

# Educational Studies 308: Cities, Suburbs, and Schools

Trinity College      Spring 2005  
M 1:15-3:55pm      LSC 138  
<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ>

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Office Hours: Mondays 10am-noon  
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## **Description:**

How did city dwellers' dreams of better schooling, along with public policy decisions in housing and transportation, contribute to the rise of suburbia in the twentieth century? How do city-suburban disparities affect teaching and learning in classrooms today? What promise do *Sheff v O'Neill* remedies for racial isolation, such as magnet schools at the Learning Corridor, hold for the future? Students will investigate these questions while developing their skills in oral history, ethnographic fieldwork, and geographical information system (GIS) software. Community learning experiences will be integrated with seminar readings and research projects.

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

## **Objectives:**

This upper-level undergraduate course is partly a reading seminar and partly a research workshop. One week, we closely examine a noteworthy text on the historical or contemporary dimensions of cities, suburbs, and schools. During the following weeks, students plan and conduct small-scale group research projects to test the author's claims in the metropolitan Hartford area. By merging together these two halves of the course, advanced undergraduates become better prepared to propose and conduct an independent research project in their senior year. For examples of student research projects that have emerged from this course, see the Cities, Suburbs, and Schools research project website (<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ/css>).

## **Readings to purchase:**

Claire Smrekar and Ellen Goldring. *School Choice in Urban America: Magnet Schools and the Pursuit of Equity*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999.

ISBN: 080773828X (Trade Paper)

Kevin Fox Gotham. *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

paperback ISBN 0-7914-5378-2

Additional readings will be made available in seminar

### **Projects and Assessment:**

Students will participate in two group research projects to test claims from syllabus readings to the metropolitan Hartford area.

#### Project 1: The Marketing and Selection of Interdistrict Magnet Schools

Claire Smrekar and Ellen Goldring's book, *School Choice in Urban America: Magnet Schools and the Pursuit of Equity* (1999), was based on their studies of Cincinnati and St. Louis. Using qualitative methods (interviewing and surveys) and quantitative methods (Excel and ArcGIS software), we will investigate how parents make choices and how administrators market interdistrict magnet schools, specifically the Montessori Magnet School and the Hartford Magnet Middle School at the Learning Corridor.

Seminar discussion facilitators 10  
(assigned to individuals or pairs for specific readings/tasks)

Qualitative and Quantitative data exercises 10  
(using local data and building on methods taught in seminar)

Paper #1 20  
(a 5-to-10 page paper that addresses the research question based on syllabus readings and data collected in metro Hartford)

#### Project 2: Private Real Estate Markets and Public Schools in Metropolitan Hartford

Kevin Fox Gotham's book, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience* (2002), analyzes various factors that shaped racial and social class characteristics of that region during the twentieth century. Using historical methods, we will examine how the composition of private homes and public schools have changed in the Hartford-West Hartford-Bloomfield area from the 1950s to the present.

Seminar discussion facilitators 10  
(assigned to individuals or pairs for specific readings/tasks)

Historical evidence exercises 10  
(using local evidence and building on methods taught in seminar)

Paper #2 20  
(a 5-to-10 page paper that addresses the research question based on syllabus readings and data collected in metro Hartford)

### Final Project:

Students must declare their choices about the final project in early April (date TBA)

Option X: Design and carry out a plan for a **public research presentation** drawn from one of our seminar projects. For example, you may arrange an off-campus oral presentation with a school, administrative team, parent organization, community group, etc. Or you may write and submit an essay to a local school newsletter, Trinity Tripod, Hartford Courant, etc. Students who choose this option must submit a 5-page paper that includes the text of your presentation/essay, the decisions you made in designing it, and reflections on how audiences responded to it.

Option Y: Design and carry out a **community outreach project** that expands upon one of the topics from our seminar. For example, you could provide user-friendly data for a school or community organization, volunteer with a city-suburb regionalization group, or organize a political protest. Students who choose this option must submit a 5-page paper that describes the outreach project, reflects on its lessons, and links this experience to at least one of our seminar readings.

Option Z: Design and write a **research proposal** for a senior-level project on any topic related to this seminar. Students who choose this option must submit a 5-page research proposal that identifies a specific research question and the most appropriate qualitative, quantitative, and/or historical research methods and primary source materials to answer it. This option is not open to current seniors.

In all cases, students will give informal presentations of their final projects at the last seminar meeting (May 2nd) and submit their final papers on Friday, May 6th.

### General:

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 project-based seminar.

**Seminar schedule:**

IMPORTANT NOTE: Since this is a project-based research seminar involving various community partners and resources, the seminar may need to make adjustments.

**January 24 Introduction to Seminar & Research Project #1 (magnet schools)**

Read:

Robert Frahm, "Whites Mostly Shun City [Magnet] Schools," *Hartford Courant*, May 1, 2004.

Rachel Gottlieb, "Magnet Schools Attract Many," *Hartford Courant*, October 23, 2004.

In seminar:

Presentation on *Sheff v O'Neill* and magnet schools

Distribution of project #1 guidelines

Plan interview / surveys guide for prospective magnet parents

Write and submit Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethics form

**January 31 Prior Research on Magnet Schools, part I**

Read:

Claire Smrekar and Ellen Goldring. *School Choice in Urban America: Magnet Schools and the Pursuit of Equity*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999.

In seminar:

Reports from interviews / survey of prospective magnet parents

Discussion of Smrekar and Goldring, facilitated by \_\_\_\_\_

Preparation for interview with magnet administrator TBA, by \_\_\_\_\_

**February 7 Prior Research on Magnet Schools, part II**

Read:

Barbara Q. Beaudin, "Interdistrict Magnet Schools and Magnet Programs in Connecticut: An Evaluation Report," Division of Evaluation and Research, Connecticut State Department of Education, March 2003; downloaded from <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/cmip/magnet.htm>

Mary Haywood Metz. "The School System's Influence on the Magnet Schools," in *Different by Design: Context and Character of Three Magnet Schools*. New York: Routledge, 1986/1992, chapter 2.

In seminar:

Reports from interviews / survey of prospective magnet parents

Discussion of Beaudin, facilitated by \_\_\_\_\_

Discussion of Metz, facilitated by \_\_\_\_\_

Preparation for interview with magnet administrator TBA, by \_\_\_\_\_

**February 14            Analyzing Qualitative and Quantitative Data with Excel**

Read:

Joel Best, *More Damned Lies and Statistics: How Numbers Confuse Public Issues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chapter 2.

In seminar:

Collating and coding the survey/interview data

Introduction to Excel for organizing and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data

**February 21            Analyzing Spatial Data with ArcGIS computer mapping**

Read:

Mark Monmonier. *How to Lie with Maps, second edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, chapter 3 excerpts.

In seminar:

ArcGIS tutorial

Distribution of qualitative and quantitative data exercises, DUE by Trinity Days

**Week of February 28th    Trinity Days**

Instead of our regularly-scheduled seminar, a computer lab session will be held on

\_\_\_\_\_ to assist with qualitative and quantitative data exercises.

**March 7                Completion and Presentation of Project #1**

In seminar:

Informal oral presentations of research findings; Paper #1 DUE in class

**March 14                Introduction to Research Project #2 (Homes and Schools)**

Read:

Kevin Fox Gotham. *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

In seminar:

Presentation of sample historical sources in metro Hartford

Discussion of Gotham and conference call with author, by \_\_\_\_\_

**March 21                Trinity Spring Break -- no seminar**

**NOTE:** This preliminary schedule for project #2 will be updated after break, with designated spaces inserted for student facilitators.

**March 28                      Historical GIS and research design for project #2**

Read:

Jonathan D. Weiss, "Part IV: The Relationship between Public Schools and the Real Estate Value of Communities," in *Public Schools and Economic Development: What the Research Shows*. Cincinnati, OH: KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2004, downloaded from [http://www.kwfdn.org/programareas/facilities/econ\\_devel.html](http://www.kwfdn.org/programareas/facilities/econ_devel.html)

In seminar:

ArcGIS session with metro Hartford historical census data, 1970-2000 (Geolytics)

*Suburbia: The Good Life in Connecticut?* (CPTV and CT Humanities Council video, 1997).

On reserve at video library (in Austin Arts basement) VID 3086, excerpts

Transcript available at <http://www.simonpure.com/suburbia.htm>

**April 4                              Historical evidence collection and analysis, part 1**

Read:

W. Edward Orser. *Blockbusting in Baltimore: The Edmondson Village Story*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994, excerpts.

In seminar:

Connecticut Historical Society, city directory data exercise (tentative)

**April 11                             Historical evidence collection and analysis, part 2**

Read:

Jennifer Jellison Holme. "Buying Homes, Buying Schools: School Choice in the Social Construction of School Quality." *Harvard Educational Review* 72 (Summer 2002): 177-205.

In seminar:

Property assessment and market valuation exercise, location TBA

**April 18                             Oral history and historical interpretation**

Read:

draft of paper-in-progress by Jack Dougherty and Jacqueline Katz

In seminar:

Interpretation of transcripts from City-to-Suburb oral history project  
Paper #2 DUE this week (exact date TBA)

**April 25                             Current city-suburban policy debates and activism**

Read:

Myron Orfield and Thomas Luce, *Connecticut Metropatterns: A Regional Agenda for Community and Prosperity in Connecticut* (Ameregis, 2003).

**May 2                                 Last Seminar: Presentation of Final Projects-in-Progress**

**May 6                                 Final paper DUE**