Course Purpose

The purpose of this seminar is to explore challenging and often controversial issues emerging from interactions among contemporary educational systems and the broader social, cultural, historical, political, ethical, environmental, and aesthetic systems of which they are a part. To do so, each student will complete an advanced project integrating their interests and preparation in education, liberal studies, and social advocacy. In addition, as a class we will explore contemporary barriers to and opportunities for systemic, progressive education reform and renewal.

Social Inquiry

Together we will explore knowledge, dispositions, skills and strategies necessary to sustain substantive attempts at social and educational reform. We will consider these resources broadly in relation to the future of U.S. public education, and more specifically in relation to topics to be addressed through individual reform compositions. We will share responsibilities for teaching and learning through active participation in exploratory writing, conferencing, discussions, simulations, presentations, and other approaches to social inquiry.

Shared readings will include The Courage to Teach by Parker Palmer, Letters to the Next President: What We Can Do About the Real Crisis in Public Education, edited by Clark Glickman, and a series of essays on course themes adapted from Re-envisioning Education & Democracy, R. Kurth-Schai & C. R. Green (forthcoming). Essays will be complemented readings selected by students from major education journals and texts. Each student will also complete a series of readings, including print and on-line sources, relevant to the topic of their reform composition.

Throughout the course we will adopt a social and exploratory approach to reading—a conversational approach that entails reading in a manner that is resonant, recursive, and responsible.

To read resonantly involves attending to aspects of your personal knowledge, values, feelings, and experiences most strongly affected by the texts. Through on-line (conversations journal) and student led class conversations (theme teaching) you are will also have opportunities to acknowledge and constructively respond to issues that resonate most strongly with others.
To read recursively entails reconsidering the same piece of writing at different stages of inquiry and deliberation, and conversing with others in ways that do not foreclose revisiting assumptions as contexts change.

To read responsibly assumes that reading for one’s self—to advance personal skills and understandings, or to support one’s initial position—is not sufficient. To read responsibly means to be ever mindful of the question: "What does the author say that is not only meaningful to me, but also important to share with others and relevant to broader civic aspirations?"

“Knowledge emerges only through invention, and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”

Paulo Freire

Reform Compositions

Throughout the semester we will also work together to challenge and support each other’s efforts to develop a significant piece of public scholarship, a creative endeavor that integrates and extends individual interests and academic preparation while making a valuable societal contribution. Compositions will vary in content and form, but all should include five primary elements:

(I) Issue Assessment: Drawing from research, consultation, and creative and critical reflection, your composition should begin with a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the current status of an issue or condition targeted for reform.

(II) Reform Initiative: Your issue assessment should be followed by an equally comprehensive and detailed account identifying your reform aspirations accompanied by an innovative and pragmatic plan of action.

(III) Alternative Representation: Your composition should include at least one alternative mode of representation (visual aides, poetry, music, information sheets, lesson plans, Powerpoint or web presentation, editorial, etc.) to reinforce thoughts communicated through the traditional written format.

(IV) Annotated Resources: Your composition should conclude with carefully selected and annotated resources that synthesize and document ways in which your understanding and imagination have been affected through engagement with varied resources (consultations with campus and community advisors, experiences, print and on-line texts, forms of artistic expression etc.

(V) Dissemination Plan: Your composition should be accompanied by a brief dissemination plan identifying ways in which your work might be made accessible to those for whom it might be of benefit. Additionally, it should be formatted for inclusion on the education reform website now being developed and maintained by Educational Studies students to serve as a community resource:

http://www.macalester.edu/educationreform

"Love and imagination may be the most revolutionary ideas available to us."

Robin D.G. Kelley
Evaluation

This seminar is structured to encourage all students to demonstrate a high quality of performance while assuming significant responsibility for each other’s learning. Self, peer, and faculty evaluation are incorporated. Final grades are assigned upon completion of all course components and based upon the following guidelines:

Reform Composition 65%
- Issue Assessment 25%
- Reform Initiative 25%
- Annotated Resources 10%
- Alternative Representation/Dissemination Plan 5%

Social Inquiry 35%
- Theme Teaching 15%
- Conversations Journal 10%
- ‘Letter to the Next President’ 10%

Course Overview & Schedule

Week 1  (9/13)  Course Introduction
          Conversations Journals

Week 2  (9/20)  Prospectus: Re-envisioning
          Palmer Chapters 1&2
          Theme Teaching

Week 3  (9/27)  Prelude: Re-envisioning
          Palmer Chapters 3&4
          Oracles

Week 4  (10/4)  Reform
          Palmer Chapter 7
Reform Composition Abstracts due
Student selected thematic readings due
Week 5  (10/11)  *Crisis*
Glickman pp. 1-34
EFR Interviews

Week 6  (10/18)  *Reflection*
Glickman pp. 35-69
Conceptual Mapping

Week 7  (10/25)  *Intuition*
Glickman pp. 70-105
‘Community Education Grants’ simulation
**Issue Assessment/Annotated Resources due**

*Midterm Break*

Week 8  (11/1)  *Inquiry*
Glickman pp. 106-140
‘Community Education Grants’ simulation

Week 9  (11/8)  *Advocacy*
Glickman pp. 141-183
Consultations

Week 10  (11/15)  *Imagination*
Glickman pp. 184-222

Week 11  (11/22)  *Risk*
Glickman pp. 223-260
**Reform Composition working draft due**
Reform Composition conference 11/22-11/24
‘Letter to the Next President’ abstract due

*Thanksgiving Break*

Week 12  (11/29)  *Inspiration*
Social Poetry/Freire Codes

Week 13  (12/6)  *Courage*
Presentations begin
‘Letter to the Next President’ due

Week 14  (12/13)  *Presentations continue/Course Closure*
**Reform Compositions due (M 12/13)**