This course offers an in depth analysis of a small but growing subfield of education and politics. Economists and sociologists have long-standing scholarship on education, but political science is only recently starting to catch up. Education and politics intersect in a number of ways. For some, education is the only way to build the informed citizenry that democracies depend on. For others, education is the core of a strategy for economic development, or a system for maintaining inequality. Education systems also create interests that contend for influence or control — different levels of government, business, teacher unions, parents, and politicians. The question of who controls education is usually complex and often changeable. Why do education systems, and performance, vary so widely across countries? What politics and policies can best promote greater equity and efficiency in education? Which groups favor or oppose these policies, and why?

The course uses a comparative perspective to get at these questions at the k-12 or primary and secondary levels. The course focuses mostly on the United States, Europe, and Latin America to allow for comparisons across richer countries and between rich and developing countries.

Class sessions will have a mix of seminar discussions and other collective exercises. Students are expected to do all the assigned readings, carefully, and come prepared to discuss them and use what they learned. Classes will also include occasional lectures, films, and visiting speakers.

Class participation, both quality and quantity, including online posts on the readings, accounts for 35 percent of the final grade. The main written assignment is a 15-20 page research paper on a topic chosen by the student, in consultation with the instructor. This paper assignment has several intermediate steps and grades: 2 two-page book reviews (10 percent), a five page research design (10 percent), a full outline for the paper (5%), in class presentation (10%), and a final paper (30 percent).

Students should buy: Peterson, Paul. 2010. Saving Schools: From Horace Mann to Virtual Learning. Cambridge: Havard University Press. Other class readings will be posted to Stellar/LM, unless otherwise noted.
Week 1 (4 February). Introduction and Organization

Week 2 (11 February). Education for What?


Further reading


Recitation: meeting with Jennifer Greenleaf, social science librarian (or second half of class)

No class 18 February, MIT holiday. Break for research.

Week 3 (25 February). Some History


https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055413000257. Skim statistics.

Further reading

Recitation: 1 page bibliography due

**Week 4 (3 March). Education, Inequality, and Sociology**


Further reading


Recitation: individual meetings on paper proposals. First book report due 5 March.

**Week 5 (10 March). Teacher Unions: Reform Partners or Self-Interested Opponents**


Further reading


Recitation:

Week 6 (17 March). The Politics of Choice and Charter Schools


Further reading


Spring break (24 March).

Week 7 (31 March). Philanthropy and Donor Politics


Further reading


Recitation: Research design due 2 April

Week 8 (7 April). Testing and Accountability Revolution


Further reading

Rhodes, Jesse. 2012. An Education in Politics: The Origins and Evolution of No Child Left Behind. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Overview (pp. 1-26) and chapter 5 (pp. 126-158).


Recitation:

Week 9 (14 April). The Politics of Education Reform in Latin America


Further reading


Recitation: “De Panzazo” movie on Mexico

-------- No class 21 April --------

**Week 10 (28 April). Vocational and Technical Education**


Further reading


Recitation: student presentations

Full outline due 30 April
Week 11 (5 May). Privatization and Battles over Public versus Private Education

Review Larrañaga from week 4


Further reading


Last Recitation: student presentations

Week 12 (12 May). Work of the Future and the Future of Education


MIT taskforce on Work of the Future, Fall 2019 report, especially pp. 35-40 on education

Further reading


No recitation

Papers due 14 May