Introduction to Comparative Education:
Theories, Perspectives, Histories

EDUX601L
Dr. Will Brehm

Course Description

Comparative education is a dynamic field enlivened by differences of theoretical and methodological views on what it means to ‘compare’ two or more schools or societies, yet united by the belief that one’s own educational system and practice can be improved by examining other ways of teaching and learning. This course will critically examine the foundations of the field of comparative education, problematizing the historical fixation on the “West” as the main reference point for understanding education development worldwide. The goal is to move beyond the debates about ‘best practices’ and ‘policies’ - often presented in comparative education literature as un-problematically flowing from the West to the ‘developing world’ - and instead consider the implications of colonial and imperialist forces for education systems, policies, practices, as well as for educational research itself. Course readings and discussions will attempt to disrupt the dominant narratives of neoliberal globalization by shifting points of reference to other world locations, including Asia, Africa, and the former socialist bloc in Eastern/Central Europe. The goal is to develop an appreciation for the multiplicity of perspectives and practices surrounding comparative education and the ways in which global and local forces shape schooling around the world.

Mode of Instruction

The primary format for this course is a participatory seminar. Members of the seminar will be asked to read weekly materials and come to class prepared to discuss them. Class discussion, readings, presentations, and written assignments will be used. I encourage students to draw on their personal experiences and opinions in discussions and class assignments. Every student brings a wealth of personal experience and practical expertise (everyone has gone to school!) that will enhance the learning process and make our time together more meaningful. By sharing reflections on our personal, professional, and academic experiences and opinions, we will be able to develop critical understandings of historical memory in this course.

Grading and assignments

Participation (15%) - Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, ask questions about the readings, and engage your peers in informed discussion about the assigned readings/topic. Active participation in class discussions that reflect an understanding and synthesis of assigned readings is the goal. Each class you must submit a hard copy of a “Reading Note” about the week’s
readings (1 page). Please include discussion questions based on the readings. You will be asked to use these readings notes in class. No late submissions will be accepted.

**Student-led Presentation & Discussion (20%)** - Depending on the number of students in the class, individuals or groups of students will be responsible for preparing a presentation on a selected reading/readings for class. When it is your turn to present, you should prepare brief handouts for fellow students and set the stage for class discussion. Further details about the presentation will be discussed in class.

**FreshEd Essay & Presentation (25%)** - The FreshEd Podcast seeks to make educational research accessible to a public audience (http://www.freshedpodcast.com). For this assignment, you will select and listen to one (or more) FreshEd episodes about a topic that interests you. You will then write a 5-page essay where you (1) provide a synopsis of the issue discussed in the episode(s); (2) find and discuss competing or concurrent research (minimum 8 additional references) that allows for greater depth of knowledge on the topic; and (3) provide three (or more) discussion questions about the topic generally and/or podcast episode specifically. *You must submit a hard-copy of your essay and present your findings on the last day of class.*

**Outline and Final paper (40%)** – Write a 10- to 12-page paper in which you identify an education issue that is of interest to you and reflect on how theories and methods from the field of comparative education have been and might be used to examine and/or address this issue. How have different comparative education scholars approached this issue? What are the implications of these approaches for policy and practice? How might alternative comparative approaches be employed?

You must submit an outline of your final paper during the last day of class. An outline guide sheet will be provided to students. Feedback on your draft will be provided through email or in person. The outline will be worth 10%.

*The final paper must be submitted by email by noon one month after class.* I will be available for individual consultation if requested by a student. The final paper will be worth 30%.

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<th>Course Outline</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Class 1: Introduction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student introductions, course overview, and introductory lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Class 2: What is Comparative (and International?) Education</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Required:</strong></td>
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**Recommended:**


**Class 3: Contrasting theoretical and methodological approaches**


**Class 4: What is Asia and what can we learn from it?**

**Required:**


Kuswandano, et al. (2015). Towards deimperialization of instructional strategies: cases of task-based learning and reflective practice implementation in the
Indonesian context. In Zhang, H. et al., (Eds), *Asia as method in education studies* (pp. 97 - 110). New York, Routledge

**Recommended:**


**Class 5: What is Africa and what can we learn from it?**


**Class 6: What is (post)socialist education and what can we learn from it?**


Bain, O. (2010), Education after the fall of the Berlin Wall: The end of history or the beginning of histories? In I. Silova (Ed.), Post-Socialism is not Dead: (Re)Reading the Global in Comparative Education (pp. 27-57). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

**Class 7: Bringing it home**


**Class 8: Conclusion**

*Student Presentations*