The Cities, Suburbs & Schools Project
research and learning on schooling and housing in metropolitan Hartford CT, based at Trinity College

Seminar at Wesleyan, Spring 2015
Last updated on February 4, 2015 by Jack Dougherty

CSPL 341: Choice – A Case Study in Education and Entrepreneurship
Spring 2015 seminar, begins Wednesday, January 28th, 2015 from 7-9:50pm
Room 004, Allbritton Center for the Study of Public Life, Wesleyan University
Visitor's directions to our classroom & parking and to the Wesleyan campus

Instructor: Jack Dougherty
Harber Fellow in Education and Entrepreneurship, Wesleyan Univ., Spring 2015
and Associate Professor of Educational Studies at Trinity College
Personal website, email, and online appointment calendar

Teaching Assistant: Elaina Rollins, Trinity Class of ’16, email: elainarollins@gmail.com
Part-time long-distance support to help Wesleyan students coordinate their field visits to Hartford, and peer-editing support via Google Docs upon request.

Description: In this seminar, we will investigate an increasingly popular reform movement—choice—to better understand what happens when educators act more like entrepreneurs in competing for students, how families navigate both schooling and housing markets, and the outcomes of recent policy innovations. Drawing from the disciplines of history, sociology, and government, we will compare and contrast choice models that have been promoted by magnet schools, charter schools, and move-to-opportunity housing experiments. Enrollment limited to 19. See WesMaps course listing.

Requirements:
Acquire two books in any format:


Additional readings will be made available in our Moodle site and on the public web.

For each seminar, students must bring a laptop (Mac, Windows, Chromebook, or Linux) for in-class writing, peer review, and data analysis. Let me know if you need to borrow one.

Students are expected to arrange a one-time visit to Hartford to conduct site visits for one of our research projects. The instructor will assist students with scheduling and coordinating transportation.

Research projects:
As a community research seminar, we will conduct small-scale studies to answer questions about school and housing choice in Connecticut, discuss what we learn with local researchers and organizations, and share on the public web.

Project 1: How do school choice programs communicate with families at public events in the Hartford region? We
will do basic qualitative research at choice school open house events and fairs, discuss what we are learning with Mira Debs (Yale doctoral candidate in sociology and Wesleyan instructor), and share our findings on the public web.

Project 2: What does public education data reveal—or obscure—about equity and outcomes among Connecticut school choice programs? We will do basic quantitative analysis of publicly-accessible magnet, charter, and Open Choice data. We will discuss what we are learning with Robert Cotto, Jr. (co-author of CT Voices Choice Watch report and Director of Urban Educational Initiatives at Trinity College), and share our findings on the public web.

Project 3: Did Connecticut urban residents who received housing choice counseling move into better neighborhoods, and how is this goal defined? We will do basic quantitative and spatial analysis of housing mobility client data, masked by census block group. We will discuss what we are learning with Erin Boggs (executive director of the Connecticut Open Communities Alliance and Wesleyan alumna), and share our findings on the public web.

Project 4: How do Connecticut urban residents interpret their housing and schooling choices before and after using a digital search tool, and also after receiving personalized guidance? We will modify an open-source digital search tool (http://jackdougherty.github.io/mobility-app and/or http://jackdougherty.github.io/school-search-tool/) and interview people as they use it to explore their options. We will discuss what we are learning with Erin Boggs and housing mobility counselors, and share our findings on the public web.

See exercises for each project and additional work in Assignments and assessment.

**Schedule**

*Subject to change by instructor, with important revisions marked in red.*

**Week 1: Jan 28th – An introduction to school choice**

*How do school choice programs market themselves? How do different parents navigate this process?*

Introduction to seminar, the syllabus, and long-distance TA Elaina Rollins

Public writing and student privacy policy; identifying students on the public syllabus

In-class simulation on school choice parent information: insert your results, and add your meta-questions

How to annotate an online PDF in Moodle (or any website) with Hypothes.is tool

Assign online annotators to raise issues and questions on next week’s readings

Assign Project 1 Exercise A: school choice event field notes, due Feb 24th

Sign up on my calendar to chat with me and classmates over lunch, dinner, or hot cocoa. (For example, if 3-4 wish to book a one-hour lunch, sign up for three 20-minute slots)

**Week 2: Feb 4th – Competing perspectives on school choice**

*How do different educational researchers and advocates frame their arguments and evidence?*

Read in Moodle and learn how to write thoughtful annotations with Hypothes.is tool:

See sample online annotations by the instructor.

Online annotations due Feb 3rd at 10pm by CB, JC, AF

Online annotations due Feb 3rd at 10pm by IF, AG, SG, HH

Online annotations due Feb 3rd at 10pm by EK, AL, AM, CM

Online annotations due Feb 3rd at 10pm by SS, LS, NT, RU, EW

View ONE video documentary:
OR

In my *Education Reform Past & Present* course at Trinity, I assigned a video documentary analysis to help students think and write more clearly about this ed reform genre. Read ANY of the sample web essays by students in my previous classes:


Presentation: *A vocabulary for understanding school choice in Connecticut*

In class: Reorganize and answer factual meta-questions about school choice in Connecticut using these resources; interpretive questions to continue during the semester

  - Charter schools, [chapter 164, section 10-66aa](http://generalstatutes.ct.gov/Statute/acts03/act04/chapter164/section10-66aa.html); see also 2014 supplement
  - Magnet schools, [chapter 172, section 10-264h](http://generalstatutes.ct.gov/Statute/acts03/act04/chapter172/section10-264h.html); see also 2014 supplement
- Sheff v O’Neill stipulation [phase 3 of school desegregation remedy], December 13,


In class: Analyze competing arguments on school choice, both in print (with student annotations) and video. List different types of arguments in meta-questions.

In class: Updates on Project 1 Exercise A: scheduling, transportation, waiver forms

Prep for next week

**Week 3: Feb 11th – School Choice and Policy Advocacy in Connecticut**


Online annotations due Feb 10th at 10pm on Moodle PDF by EW, RU, NT, LS

Recent school choice policy briefs in Connecticut:


Mira Debs, “Pre-Kindergarten Availability and Access in Hartford Region Magnet and Open Choice Schools” (Sheff Movement, January 2015), http://sheffmovement.org/publications/pre-k-programs/.


Online annotations due Feb 10th at 10pm on Moodle PDF briefs by IF, AF, JC, CB

Watch videos to compare different themes that emerge:

- “The State of North End Schools,” video by J. Stan McCauley (public discussion of school choice and

Presentation on school reform networks; public education data


Assign Project 2, Exercise C: school choice data analysis, due on Wed Feb 18th at 4pm

**Week 4: Feb 18th – School Choice Data and Equity in Connecticut**


and compare with presentation slides


Guest: Robert Cotto, Jr. (7-8pm) to discuss our data and preliminary findings in Project 2

Assign Project 2, Exercise D: school choice data visualization, due before break (March 6)

**Week 5: Feb 25th – Choice Marketing and Family Access in Connecticut**


Online annotations due Feb 24th at 10pm on Moodle PDF by SS, CM, AM, EK

Due night before class on Feb 24th: Project 1 Exercise A field notes

Guest: Mira Debs (8:30-9:30pm) to discuss our field notes and preliminary findings

In class: Thematic analysis of field notes; Exercise B due March 3rd

**Week 6: March 4th – CT School Choice and Outcomes**


Online annotations due March 3rd at 10pm on Moodle PDF by AL, HH, SG, AG

TBA selected documents, slides on school data by choice advocates

In class: Support for data visualizations for Exercise D

**Break: March 11th and 18th**

**Week 7: March 25th – Schooling and housing boundaries and choice in CT**

Read: Jack Dougherty and contributors, *On the Line: How Schooling, Housing, and Civil Rights Shaped*
Week 8: April 1st – Housing choice and moving to opportunity


Short response essay due March 30th at 10pm by ___

Presentation on housing mobility outreach and research (DeLuca, HousingMobility.org)

Week 9: April 8th – Housing choice and moving-to-opportunity in CT


HousingMobility.org website, [http://www.housingmobility.org/](http://www.housingmobility.org/)

Connecticut Open Communities Alliance website, [http://www.ctoca.org/](http://www.ctoca.org/)

Guest: Erin Boggs (7-8:30pm) to provide background and help us plan Projects 3 & 4

Assign Projects 3 and 4 and Exercises E, F, G, H due dates (all by April 21st)

Week 10: April 15th – Rethinking Charter and Magnet Schools


Short response essay due April 14th at 10pm by ___

Video conference via Google+ with Richard Kahlenberg and Halley Potter, 7:30-8pm

Assign web essay proposals due April 22nd at 4pm

Week 11: April 22nd – Interview data analysis

Thematic analysis of interview data in class

Week 12: April 29th – Teachers and Choice

Read: article tba

Guests (via video conference, 7-8pm): Cara Colker-Eybel, Wesleyan alumna teaching in a public choice school in Cleveland, and possibly others TBA

Assign web essay drafts due Sunday May 3rd (for guest evaluators to review)

Web essay workshop

Week 13: May 6th

Web essay draft presentations and discussion with guest evaluators
Friday May 8th

Due: Revised web essay

One Response to Seminar at Wesleyan, Spring 2015

Pingback: ENGAGE – Wesleyan University » Blog Archive » Choice: A Case Study in Education and Entrepreneurship

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