This course is intended to be offered in the style of a classic “proseminar” or advanced readings course, covering representative readings about problems related to the study of urban schools and their improvement. We will spend most of the semester reading & discussing books and articles concerned with these issues, with writing assignments to give you an opportunity to probe a bit deeper into various topics. This course of study is supposed to represent a broad introduction to some of the very best research in the social sciences related to (and shedding light on) urban educational problems. It will establish a strong foundation for your doctoral studies in these areas, and for your teaching and research regarding these issues in the years ahead.

The following books are required reading (all available at the KU Bookstore):


Additional readings are available on the course Blackboard (Bb) site and the full schedule of expected readings is outlined in the syllabus below. Readings may be added in the course of the semester as new research becomes available. These will be announced in class or via email, but please consult the syllabus published on Blackboard for updates.

We will decide when assignments are due during the semester, but I would like you to write reviews of at least two books that you find especially interesting, which should come after we have finished them in groups. Guidelines for this assignment will be posted on the Blackboard site.

Additionally, I will post discussion questions each week, so that you can post reaction statements (150-300 words) on the "Discussion Board." Please try to get your reactions posted by the day before class, so that everyone has a chance to read them and respond if they would like. This will add considerably to the quality of our discussions, and to the learning process for the entire class.

The final assignment will be a research proposal on a topic of your choosing. I will provide guidelines for this on the Blackboard site. It is possible to work collaboratively on this assignment, with no more than two of your classmates. Naturally, collaborative
projects should be correspondingly larger in scope. The closing weeks of the semester will be devoted to presentations of individual proposals and discussion of them.

Final grades for the semester will be determined on the following basis: Class discussion and participation in Blackboard discussion, 25%; book review essays, 30%, final research proposal project, 45%.

**General Schedule (topics subject to change as the course proceeds)**

First meeting, Jan 15: Introduction & Orientation

Discussion: What is the meaning of “urban education”?

Second meeting, Jan 22: Historical & Conceptual Background

Read: Rury & Mirel, “Political Economy of Urban Education” (Bb)
      Kantor & Brenzel, “Urban Education and the ‘Truly Disadvantaged’” (Bb)
      Stringfield, et al, “Promise, Progress, Problems, and Paradoxes of Three Phases of Accountability” (Bb)

Discussion: How did we get to this point in thinking about urban schools?

Third Meeting, Jan 29: Working In Urban Classrooms

Read: Schultz, *Spectacular Things*, Chs. 1-3
      Ladson-Billings, “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” (Bb)
      Roderick & Engel, “The Grasshopper and the Ant” (Bb)
      Abi-Nader, “’A House for my Mother’” (Bb)

Discussion: Reaching the kids?

Fourth Meeting, Feb 5: Overcoming the Odds

Read: Schultz, *Spectacular Things*, Chs. 4-7
      Phelan, et al, “Students’ Multiple Worlds” (Bb)
      Carter, “Straddling Boundaries” (Bb)

Discussion: How do we go from classrooms to schools?

Fifth Meeting, Feb 12: Inside Failing Urban Schools

Read: Payne: *So Much Reform, So Little Change*, Intro & Chs. 1-3
      Roderick: “What’s Happening to the Boys?” (Bb)
Sixth Meeting, Feb 19: Barriers to School Reform

Read: Payne: *So Much Reform, So Little Change*, Chs. 4-7 & Epilogue
Farmer-Hinton, “The Chicago Context” (Bb)
Hess, “Understanding Achievement” (Bb)

Discussion: Can the high schools be saved?

Seventh Meeting, Feb 26: In and Out of City Secondary Schools

Read: Lee & Burkham: “Dropping Out of High School” (Bb)
Oakes and Guitan, “Matchmaking” (Bb)
Darling-Hammond, et al, “Reinventing High School” (Bb)
Kahne, et al, “Small High Schools on a Larger Scale” (Bb)

Discussion: Can schools be changed in a “comprehensive” fashion?

Eighth Meeting, March 5: Comprehensive School Reform

Read: Desimone, “How Can Comprehensive School Reform Models Be Successfully Implemented?” (Bb)
Borman, et al, “Comprehensive School Reform and Achievement” (Bb)
Dantow, et al, “Comprehensive School Reform in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Contexts” (Bb)
Camburn, et al, “Distributed Leadership in Schools” (Bb)

Discussion: How can reform occur at the district level?

Ninth Meeting, March 12: Big Changes in Big City Districts

Shipps, “Pulling Together” (Bb)
Roderick, et al, “Impact of High Stakes Testing in Chicago” (Bb)
Copland, “Leadership of Inquiry” (Bb)

Discussion: What are the roles of big city leaders in educational reform?

Spring Break—no meeting, March 19
Tenth Meeting, March 26: The Politics of Institutional Change

Land, “Local School Boards under Review” (Bb)
Lacireno-Paquet, et al, “Creaming vs Cropping” (Bb)

Discussion: What can we learn from case studies?

Eleventh Meeting, April 2: San Diego as a Reform Model


Discussion: What were the building blocks of change in this case?

Twelfth Meeting, April 9: The Limits of Reform


Discussion: What are the persistent barriers to systemic change?

AERA—no meeting April 16

Thirteenth Meeting, April 23: Bridging the Achievement Gap

Read: Ferguson: *Toward Excellence with Equity*, Entire book (you have 2 weeks)
Jacobs, “Defining Culture in a Multicultural Environment” (Bb)
Stone, et al, “Getting It the Second Time Around” (Bb)

Discussion: What are the best strategies for helping everyone achieve?

Fourteenth Meeting, April 30: Reports on Proposals

Fifteenth Meeting, May 7: Reports on Proposals & Wrap Up

Final Proposals Due May 15