Course Purpose:

Today there is significant concern that public education, both in the United States and around the globe, has reached a critical juncture. Perhaps more than any other social institution, public schools mirror a troubling array of social problems. Yet also more than any other social institution, public education provides vital opportunities to express social justice, compassion, imagination, and integrity. Urban public schools remain as one of the few social settings through which diverse citizens can interact in sustained and meaningful ways to achieve common goals. This course is centered in the belief that public education can be shaped to better prepare all young people to pursue life with intelligence, dignity, affiliation, and an ever-evolving sense of purpose and possibility.

To this end, we will study contemporary challenges and opportunities affecting urban public education on local, national and international levels. We will work both individually and collectively, on campus and in the community, to analyze specific policy issues and reform strategies. We will address these complex concerns from multiple perspectives, using varied approaches to teaching and learning. We will explore Macalester’s urban community through service learning placements in Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools.
Course Process:

Throughout the semester we will use a social approach to inquiry—an approach based on well-grounded assumptions that deep learning is relational, exploratory, and responsible.

Social inquiry is relational. Learning is not only cumulative, but also connective. It is deepened by through relationships that integrate cognitive, emotional, intuitive, aesthetic, ethical, and kinesthetic ways of knowing. It is extended by creating connections that cross boundaries. It is best accomplished through interpersonal relationships that are engaging and egalitarian. In such relationships the roles and responsibilities of ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ are continually exchanged.

Social inquiry is exploratory. Deep learning occurs in response to the discovery of new, often surprising conceptual patterns that provide a sense of possibility and direction, even in the face of complexity and uncertainty. Educational interactions are conversational. Knowledge is advanced through open, non-judgmental questioning and response. The goal is to sustain, complicate, and extend shared consideration rather than to move as quickly as possible toward closure. Curiosity, risk-taking, and experimentation are always in play.

Social inquiry is responsible. To learn for one’s own sake, to derive personal meaning and develop skill in self-expression, is necessary but not sufficient. Our knowledge is challenged and enriched as we strive to understand, and then to respond with respect and creativity to the needs and contributions of others. We are transformed as we work to connect our learning with broader civic aspirations and principled social action.

Two attributes of social inquiry are important to note here. First, because effective learning requires active participation and cooperative exchange, regular attendance is essential. Second, because deep learning is both radically social and highly personal, self- and social reflection and self- and peer evaluation play fundamental roles in this teaching/learning process.

Course Requirements:

1. Entering a Community of Inquiry: Varied activities designed to encourage active engagement in the dynamic ‘community of inquiry’ that is Macalester College. Included are skill-based (e.g., writing, information fluency) experience-based (e.g., participation in campus conferences and events), and reflective (e.g., educational autobiography) opportunities.

2. Shared Readings: Together we will read and consider In Schools We Trust by Deborah Meier; City Schools and the American Dream by Pedro Noguera; and Education for Public Democracy, David Sehr. These will be supplemented by relevant print, on-line, and other media resources selected by course staff and students.
3. **Course Conferencing:** In addition to class discussions we will use Nicenet—an on-line course-organizing tool—to support continuing conversations in preparation for, and in response to, course projects and experiences.

4. **Class Design Projects:** Drawing from personal preferences and experiences, from interactions with each other, and from course materials and activities, small design groups will develop projects relevant to focal course themes.

5. **Community Internships:** Students will participate in service learning placements (2-3 hours/week) in urban public school classrooms. Combined with assignments and reflective responses, and supported by our service-learning consultant, we will use these community-based experiences to effectively integrate education theory, policy and practice.

6. **Exploratory and Reflective Writing:** With support from our course preceptors and the MAX Learning Center, we will engage in varied approaches to learning through writing. Included are a series of relatively informal exploratory papers in varied formats and two analytic essays.

7. **Public Scholarship:** Throughout the semester we will also support each other’s efforts to develop a significant piece of public scholarship. Public scholarship is a creative endeavor that integrates and extends individual interests and academic preparation while making a valuable social contribution. Each student will compose a formal review of a book that addresses an issue of importance to contemporary urban public schools and society. These will 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

**Evaluation:**

Students are expected to demonstrate a high quality of performance across all course activities and assignments. Self, peer, and faculty evaluation are incorporated.

Course assignments (including preparation, reflections, and drafts) will be collected and organized in a portfolio. You will need a 2-2.5 inch, preferably D-ring type, 3-hole notebook with dividers. These will be collected for review twice during the semester. In addition to serving as an organizational strategy, portfolios support a more holistic approach to evaluation by providing a cumulative record of academic progress.

Time management is an important academic skill, particularly in courses that emphasize social inquiry. We will depend upon each other’s participation. Late assignments will therefore not be accepted unless arrangements are made with the instructor and peer reviewers in advance. Final grades are assigned based upon full course participation and completion of all course requirements, in reference to the following guidelines:
Entering a Community of Inquiry 10%
Course Conferencing 10%
Community Internships 10%
Design Projects 20%
Essays 20%
Public Scholarship 30%

Course Overview:

I. Contemporary Social Contexts and Aspirations for Public Education

Dates: 9/5-9/16
Readings: Meier; Noguera 1 & 2; Hjorsthoj 1, 2 & 5
Special Events: Into the Streets, Convocation (9/7)

II. Adventures in Education Policy – Challenges & Opportunities of Urban Schooling

Dates: 9/21-10/12
Readings: Noguera 3-7; Hjorsthoj 3 & 4; No Child Left Behind and selected publications provided in class.
Special Events: Information Fluency Session I (9/21)
‘First Month Metaphors’ Class Dinner (10/3)
Internships Begin

III. Education for Democracy

Dates: 10/14-11/11
Readings: Sehr Part I; Hjorsthoj 6-8
Special Events: International Round Table (10/14-17)
Educational Studies New Student Information Session (11/9)
Information Fluency Session II (11/11)
Dinner Discussion with World Press Institute Fellows (11/14)
Spring Semester Advising

IV. Theory into Practice: Developing Public Scholarship

Dates: 11/16-12/16
Readings: Selected by students
Special Events: ‘Works in Progress’ Process (11/30-12/8)
Internships Completed
Course Dinner & Awards Ceremony (12/19)
### Schedule of Submissions:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>9/16</td>
<td>Education Autobiography I</td>
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<td>9/30</td>
<td>Analytic Essay I (Draft)</td>
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<td>10/7</td>
<td>Design I Presentations</td>
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<td>10/12</td>
<td><strong>Analytic Essay I</strong></td>
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<td>Analytic Essay II (Draft)</td>
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<td>11/11</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>Book Review Abstracts</td>
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