EDUCATION 399
Jobs: Teaching as a Case Study
Fall 2015
Wednesday 11am-1:30pm
Stein 102

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Office hours: Wed. 10-11am, Fri. 12-1:30pm

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Course Description

What is a profession? And how does it differ from an occupation, a job, a vocation, or a calling?

What shapes the nature and feel of a workplace? What makes it stressful or pleasant, boring or inspiring?

What motivates people to come to work each day? What motivates them to actually try?

How do people get better at their jobs? Why do they sometimes not?

This course will consider core questions like these, about the nature of work in the United States. But it will do so by focusing on one job in particular: that of the teacher.

After all, teaching is an enigmatic profession with deep complexities to unravel.

Teachers, for instance, are highly valued—praised for doing important work and held in relatively high esteem by the public. Yet their work is often perceived as easy, and they lack the prestige of professionals in other fields. Teaching is incredibly difficult, the pay is marginal, and teachers are often blamed for perceived shortcomings in the education system. Yet year after year, tens of thousands of new teachers vie to fill empty classrooms, and current teachers report relatively high levels of job satisfaction. Teaching is the subject of great public interest and intense policy focus, and the profession is a perpetual target for reformers. Yet little has changed in teacher practice over the decades and its defining characteristics remain the same.

This class will examine teaching in the United States—its past, its present, and its future. How did the job evolve the way it did? To whom is the work attractive and why? What explains teacher decisions and behaviors? Why do we perceive teachers the way we do? What are the challenges teachers face? How could their jobs be made easier?

By treating teaching as a case study, the course will not only uncover much about teaching, but will also reveal a great deal about the nature of jobs in the United States.
Course Expectations

1. **Readings:** Do the assigned readings prior to class discussions and be prepared to ask and answer questions in class. We will be reading a wide range of pieces over the course of the semester, some more detailed than others. As a rule of thumb, shorter readings should be read more slowly and more carefully than longer ones…and you can skip “methods” sections.

2. **Participation:** Participation in class is important for deepening your understanding of the main ideas of the course and practicing key skills. Useful contributions take a number of forms—building on the comments of others, bringing new points to light, raising questions, carefully listening—but are common in that they foster an environment of discovery. In short, your participation is not merely as an *individual*, but as a *member of a whole*; bear that in mind. Attendance is a requirement; missing more than one class will require instructor consent and will otherwise adversely affect your grade.

3. **Writing:** We will do a good deal writing in this class, and you will be asked to complete several different kinds of assignments over the semester. You are responsible for fully understanding the Guidelines for Analytical Writing at the end of the syllabus.

Grading and Assignments

Your course grade will be broken down into the following categories:

1. Weekly Emails (20%)
2. Teacher Interview (15%)
3. Occupational Interview (15%)
4. Analytical Essay (25%)
5. Final Project (25%)

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, should be emailed (always cc: yourself). Late work for all assignments will be graded down one-third of a grade (i.e. A → A-) for each day it is past due. You are responsible for ensuring that emails go through (pro tip: copy yourself on them).

1. **Weekly Emails**

   **Due: Weeks 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 (by 8pm the evening before class)**

   Each week you will send me a brief email (250-300 words) indicating a) what you understood from the readings and b) what questions you have about them. These emails are for you as much as they are for me—a way to keep you thinking about (and remembering) what you’re learning.

   The first email will not be graded (that’s your test run). Subsequent emails will be graded on accuracy (did you understand the readings?), analysis (have you articulated what the really important ideas are?), and engagement (have you considered the bigger picture when crafting your questions?). Do not resort to vague statements and general claims; be clear and specific.
2. Teacher Interviews  
**Due: Sept. 23**

For this assignment, you will be interviewing several teachers about their profession. The interviews should last 20-30 minutes each, and should be designed to elicit as much information about the job as possible.

Your first task is to design an interview protocol (due **September 16**). What are you interested in? What questions will you ask? What follow-up questions will you ask? What are the key ideas you want to get at? Your questions should be **specific and organized around a central idea/topic/theme**. You will probably only get through about 10 questions during your interviews, so shoot for about that number.

The next task will be to find three teachers willing to be interviewed. In-person interviews are generally preferable, but phone and Skype also work. You can give them the questions ahead of time if you wish, but avoid emailing the questions to people, since that strips you of your ability to ask follow-up questions.

After your interviews are complete, you will want to summarize the main findings in a memo of 500-700 words. Your memo will be graded for **analysis** (did you distill a few key points out of the interviews?), **evidence** (did you support your analysis with data?), and **general writing** as outlined in the “Guidelines” section at the end of the syllabus.

3. Occupational Interviews  
**Due: Oct. 7**

This assignment will be very much like the teacher interviews, only with non-teachers. You will choose three people from three different fields (any job, including being a stay-at-home parent, is applicable) and then summarize your main findings in a memo of 500-700 words.

4. Analytical Essay  
**Due: Nov. 11**

What defines teaching as a profession? In a 1500-1800 word essay, you will offer your take.

Your essay should have a central argument that ties your various ideas together (you should not merely have a string of disconnected observations about teaching). In brainstorming that central argument, you will want to consider what the key and/or unique aspects of the job are, how it differs from other jobs, and how it is similar. After all, you are considering what defines teaching, and not merely what describes it. Remember to ground your argument in evidence from the readings and your interviews.

You will be evaluated on the criteria laid out in the “Guidelines for Analytical Writing” section.
5. Final Project

**Due: Dec. 9**

Your task for this assignment is to reinvent teaching, or at least one aspect of it.

First, you will want to start with what you know from the course. What do you think the biggest obstacles in the profession are? How could the profession be strengthened?

Once you have some of your own ideas, you’ll want to talk to some actual teachers (3-5). Do they see those things as problems? Do they have insights that you hadn’t considered?

After defining the problem (and your problem should be an *aspect* of the profession, like “professional growth” or “professional isolation”), your task will be to generate a series of potential solutions.

Then, having generated potential solutions, you will want to return to actual teachers to get their feedback. What do they like or dislike? What do they think will work or not? After that, you’ll head back to the drawing board. Then you’ll check in with teachers one more time. At the end of this iterative process, you should have 3-5 potential solutions that would improve the aspect of the profession you identified as problematic.

You will present your ideas in two different ways.

The first of those is through an in-class presentation (worth 50% of your final project grade). Walk the class through your problem (and how you identified it), the different drafts of your solutions (and how you refined them), and your final set of solutions (with clear, concrete examples of how they would be implemented). Plan on 15 minutes to present. We will discuss this further in class.

The other half of your final project grade will be determined by a very short essay—an op-ed—that distills your solutions into 800-1000 words. You will follow the same general format (identifying the problem, drafting solutions, and coming up with a final set of proposals). More information about writing op-eds will be given to you in class.

*For all of these assignments, you will receive more detailed instructions and support in class. The descriptions above are designed to give you a sense of the major tasks you will be completing this semester and are not intended to provide you with all of the information you need.*
# Classes and Readings

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<td>Geraldine Clifford, “Man/Woman/Teacher,” from <em>American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work</em></td>
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**Teacher Interview Protocols due**

**Memo due**
| Week 5 | Howard Becker, “School is a Lousy Place to Learn Anything in,” *American Behavioral Scientist*  
David Labaree, “On the Nature of Teaching and Teacher Education,” *Journal of Teacher Education*  
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| Week 6 | Lauren Rivera, “Hiring as Cultural Matching,” *American Sociological Review*  
Michael W. Sedlak, “Let Us Go and Buy a School Master,” from *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work*  
Linda Darling-Hammond et al., “Teacher Recruitment, Selection, and Induction,” [School District Selection and Hiring section] from *Teaching as the Learning Profession*  
Edward Liu and Susan Moore Johnson, “New Teachers’ Experiences of Hiring: Late, Rushed, and Information Poor,” *Educational Administration Quarterly* |
| 10/7 | Getting Hired |
| | Occupational Interview Memo due |
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| Week 7 | Fall Break |
| 10/14 |  |
Dan Lortie, “Career and Work Rewards,” from *Schoolteacher*  
Sylvia Allegretto et al., *The Teaching Penalty: Teacher Pay Losing Ground* |
| 10/21 | Compensation and Evaluation |
| Week 9                  | Frank Dobbin and Terry Boychuk, “National Employment Systems and Job Autonomy,” *Organization Studies*  
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|  
|                        | L. Carolyn Pearson and William Moomaw, “The Relationship between Teacher Autonomy and Stress…” *Educational Research Quarterly*  
|                        | Dan Lortie, “The Balance of Control and Autonomy in Elementary School Teaching” (pages 30-41)  |
| Week 10                | Philip W. Jackson, “The Daily Grind,” from *Life in Classrooms*  
|                        | David Cohen, “The Social Resources of Teaching,” from *Teaching and Its Predicaments*  
|                        | Joan E. Talbert and Milbrey W. McLaughlin, “Understanding Teaching in Context,” from *Teaching for Understanding: Challenges for Policy and Practice*  
|                        | Charles Bidwell, “Analyzing Schools as Organizations,” *Sociology of Education*  |
| Week 11                | Mike Rose, “The Working Life of a Waitress,” *Mind, Culture, and Activity*  
|                        | Lee Shulman, “Signature Pedagogies in the Professions,” *Daedalus*  
|                        | Willis D. Hawley and Linda Valli, “The Essentials of Effective Professional Development,” from *Teaching as the Learning Profession*  
|                        | Clea Fernandez, “Learning from Japanese Approaches to Professional Development,” *Journal of Teacher Education*  |
| Week 12                | William Goode, “Community within a Community: The Professions,” *American Sociological Review*  
|                        | Charles Goodwin, “Professional Vision,” *American Anthropologist*  
|                        | Renee Landers et al., “Rat Race Redux,” *American Economic Review*  
|                        | Dan Lortie, “The Limits of Socialization,” from *Schoolteacher*  |
| Week 13                | Thanksgiving Break  |
### Guidelines

**Guidelines for Critical Reading**

As a critical reader of a particular text (a book, article, speech, proposal), you should to use the following questions as a framework to guide you as you read:

1. What’s the point? This is the analysis issue: what is the author’s angle?
2. Who says so? This is the validity issue: on what are the claims based?
3. What’s new? This is the value-added issue: what does the author contribute that we don’t already know?
4. Who cares? This is the significance issue (the most important issue of all): is the text worth reading? Does it contribute something important?

If this is the way critical readers are going to approach a text, then as an analytical writer you need to guide readers toward the desired answers to each of these questions…

**Guidelines for Analytical Writing**

In writing papers for this (or any) course, keep in mind the following things that good writers do:

1. Pick an important issue. Why should anyone care about this topic? Pick an issue that matters and that you really care about. In short, make sure that your analysis meets the “so what?” test.

2. Provide analysis. A good paper is more than a catalogue of facts, concepts, experiences, or references; it is more than a description of the content of a set of readings. A good paper is a logical and coherent analysis of a key issue. This means that your paper should aim to explain rather than describe.
3. Keep focused. Don’t lose track of the point you are trying to make. Make sure the reader knows where you are heading and why. Cut out anything extraneous to your main point.

4. Aim for clarity. Don’t assume that the reader knows what you’re talking about. Instead, make your points clearly enough that even a lazy reader will get the point. Keeping focused and avoiding distracting clutter will help, as will writing clear sentences and deploying effective “signposts.”

5. Provide depth, insight, and connections. The best papers are ones that go beyond making obvious points, superficial comparisons, and simplistic assertions. They dig below the surface of the issue at hand, demonstrating a deeper level of understanding and an ability to make interesting connections.

6. Support your analysis with evidence. You need to do more than simply state your ideas, however informed and useful these may be. You also need to provide evidence that reassures the reader that you know what you are talking about.

7. Draw on course materials. Your papers should give evidence that you are taking this course. You do not need to agree with any of the readings or presentations, but your paper should show you have considered the course materials thoughtfully.

8. Recognize complexity and acknowledge multiple viewpoints. You should not reduce issues to either/or, black/white, good/bad. Papers should give evidence that you understand and appreciate more than one perspective on an issue.

9. Do not overuse quotation. In a short paper, long quotations (more than a sentence or two in length) are generally not appropriate. Even in longer papers, quotations should be used sparingly. In general, your papers are more effective if written primarily in your own words, using ideas from the literature but framing them in your own way to serve your own analytical purposes.

10. Cite your sources. You need to identify for the reader where particular ideas or examples come from. This can be done through in-text citation: give the author’s last name, publication year, and (in the case of quotations) page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence or paragraph where the idea is presented—e.g., (Schneider, 2011, p. 22); provide the full citations in a list of references at the end of the paper. You can also identify sources with footnotes or endnotes: give the full citation for the first reference to a text and a short citation for subsequent citations to the same text.

11. Take care in the quality of your prose. A paper that is written in a clear and effective style makes a more convincing argument than one written in a murky manner, even when both writers start with the same basic understanding of the issues. However, writing that is confusing usually signals confusion in a person’s thinking. After all, one key purpose of writing is to put down your ideas in a way that permits you and others to reflect on them critically, to see if they stand up to analysis. Take the time to reflect on your own ideas on paper and revise them as needed.