

# **Educational Policy and Politics Across the World**

## **Spring 2026**

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Instructor: Volha (Olga) Chykina

Contact Information: vchykina@richmond.edu

Class Time: Thursday, 3:00 pm -5:40 pm, Jepson 120

Office Hours: Thursday, 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm, or by appointment, Jepson 131

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### **Course Description**

One of the most notable trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the increased rate at which people are schooled. Not only do the majority of people even in most remote parts of the world have access to some version of formal schooling, but they also spend more years in formal education than in the past. There are surprising similarities in educational policies across the globe. At the same time, there are also striking differences and inequalities that persist in the amount and quality of education that students are exposed to depending on their country of residence.

This course examines these similarities and differences, as well as the role that governments, INGOs, and other institutions and individual actors play in how education is administered. Education will be discussed in relation to both traditional students and students from historically underserved groups, such as immigrant and refugee children and girls.

### **Required Textbook**

Baker, D. (2014). *The Schooled Society: The Educational Transformation of Global Culture*. Stanford University Press.

### **Course Grades**

Your grade will consist of attendance and participation (20 points), 4 short responses (4 X 8 = 32 points), a group presentation (10 points), a paper presentation (3 points), and a final paper (35 points). Points for each assignment translate directly and with equal weight into the percentages towards the final grade.

### **Passing Letter Grades are Assigned as Follows**

A+ = 98-100%	B+ = 88-89%	C+ = 78-79%	D+ = 68-69%	
A = 94-97%	B = 84-87%	C = 74-77%	D = 64-67%	F <60
A- = 90-93%	B- = 80-83%	C- = 70-73%	D- = 60-63%	

If a student disagrees with their grade on any of the assignments, they must discuss it with the instructor within a week after the grade is given. For the final paper, this time frame will be shorter to allow for timely input of final grades. I do not offer makeup work or extra credit, no exceptions.

## Assignments and Class Activities

**Attendance and participation (20 points, 10 points assessed after week 8, 10 points assessed at the end of class).** This class is a seminar, and your attendance and participation are essential to your success. Each class will incorporate a lecture and a discussion during which students should be prepared to engage with the instructor and each other in a respectful manner appropriate for a professional setting. You are expected to come to every class having read and / or watched all assigned materials, and your participation grade will suffer if you do not. With that said, if you need to skip class, I will grant excused absences with ease if you reach out before class and explain the nature of your absence.

**Four short responses (8 points each X 4 = 32).** To facilitate in-class discussion, four times during the semester, each student will be assigned a short written response to the day's readings and / or videos. Responses should be between 2 and 3 pages long, with 1" margins, double-spaced, in Times New Roman size 12 font, and **printed-out**. Please bring your printed response to class. Students should address the following points in their responses.

- What are the main claims that the authors of the assigned readings make?
- What are the arguments behind the authors' main claims?
- What are the potential criticisms of the authors' claims, and / or how do these claims connect to the material covered earlier in class?

Responses will be graded 0 if they are not submitted on time, and 8 if they are submitted on time and incorporate all the points above in a manner that reflects both substantive knowledge of and active thinking about the material. Points between 0 and 8 will be assigned if some of the points above are not addressed at all or in a substantive manner.

**Group presentation (10 points).** In groups, students will prepare a presentation (before class) and lead class discussion that centers around how one of the issues discussed during the course applies to the United States. You do need to submit the presentation, just bring it to class. Each group will be able to choose a topic that they are interested in but no duplication of topics across groups will be allowed. Each group will be allotted about 30 minutes for the presentation and discussion.

**Paper presentation (3 points).** Students will present the work that they have done so far for the final paper. The presentations should be 4-5 minutes, and they will be followed by discussion. The point of the presentation is to make sure that the student is on track to complete the final paper. At this point, students should be ready to present the main arguments that they will make in their final paper as well as some preliminary work.

**Final paper (35 points).** Students will be asked to pick one country (not USA) and create an overview of its educational system. To ensure no duplication, I will share a document where students can sign up with their country of choice. Permission for multiple students to focus on the same country will be granted only in exceptional cases and with my permission. To facilitate student writing, I will take drafts. Draft submission is optional. The final paper is due at **2 pm on May 1<sup>st</sup>**.

The final paper should be 10 to 12 pages long excluding title page and references. It should be typed using Times New Roman font in size 12, 1” margins, and it should be double-spaced and either in Word or PDF format.

The **final paper** is expected to address the following points:

- Description of country’s geographic information, as well as its political and historical background and their potential impact on the educational system. 5 points
- A brief description of how students progress through the education system (e.g., when do students start school, how many years of mandatory education do students have to complete, are students differentiated into different types of schools or tracks as they progress through education, do they have to take high-stakes exams in order to be admitted to the next level of schooling, etc.) 5 points
- A detailed look into one specific issue that was discussed in class (such as girls’ education, shadow education, or a specific feature of an educational system, such as centralization, etc.), how it applies to the country of interest, and how it affects the student population or sub-population of interest. 5 points
- A discussion of how educational expansion affects the lives and educational outcomes of students in the country of choice. This section can be merged into other sections of the paper, but students should explicitly point to the fact that they are discussing educational expansion when writing about it. 5 points
- An **original** chart, graph, or table that supports or illustrates one of the arguments that a student puts forward in the paper. Potential sources of data are listed at the end of the syllabus. Demonstrations on how to use these data sources will be provided during classes. If a student finds it difficult to use these data sources, they should see the instructor during office hours. 5 points
- Citations to at least 10 academic sources. References should be presented in a uniform format and in a way that facilitates instructor’s retrieval of cited information (i.e. if a student cites an online source, a link to the source should be provided). Students can cite mainstream journalistic work as well but it won’t count towards the 10 required academic sources. 5 points
- The paper should be free of typographic and grammatical errors and should be well written. 5 points

Total: 35 points

## Weekly Schedule

All reading materials except the textbook are available on Blackboard or via links on the syllabus.

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### **Week 1 (January 15). Introduction: Educational Policy, Educational Expansion, and the Politics of Education.**

Lindle, J. C. (2018). The history of educational policy and governance: Fundamental questions about citizens' rights, roles, and futures. *The Wiley handbook of educational policy*, 29-49.

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### **Week 2 (January 22). The Role of the University in the Modern World.**

*The Schooled Society*, Chapters 1 – 5.

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### **Week 3 (January 29). Social and Political Consequences of the Education Revolution.**

*The Schooled Society*, Chapters 6 – 10.

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### **Week 5 (February 5). Educational Aid.**

Steer, L., & Smith, K. (2015). Financing Education: Opportunities for Global Action. *Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution*. Read only Executive Summary.

Lewin, K. M. (2020). Beyond business as usual: Aid and financing education in Sub Saharan Africa. *International journal of educational development*, 78, 102247.

- Attending *AI and the Future of Work Sharp Viewpoint Speaker Series* Lecture at 5 pm (<https://www.richmond.edu/sharp/>). Registrations will be made for students by the event coordinator.
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### **Week 4 (February 12). Illiberal Politics and Education.**

Schofer, E., Lerch, J. C., & Meyer, J. W. (2022). Illiberal reactions to higher education. *Minerva*, 60(4), 509-534.

Fernandez, F., Chykina, V., & Lin, Y. C. (2024). Science at risk? Considering the importance of academic freedom for STEM research production across 17 OECD countries. *PLOS One*, 19(2), e0298370.

In groups, find a recent news article on the attack on academic freedom and come to class ready to talk about it.

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## **Week 6 (February 19). How Educational Systems Differ and Why They Matter.**

Bodovski, K., Byun, S. Y., Chykina, V., & Chung, H. J. (2017). Searching for the golden model of education: Cross-national analysis of math achievement. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47(5), 722-741.

Suleymanova, D. (2018). Between regionalisation and centralisation: The implications of Russian education reforms for schooling in Tatarstan. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 70(1), 53-74.

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## **Week 7 (February 26). Educational Systems: Tracking.**

- LeTendre, G. K., Hofer, B. K., & Shimizu, H. (2003). What is tracking? Cultural expectations in the United States, Germany, and Japan. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 43-89.
  - Pásztor, A. (2010). “Go, go on and go higher an’ higher”. Second-generation Turks’ understanding of the role of education and their struggle through the Dutch school system. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31(1), 59-70.
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## **Week 8 (March 5). Meritocracy, Educational Testing, and Informal Educational Systems.**

- Byun, S-Y. (2014). Shadow education and academic success in Republic of Korea. In H. Park and K-K Kim (Eds.), *Korean education in changing economic and demographic contexts*, (pp. 39–43). Singapore: Springer.
  - Korea JoongAng Daily (2024). *Cram or crime? Demand for illegal late-night hagwon classes persists despite government crackdowns*. Retrieved from <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2024-08-23/national/socialAffairs/Cram-or-crime-Demand-for-illegal-latenight-hagwon-classes-persists-despite-govt-crackdowns/2119400>
  - Liu, Y. (2013). Meritocracy and the Gaokao: A survey study of higher education selection and socio-economic participation in East China. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34(5-6), 868-887.
  - CBS News (2015). *Indian parents scale school wall to help students cheat on exams*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/indian-parents-scale-school-wall-to-help-students-cheat-on-exams/>.
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## **Spring Break! (No Class on March 12)**

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## **Week 9 (March 19). International Assessments**

- Familiarize yourself with TIMSS: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdq-QJmeQfM>

- Familiarize yourself with PISA:  
<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/overview.asp#:~:text=The%20Program%20for%20International%20Student,since%20its%20inception%20in%202000.>
  - Schleicher, A. *Use data to build better schools*. TED Talk. Available at [https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas\\_schleicher\\_use\\_data\\_to\\_build\\_better\\_schools#t-773156](https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_schleicher_use_data_to_build_better_schools#t-773156)
  - Morsy, L., Khavenson, T., & Carnoy, M. (2018). How international tests fail to inform policy: The unsolved mystery of Australia's steady decline in PISA scores. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 60(C), 60-79.
  - Ravitch, D. (2013). *Chapter 7: The facts about the international test scores* (pp. 63-70). In D. Ravitch, *Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
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### **Week 10 (March 26). Educating Girls.**

- Warrington, M., & Kiragu, S. (2012). "It makes more sense to educate a boy": Girls 'against the odds' in Kajiado, Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 32(2), 301-309.
  - Bajaj, M. (2009). Sugar daddies and the danger of sugar: Cross-generational relationships, HIV/AIDS, and secondary schooling in Zambia. In D. Baker & A. Wiseman (Eds.), *Gender, Equality and Education from International and Comparative Perspectives* (pp. 123-143). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
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### **Week 11 (April 2). Educating Immigrant Children.**

- Drouhot, L. G. (2024). Assimilation theories in the 21st century: Appraising accomplishments and future challenges. *International Migration Review*, 58(4), 1974-2011.
  - Chykina, V. (2024). Expecting to achieve against the odds: Anti-immigrant sentiment and immigrants' educational and occupational expectations in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 59(1), e12574.
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### **Week 12 (April 9). Educating Refugee Children.**

- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2016). Refugee education: The crossroads of globalization. *Educational Researcher*, 45(9), 473-482.
- Mahfouz, J., El-Mehtar, N., Osman, E., & Kotok, S. (2020). Challenges and agency: Principals responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanese public schools. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 23(1).

- The Guardian (2024). 'Education is survival': parents of Rohingya refugee children fight for their right to go to school in India. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/nov/26/education-rohingya-refugee-children-india-schools>.
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### **Week 13 (April 16). Bringing it Back Home**

- In groups, prepare a presentation and come to class ready to lead class discussion on how one aspect of how what we discussed during the course applies to the US.
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### **Week 14 (April 23). Individual Paper Presentations**

- Come to class with your paper presentation ready.
  - Optional paper draft due on April 24<sup>th</sup>, by 5 pm.
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- The final paper is due at **2 pm on May 1<sup>st</sup>**.
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## Potential Data Sources to Use in the Final Paper Assignment

World Bank DataBank:

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics:

<http://uis.unesco.org/>

OECD Online Database:

<https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators.html?orderBy=mostRelevant&page=0>

PISA Data Explorer:

<https://pisadataexplorer.oecd.org/ide/idepisa/>

or

<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/idepisa/>

TIMSS Data Visualizer (this will require that you register):

<https://nces.ed.gov/timss/idetimss/>

Barro-Lee Educational Attainment Dataset:

<http://www.barrolee.com/>

## Other Policies

### Awarding of Credit

To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.

[registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html](http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html)

### Disability Accommodations

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.

[disability.richmond.edu/](http://disability.richmond.edu/)

### Honor System

All assignments are expected to be the student's original work. The Jepson School follows the provisions of the Honor System as outlined by the School of Arts and Sciences. This means that no student is to use, rely on or turn in work that was paid-for, copied, excessively summarized without citation, created in collaboration (without permission), produced by AI (without explicit permission), or is otherwise not the original work of the student (without explicit permission).

### Religious Observance

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.

### Addressing Microaggressions on Campus

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership<sup>1</sup>. Recent research has found that, when professors do not address microaggressions in class, microaggressions foster alienation of marginalized groups<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, both students and faculty who are exposed to microaggressions more often are more likely to have depressive symptoms and negative affect (a negative view of the world)<sup>3</sup>. A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism<sup>4</sup>. With this in mind, community member at the University of Richmond should aim to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding themselves, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.

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<sup>1</sup> Sue, S., Zane, N., Nagayama Hall, G. C., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The Case for Cultural Competency in Psychotherapeutic Interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 525–548. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163651>

<sup>2</sup> Bergom, I., Wright, M.C., Brown, M.K. and Brooks, M. (2011), Promoting College Student Development through Collaborative Learning: A Case Study of Hevruta. *About Campus*, 15, 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20044>

<sup>3</sup> Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Mental Health: Counseling Implications for Clients of Color. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x>

<sup>4</sup> Rolón-Dow, R. (2019). Stories of Microaggressions and Microaffirmation: A Framework for Understanding Campus Racial Climate. *NCID Currents*, 1(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.106>