

**Education 100**  
**Will This Be On The Test? Standardized Testing and American Education**  
Fall 2021  
M, W: 950-1100AM; F: 940-1040AM  
Willis 114

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Office Hours: T: 10AM-12PM; F: 12-1PM; and by appointment

**Course Description**

If education is a journey, standardized tests guide our paths every step of the way. Preschools look at test results to identify “gifted and talented” children as young as three years old, just as colleges and universities rely on test scores to make admissions decisions. We now use standardized tests to measure and rank the academic performance of students, schools and states—even nations. How and why have standardized tests become so central to U.S. education? How has testing reflected and shaped core American ideas such as opportunity, equality and merit? What role does testing play in the U.S. education system today?

This seminar will explore the following topics, among others: the invention of standardized tests and the growth of the testing industry; the “high stakes” tests required by the federal government; and the controversies surrounding the use of standardized tests, including cheating scandals, the charge that they discriminate on the basis of race and class and critiques that they narrow the curriculum and stifle student creativity. Our analyses will be informed by a close examination of authentic testing materials, ranging from the original intelligence tests to those mandated by the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act.

**Course Readings**

Koretz, Daniel. *The Testing Charade: Pretending to Make Schools Better*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

\* All additional readings will be available in a course reader \*

**Course Requirements**

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Participation (15%)	Every Class
Analytical Essay 1 (20%)	Sunday, October 17 by 1159PM
Notes (20%)	Tuesday, October 19 & Friday, November 12 by 1159PM
Analytical Essay 2 (20%)	Wednesday, November 10 by 1159PM
Final Paper (25%)	1-page Proposal due Sunday, November 14 by 1159PM Paper due Wednesday, November 24 by 1159PM

Education 100 is a **Writing-Rich course** and you will have the opportunity to focus on your fundamental writing skills, with an emphasis on drafting and revision. The Writing Center is a space with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their [online appointment system](#).

**Course Outline (subject to minor revisions)**

**INTRODUCTIONS**

W, September 15

- Course Syllabus

Before class: 1. complete the online intro form & 2. submit a 350-500 word informal response to the prompt posted on Moodle

F, September 17

- *Testing Charade*, Ch.2
- Koretz, “Validity”

**INTELLIGENCE TESTING**

M, September 20

- Primary Source Packet, Part I

W, September 22

- Primary Source Packet, Part II

F, September 24

- Stephen Jay Gould, “The Hereditarian Theory of IQ”

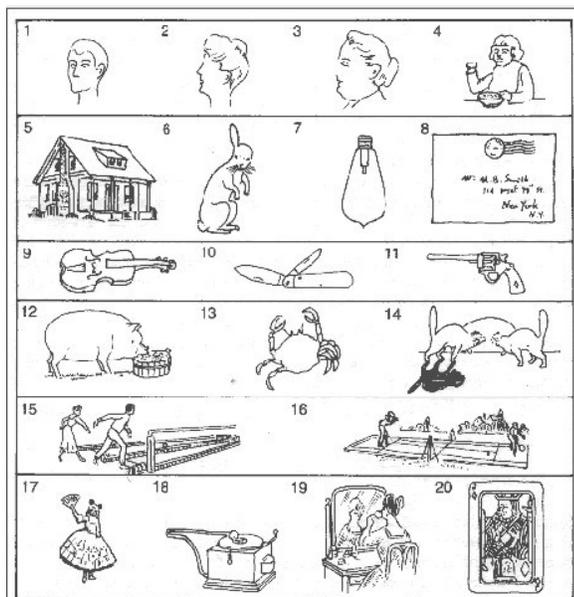
1050-1150AM: Attend Argument and Inquiry Convocation, Neil Lutsky, “Shelter from the Storms: Your Way Home in the Liberal Arts”

**HISTORY OF THE SAT**

M, September 27

- Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*, Chs.1-3

Army Beta Test, World War I



W, September 29

- *Big Test*, Chs.4-6

F, October 1

- *Big Test*, Chs.7-10
- Herbert Yahraes, “They Know All the Answers”



## HIGH STAKES TESTING

M, October 4

- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) Grade 6 Math
- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) Grade 6 Reading
- Minnesota Assessment Reports Interpretive Guide
- Matthew M. Chingos, “Testing Costs a Drop in the Bucket”

W, October 6

- Koretz, “What Influences Test Scores?” and “Error and Reliability” (concentrate on pp.145-52 and pp.171-77)
- Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot, “Causation: Think Twice”

F, October 8

- Alfie Kohn, “Standardized Testing and Its Victims”
- Jonathan Kozol, “The Road to Rome”
- Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom, skim “Introduction,” read “Tests Matter”
- Herbert J. Walberg, “Why Tests Are Necessary”

M, October 11

- Frederick M. Hess and Max Eden (eds.), *Every Student Succeeds Act*, Chs.2 & 4
- *Testing Charade*, Chs.1, 3 & 11

W, October 13

- *Testing Charade*, Chs.4-5,7 & 8

F, October 15

**No Class (Professor attending conference)**

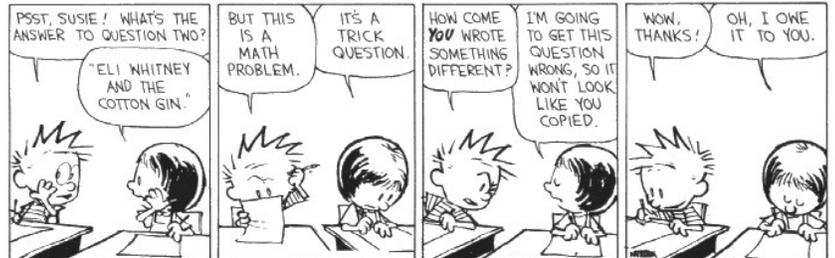
Sunday, October 17: Analytical Essay 1 due by 1159PM

M, October 18  
No Class (Midterm Break)

Tuesday, October 19: Notes 1 due by 1159PM

W, October 20

- Rachel Aviv, “Wrong Answer”
- James M. Lang, “Who Cheats— And How Much?” and “Case Studies in the History of Cheating”



F, October 22

- *Testing Charade*, Ch.6
- Watch “The Education of Michelle Rhee,” PBS Frontline

### TEST PREP, GAMING & THE QUESTION OF BIAS

M, October 25

- Goldie Blumenstyk, “The Legacy of a Test-Prep Entrepreneur”
- NACAC Discussion Paper, “Preparation for College Admission Exams”
- Listen to “How to Game the SAT,” Reuters Investigates
- Explore the College Board site as well as the site of at least one test prep company (Kaplan, Princeton Review, Ivy Bound, etc.)



W, October 27

- Koretz, “Adverse Impact and Bias”
- Skim Paul R. Sackett and Nathan R. Kuncel, “Eight Myths about Standardized Admissions Testing”
- Jeffrey Aaron Snyder, “What SAT Critics Miss” and “Inequities in American society go well beyond testing”

F, October 29

- Dana Goldstein, “Does It Hurt Children to Measure Pandemic Learning Loss?”
- Sarah Mervosh, “The Pandemic Hurt These Students the Most”
- “What Students Are Saying About ‘Learning Loss’ During the Pandemic”
- Additional reading(s) TBD

M, November 1

- John Thelin, “An Embarrassment of Riches: Admission and Ambition in American Higher Education”
- Watch “Operation Varsity Blues”
- Explore College Board Landscape page and watch accompanying video

## MEASURING UP TO THE WORLD

W, November 3

- Lauren Camera, “U.S. Students Show No Improvement in Math, Reading, Science on International Exam”
- Watch PISA videos
- Complete sample PISA test questions
- PISA 2018 Results
- PISA US Country Note



“Big deal, an A in math. That would be a D in any other country.”

F, November 5

- Eric A. Hanushek et al., *Endangering Prosperity*, excerpts

M, November 8

**No Class (Professor attending conference)**

W, November 10

- Gerald Bracey, “Big Tests: What Ends do they Serve?”
- David Labaree, “The Limits of School Learning”
- Watch *Two Million Minutes*

**Analytical Essay 2 due by 1159PM**

## ALTERNATIVES

F, November 12

- *Testing Charade*, Chs.12-14

**Notes 2 due by 1159PM**

**Sunday, November 14: 1-page Final Paper Proposal due by 1159PM**

M, November 15

- Linda Darling Hammond, *Next Generation Assessment*, excerpts
- Anya Kamenetz, “In Kentucky, Moving Beyond Dependence on Tests”
- Grant Wiggins, “A True Test”

W, November 17

- Christopher T. Bennett, “Untested Admissions: Examining Changes in Application Behaviors and Student Demographics Under Test-Optional Policies”
- Jerome A. Lucido, “Understanding the Test-Optional Movement”
- Jon Marcus, “A Test for the Test Makers”

F, November 19

- Frederick Hess, “A Modest Proposal Regarding College Admissions”
- Scott Jaschik, “The Admissions Essay is Back”
- Ariel Kaminer, “Didn’t Ace SAT? Just Design Microbe Transplant Research”
- Explore Bard College “Entrance Exam” pages
- Explore Goucher College Video Application pages

Essay Revision due by 1159PM

Wednesday, November 24: Final Paper due by 1159PM

### Course Assignments and Grading

#### **Participation, 15%**

“Be Prepared.” The Scout motto sums up the crux of participation. Because this course places a premium on discussion, students are expected to show up for class on time with the assigned readings completed, ready to participate meaningfully in all class activities. Please pay attention to the guiding questions posted on Moodle. Speaking up, while important, is not the only hallmark of participation. Active listening and engaging with others’ ideas respectfully are also key components of participation. \*Air-time\* is less important than the relevance and sincerity of your contributions.

Please \*power-down\* your electronic devices—laptops, cell-phones, etc.—before the start of class. Classroom recordings of any kind are not permitted in this class.



*“Before I read about my summer vacation, I’d like to ask that all pagers, beepers, and cell phones be turned off.”*

**Analytical Essay 1 (750 words), 20%**

Sunday, October 17 by 1159PM

The goal of this essay is to examine how authors use evidence to support their arguments. Find a claim that intrigues you from one of our assigned readings. Go to the footnotes and identify one source the author is citing to bolster her claim. Track down a copy of the original source and write an essay that weaves together:

1. a brief summary of the source’s most important content (claims; findings; point-of-view; etc.) &
2. an assessment of how well our course author uses the source, especially with respect to fairness and accuracy—based on your analysis of the source, are the author’s conclusions justified?

**Notes, 15%**

Tuesday, October 19 & Friday, November 12

Submit your notes on our course readings. I will look for evidence of careful, critical reading that distills and analyzes key points, poses thoughtful questions and draws meaningful connections among different materials. Notes will be graded on a ✓ + (exceeds expectations) and ✓ (meets expectations) basis.

Notes	Grade
1. ✓ + and 2. ✓ +	A
1. ✓ + and 2. ✓ / 1. ✓ and 2. ✓ +	B
1. ✓ and 2. ✓	C
Anything less than two “checks”	No Credit

**Analytical Essay 2 (750 words), 20%**

Wednesday, November 4 by 1159PM

The goal of this essay is to reexamine your initial assumptions about standardized testing. Revisit your informal, reflection paper on standardized testing from the first day of class. How have your ideas changed over the past eight weeks? Write an essay that explains one important shift in your thinking. Refer to at least three different course texts.

\* Essay Revision Option \*

You have the option to revise ONE of your two essays. If you choose to do so, please include a 1-2 paragraph explanation of how you have responded to my feedback at the top of the revised paper. The final grade for the paper will be the average of the original and revised essay grades. Revisions are due on the last day of class by 1159PM.

**Final Paper (1,500 words), 25%**

1-page proposal that identifies an Editorial or Op-Ed, outlines your initial paper ideas and includes a bibliography due on Sunday, November 14 by 1159PM

Final Paper due Wednesday, November 24 by 5PM

The goal of the final paper is to offer a critical analysis of an Editorial/Op-Ed about standardized testing. Find a suitable Editorial/Op-Ed from a reputable source. Your essay will:

1. provide a brief summary of the author's point-of-view and main arguments
2. assess the strength of the author's specific claims based on our course readings and at least three additional scholarly sources (articles, book chapters and/or books) that we have NOT read for class
3. explain why you agree or disagree with the author's conclusions/recommendations

## **The Fine Print**

### **Attendance:**

Given the importance that all Educational Studies classes place on learning with peers through classroom discussions, students are expected to come to every class session. After two unexcused absences from class, each subsequent absence will result in the lowering of your course grade by a third (from an A to an A-, for example).

### **Guidelines for Written Assignments:**

- All written assignments should be double-spaced and written in 12-point Times font
- Include a word-count at the top of each assignment
- Submit all of your assignments as \*Google docs\* using the Google Assignment tool on Moodle
- No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval from the instructor

### **Guidelines for Critical Reading:**

As a critical reader of a particular text, the following four questions are essential:

1. What are the author's main claims? This is the analysis issue—what is the author's angle?
2. Who says? This is the validity issue—what is the author's evidence?
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—is the text worth reading?

### **Academic Honesty:**

Sharing ideas with friends is central to the academic enterprise at Carleton. So too is availing yourself of the ever-expanding universe of print and digital resources available through the Libe. In your written work, of course, it is imperative that the words you present as your own are in fact original to you. When you borrow somebody else's ideas or words, make sure to cite the original author. For information on plagiarism, see: <https://www.carleton.edu/writing/plagiarism/>

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Office of Accessibility Resources (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact [OAR@carleton.edu](mailto:OAR@carleton.edu) or call Sam Thayer ('10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

### **Images Credits:**

Army Beta Test: Steven Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton), 1996, p.241; "You Count S.A.T.s": Mike Twohy, *New Yorker*, 9/9/1991; Calvin and Hobbes strip: Bill Watterson, *There's Treasure Everywhere* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel), 1996, p.21; "Our Day": Barbara Smaller, *New Yorker*, 12/21/1998; "Big Deal": Twohy, *New Yorker*, 3/16/1998; "Before I read": Danny Shanahan, *New Yorker*, 9/11/2000.