Educational Studies 308:
Cities, Suburbs, and Schools

Trinity College  Fall 2006
W 1:15-3:55pm  Library seminar room 103
http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ

Associate Professor Jack Dougherty  Teaching Assistant:
McCook 302  Lis Pennington ‘07
Phone: 297-2296  email: elisabeth.pennington
Email: jack.dougherty@trincoll.edu
Office Hours: Tues 2-4pm and Wed 10am-Noon

Additional resource people:
  Rachael Barlow, Social Sciences Data Coordinator (office in library, level 1)
  David Tatem, Academic Computing Specialist (office in library, level A)

Theme for Fall 2006:
Shopping for Homes and Schools

Description:
This upper-level undergraduate seminar operates as a team research workshop. First, we closely examine a noteworthy study on some aspect of cities, suburbs, and schooling in the United States. Next, we design and conduct a small-scale parallel research project to test whether the author’s claims apply to the metropolitan Hartford area. Students develop three types of research skills: historical (interpreting archival source materials), qualitative (analyzing oral interviews), and quantitative (generating descriptive statistics and GIS computer maps from large datasets). For the community learning experience, the seminar partners with a local organization to develop the research study, present the findings, and discuss their significance.

A major goal of the seminar is to prepare students to design and conduct their own independent research projects during their senior year. For examples of undergraduate research projects that have emerged from this seminar, see the Cities, Suburbs, and Schools website: <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ/css>

In fall 2006, our seminar theme will be “Shopping for Homes and Schools.” We will investigate questions such as: How do city and suburban families construct beliefs about the quality of neighborhood schools? How does public data about schools (such as test scores, or student racial and socioeconomic composition) influence home purchasing decisions? What are the broader social consequences of a system where privileged families may use private real estate markets to “buy” access into selected public schools?

Prerequisite: Ed 200 or Psyc 225 or the Cities Program or permission of instructor.

Readings: Will be made available in the seminar
### Assessment:

**Project #1 Home-buyer Interviews (qualitative skills)**
- literature review: 10
- data exercises: 10
- analysis paper: 20

**Project #2 Schools, Test Scores, and Home Sales (quantitative skills)**
- data exercises: 10
- analysis paper: 20

**Final Project**
- research proposal OR public outreach project paper: 20

**Class Participation (graded by classmates)**
- discussion facilitator -- organize an engaging, focused dialogue on assigned topic, with partner; prep with instructor or TA: 5
- overall contribution to the seminar: 5

**TOTAL** 100

Be advised that adequate work earns a C, good work earns a B, and outstanding work earns an A in this class. Students are expected to engage in academic honesty in all forms of work for this course. If this is unclear to you, ask me for clarification.

The penalty for overdue assignments will be 10% for every 12-hour period beyond the deadline, with exceptions granted only for documented medical or family emergencies.

Please notify me during the first week if you require any special accommodations.

Your classmates and I expect your regular and prompt attendance at every session, since we rely upon our collective efforts to succeed in this team-based seminar.
Seminar schedule:
REMINDER: Since this is a project-based research seminar involving real-world situations, the instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus schedule at any time.

Sept 6th
Intro to syllabus and CSS research project; Home buying simulation, part 1

Sept 13th
Read: Kenneth Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (Oxford University Press, 1985), chapter 11 ("Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream") and chapter 13 ("The Baby Boom and the Age of the Subdivision").


Facilitators 1 & 2 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________


In seminar: Home buying simulation, part 2

Facilitators 3 & 4_______________________; prep meeting ____________________

Sept 20th
Read:

Facilitators 5 & 6 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________

In seminar: conference call with the author

Facilitators 7 & 8 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________

In seminar: literature review assignment distributed

Sept 27th
In seminar: literature review reports; design study sample and draft of interview guide

Facilitators 9 & 10 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________

Facilitators 11 & 12 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________
Oct 4th
Read: (TBA after literature reviews) ________________________________

Facilitators 13 & 14 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________

In seminar: pilot interviews with home-buyers; transcribing guidelines

Oct 11th
Interviews with home buyers (during seminar or alternative date/time ____________)

Oct 18th
In seminar: Thematic analysis of interview transcripts; paper #1 assignment distributed

Oct 25th
Paper #1 and informal presentations due in seminar


In seminar: Descriptive statistics and charts with Microsoft Excel

Nov 1st

Facilitators 15 & 16 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________


In seminar: Computer mapping with ArcGIS

Nov 8th
Project #2 paper assignment distributed; data analysis workshop

Nov 15th
Paper #2 and information presentations due in seminar; discussion with Professor Zannoni’s econometrics students about their research project

Nov 22nd [reschedule to new date and location: ________________________]
Final project brainstorming session
Nov 29th
Read: Lis Pennington, “A Political History of School Finance Reform in the Metropolitan Hartford Region, 1945-2005,” [research proposal and draft of final paper].

Facilitators 17 & 18 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________

In seminar: prepare for next week’s presentations

Facilitators 19 & 20 _______________________; prep meeting ____________________

Dec 6th
Research presentation exchange with the Pols 355: Urban Politics seminar, taught by Prof. Stefanie Chambers

*********** Final Project options: ***********
A) Design and write a research proposal for a senior-level project on any topic related to this seminar on cities, suburbs, and schools, to be evaluated on these criteria:

-- Does the author pose a thought-provoking, researchable question (or hypothesis) and explain its significance?

-- Does the author connect the question to the existing research literature (secondary sources) and move beyond into new territory?

-- Does the author identify the most appropriate primary sources and research methods for this study?

-- Is the author’s proposal well organized, and does it include sufficient background for audiences unfamiliar with the topic? Does the author cite sources in an acceptable format so that future readers may easily locate them?

B) Design and carry out a public outreach project that introduces real audiences to some research findings from our seminar. For example, you may:

-- deliver a research presentation and lead a discussion with community partner

-- produce a user-friendly research summary to be used by a community partner

-- write and submit a research-based op-ed essay to a local periodical

-- organize a political protest or public speak-out, based on research findings

Students choosing this option must write a paper that describes the planning and results of the outreach project, reflects on the lessons learned, and links the experience to at least one of the seminar readings.

For either option A or B, the suggested length is approximately 5 double-spaced pages.

In lieu of a final exam, the final paper is due on Thursday, Dec 14th at 3pm.

Educ 308 Fall 2006, p. 5