

Education and the Schools

Contemporary educational issues, choices, and ideals

Course #	20SED
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	Francie Borden, Tyll van Geel
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 10 weeks, starting Feb. 25, 2020
Location:	Smith College Campus Center, room 102
Maximum number of participants	18
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: Our purpose is to examine problems, conflicts, reforms, and ideals affecting today's public and private elementary and secondary education.

Description: Almost daily, the media reports on and analyzes the myriad problems, conflicts and proposed reforms touching upon public and private education. Among the matters covered are the following: what purposes are served by our public and private schools? What are the best pedagogies for a 21st century education? Various issues touching upon inequality: how can schools deal with increasing racial isolation? What should be the admission criteria for the elite academically oriented public schools? What are the causes of inequality in the funding of schools? How are children with disabilities to be educated? How, if at all, should home schooling be regulated? What should be the policy regarding charter schools? Should the current effort of assessing students with standardized testing be modified or even dropped? What policies should the school follow when dealing with a complaint of bullying and sexual harassment? After examining these and yet other issues, the participants should come away with a better understanding of contemporary elementary and secondary institutions, practices, and ideas for reform.

Role of participants: Participants will each be asked to pick an issue confronting elementary/secondary education today, describe the problem, and examine possible solutions. A list of suggested issues will be provided by the moderators.

Resources: Contemporary news (e.g. *The New York Times*) and opinion sources offer starting points for choosing one's topic. "Education Week" online and "The Harvard Educational Review" offer a good range and sense of what is current. The moderators can offer suggestions of resources for individuals once topics are chosen.

About the Moderators: Francie was a reform minded educator (pre-school through high school) for 45 years and instrumental in starting and establishing two very different schools. Tyll taught education law for 35 years.