

**EDUC 395:**  
**Controversy, Politics and Intellectual Freedom in U.S. Public Schools**  
Spring 2020  
M/W: 150-335PM

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Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Description**

This course examines past and present school controversies, including school prayer, book banning and student protests. With an emphasis on the concept of intellectual freedom, we will explore big questions about the purpose of public schooling in a diverse, multicultural nation. Questions like these: How do—and how *should*—we teach contentious issues such as religion, racism and climate change? Who has—and *should* have—the power to control the curriculum? (Students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members?) Do—and *should*—teachers and students have the right to speak their minds in the nation’s schools?

**Course Readings**

All readings—*with the exception of the banned book that you select*--will be available on Moodle.

**Course Requirements**

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Participation (25%)	All Virtual Class Sessions
Course Blog (25%)	Weekly, starting April 9
Banned Book Letter to the Editor (20%)	May 9 by 11:59PM
Group Project (30%)	1-page Proposal May 15 by 1159PM First week of June

## Course Outline

### INTRODUCTIONS

M, April 6

- course syllabus
- Bruce Robbins, “Public”

### TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

W, April 8

#### TEACHER FREEDOM?

- Jonathan Zimmerman and Emily Robertson, *Case for Contention*, chs.1 & 2
- Horace Mann, Twelfth Annual Report (1848) excerpt, “Political Education”

**\* Thursday, April 9: Course Blog Opens \***

M, April 13

#### WHAT’S IN A “CONTROVERSY”?

- *Case for Contention*, chs.3 & 4

### GOD IN THE CLASSROOM

W, April 15

#### THE *SCOPES* TRIAL & SCHOOL PRAYER

- Adam Laats, “Monkeys, Morality and Modern America”
- T.T. Martin, *Hell and the High School* excerpt
- Benjamin Justice and Colin MacLeod, “Religion and Public Education Since 1960”

M, April 20

### EVOLUTION, CREATIONISM & INTELLIGENT DESIGN

- Adam Laats and Harvey Siegel, *Teaching Evolution in a Creation Nation*, chs.5-8 & conclusion
- Watch YouTube videos (x4)—see course Moodle site
- Explore the websites of the National Center for Science Education & the Discovery Institute

W, April 22

### TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

- Pew Religion Statistics
- Linda K. Wertheimer, *Faith Ed*, prologue, chs.1, 6&7

### INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

M, April 27

### PRINCIPLES & IDEALS

- American Library Association, “Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q&A”
- Timothy Garton Ash, “Ideals,” “Lifeblood” & “Knowledge”

W, April 29

### BANNED BOOKS 1

- Emily J.M. Knox, *Book Banning in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America*, ch.1 & ch.4

M, May 4: Midterm Break

W, May 6

### BANNED BOOKS 2

- *Book Banning in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America*, chs.5-6
- Mark Hemingway, “In Defense of Book Banning”

**\* Saturday, May 9: Banned Book Letter to the Editor Due \***

## **STUDENT RIGHTS & STUDENT ACTIVISM**

M, May 11

### **STUDENT PROTEST IN THE PAST**

- Gael Graham, “Flaunting the Freak Flag: *Karr v. Schmidt* and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975”
- Catherine J. Ross, *Lessons in Censorship*, ch.1

W, May 13

### **STUDENT PROTEST IN THE PRESENT**

- Readings/Materials TBD

**\* Friday, May 15: 1 Page Group Presentation Proposal Due \***

## **PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN A PANDEMIC**

M, May 18

### **CORONAVIRUS I**

- Readings/Materials TBD

W, May 20

### **CORONAVIRUS II**

- Readings/Materials TBD

**\* Friday, May 22: Course Blog Closes \***

## GROUP PROJECTS

M, May 25

- Group Project Work

W, May 27

- Group Project Work

M, June 1

- Group Presentations

W, June 3

- Group Presentations

## Course Assignments and Grading

### **Participation, 25%**

“Be Prepared.” The Scout motto sums up the crux of participation. Students are expected to come to every virtual class on time with the assigned readings completed, ready to participate meaningfully in all class activities. Active listening and engaging with others’ ideas respectfully are key components of participation—both during Zoom sessions and on the course blog.

### **Course Blog, 25%**

Weekly (starting on 4/9, ending on 5/22); posts by 5PM on Thursdays and comments by noon on Fridays

Posts should be approximately 750 words in length. Comments should be around 250 words. I do not expect that your blog contributions will be finely polished but they should represent a serious engagement with the course materials. Posts and comments will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Credit will be given to all posts that demonstrate you have read and thought critically about the course content. Credit will be given to all comments that offer a thoughtful response to your classmate’s post. Your grade will depend on the number of weeks that you satisfactorily post and comment. **Seven weeks = A. Six = C. 5 or fewer = no credit for this portion of the course.**

**Banned Book Letter to the Editor** (1000 words), 20%  
May 9 by 1159PM

Choose and read a book from the list in the “American Library Association Field Report 2018: Banned and Challenged Books.” Research why the book caused a stir in a particular community. Write a letter to the editor explaining your position on banning the book in question. Include a bibliography with at least three sources that you used to inform your analysis.

**Group Project**, 30%  
1-page proposal due on May 15 by 1159PM

In small groups, investigate a particular school controversy. Consult at least a dozen texts/resources (news stories, academic articles and books, websites, podcasts, etc.) to inform your analysis. Create a handout and present your findings to your peers.