

## Photography and the History of American Education

Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education

5:300:364:01, Fall 2013, GSE 011

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Office hours before and after class and by appointment

Introduction: The history of photography coincides with the history of American education from the Common School Movement forward and the many photographs school classes, teachers, pedagogic scenes, and other aspects of education that have been saved by individuals, families, and archives since then offer a unique but little studied access to the formative modern movements in education. Most of these archived photographs have never been interpreted by historians, though they are original documents, many of them with accompanying written information, and as such they are primary material for studying and writing history. Studying archival photographs of school life presents a unique problematic opportunity to interpret meanings in the history of education by offering views of the past other documents cannot give. Using them as historic documents requires methods of interpretation that take account of the nature of photography, the ways people have used it in schools, the ways it has become part of public, personal and family life, and the ways photographs have been saved. A school picture or set of pictures that we can interpret objectively and perhaps find written documentation about can become the subject for a new passage in the history of education, challenging our thinking about the frameworks of meaning offered by articles and textbooks in history of education. This active, questioning experience of the study of history of education can ground critical

reflection on the meanings of education as we have experienced it personally and as we discuss it socially and politically, where we see connections of the past with education in our lives.

Aims and Activities: This course has three aims: To learn the story of American education chronologically and thematically from a textbook and with that the range and limits of interpretation imposed by contemporary scholarship; in a somewhat reverse direction, to write passages of history from archival photographs, learning to explore leads from the pictures and any accompanying documents we might find back to the textbook, as well as from the textbook into them; and to think speculatively about values and purposes in the study of history, especially history of education. The course combines reading, research, brief lectures adding to knowledge from the textbook, practice and collaboration by students, demonstration by the teacher, and presentations by students. Activities include: Reading and discussing the textbook; making a critical assessment of the textbook; two theme-based quizzes on the textbook; researching themes from the class in *History of Education Quarterly*; finding and researching archival photographs in *American Memory* (a Library of Congress website) and in the Rutgers University Libraries' Special Collections; interpreting these photos and relating them to the history of education; learning and using a basic study of rhetoric as a premise for interpretation; writing about or discussing personal responses to pictures; and a collaborative final project, which the other activities should prepare for.

Requirements and Grading: Attendance in all class meetings and participation in class activities are required except with a legitimate excuse; students must pass two theme-based quizzes on the textbook (15 points each); each student must write two short interpretive papers researched and planned in class with the teacher's help and finished at home (15 points each); students must complete a final project in the form of an electronic portfolio of pictures with an interpretive-scholarly essay - e.g., *PowerPoint*, blog, etc. (30 points); students will find and read three scholarly articles in history of education relevant to the themes of our study and present an interpretation of one of them in class (10 points). *Note:* For the textbook quizzes notes prepared in advance according to a protocol given by the teacher may be used; the protocol will be given a few days before each quiz and students' notes must be shown to the teacher at the time of the quiz. Accumulated points from all assignments will determine final grades, but the course is designed to include practice and some collaboration to enhance learning and help everyone earn the highest grade. Absences will severely undermine this. Necessary absences should be compensated for by getting notes from other students and seeing the professor in office hours to review things missed. Evaluations of student work will be based on how much learning the work shows, in each case; this includes especially the student's ability to use concepts and vocabulary from the course. Late assignments will be downgraded (A becoming B+, etc.), unless excused.

Academic Integrity: Individual and collaborative work in this course will be clearly distinguished. For

collaborative assignments (researching articles, practice writing and editing, and the final project), the teacher will establish requirements for equal participation and students will not receive credit if these requirements are not met. This course will follow the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, found at:

<http://senate.rutgers.edu/FinalInteri,AcademicIntegrityPolicy.pdf>

Required Text: Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, *American Education: A History*. Fifth edition. New York and London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2014.

Schedule of Classes: (15 meetings)

9/8 Introduction; "Aaron Copland's Class Picture"

9/11 Urban & Wagoner, chaps. 1-3; photos & documentation

9/18 Urban & Wagoner, chaps. 4-5; photos & documentation

9/25 Urban & Wagoner, chaps. 6-8; photography & rhetoric

10/2 First textbook quiz; Urban & Wagoner, chaps. 9-10

10/9 Urban & Wagoner, chaps. 11-13; photography & rhetoric

10/16 Second textbook quiz; photography & rhetoric

10/23 Library: *History of Education Quarterly*

10/30 Library: Pictures in Special Collections (moveable)

11/6 Practice interpretation of photographs for first paper

11/13 Presentation of articles

11/21 Practice interpretation of pictures for second paper

[11/27 Thanksgiving Recess: class does not meet]

12/4 Work on final project

12/11 Work on final project

Exam Day: Final project presentations

Note: We will be interpreting photographs in every class meeting.

Grading Schedule:

First textbook quiz: 10/2 - 4 weeks

Second textbook quiz: 10/16 - 6 weeks

First interpretation paper due: 11/13 - 10 weeks

Second interpretation paper due: 12/4 - 12 weeks

Presentation of articles from *History of Education Quarterly*: 11/13 - 10 weeks

Final project presentation; Exam day - 15 weeks