

## Encyclopedia Production

On most Wednesdays students will work in teams of 2 - 3 persons. Two is the preferred number. The first task of each team will be to choose a pair of countries and an educational topic that they wish to study. To avoid too much duplication, teams are requested to rank-order three preferences of countries and topics. The instructors/editors will try to grant everyone their preferred assignment, but our intention is to produce a comprehensive encyclopedia. So we may ask you to work on one of your alternate choices, if one set of countries or one topic is oversubscribed. Most of the responsibility for pacing the production, and scheduling activities, will be decided by the individual teams, although the instructors/editors will expect that everyone complete: by January 24, a list of three choices for countries/topics; by March 23, a rough draft; by April 8, the final copy on disk as well as paper.