

Fall 2026 Course Offerings

This is a great community that will help you rethink what you know, learn different ways to fight social injustices, and really just bond over the wonders that education can provide for people.

-Mary Rozembajgier (Psy/ESS)



Amplifying Voices: Multilingual Children and Families in U.S. Schools

Prof. Katy Lichon

ESS 20380 (TTh 11:00-12:15)

area: Language, Literacy, & Culture

Multilingual learners represent one of the fastest-growing student populations in U.S. schools, with more than five million students identified as English learners nationwide.

How do schools identify, support, and instruct children who speak a language other than English at home? What responsibilities do educators and schools have toward multilingual children and their families? How do educational policies, federal guidelines, and classroom practices shape the daily experiences of multilingual learners? This course examines the histories, identities, and everyday schooling experiences of multilingual children and families in the United States. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from educational linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and the history of education, students will explore how language development, educational policy, federal guidance, and instructional practices shape children's experiences in schools. Particular attention will be given to how schools identify, serve, and partner with multilingual learners and their families across diverse educational contexts.



School Choice Perspectives

Prof. Joe Waddington

ESS 30634 (TTh 12:30-1:45)

area: Comparative Education and Policy

Public and private K-12 school choice programs and policies are at the forefront of educational reform efforts and research in the United States. We will begin the course by exploring the history of school choice, from the foundation of religious and non-religious private schools, to the advent of magnet schools as part of the Civil Rights Movement, to contemporary choice programs such as charter schools, private school vouchers, educational savings accounts, and inter-district public school choice. Next, we will examine the roots of school choice through various theoretical lenses, including political, sociological, economic, and legal perspectives. We will then explore school choice in the local context, giving detailed attention to policies in Indiana and the implementation of these policies within public and private schools in South Bend, which will include visits with local schools. In the last part of the course, we will evaluate and critique rigorous research studies that examine the impacts of school choice on student educational outcomes and how that research is portrayed in the media. We will give special attention to these educational impacts on students who are racial or ethnic minorities, students from low income families, and students with diverse learning abilities. Over the course, we will reflect on the effects of implementing school choice programs and policies on traditional public schools and their students.

ESS is a supplementary major/minor that helps students acquire diverse perspectives on important questions in education. We take a wide-angle lens on education to analyze its processes, understand its history and traditions, critique its goals, and imagine otherwise.



Education for Intelligible Reality: The Mutuality between the Spiritual and the Quantitative

Prof. Chrissy Trinter

ESS 30460 (MW 12:30-1:45)

area: Language, Literacy, & Culture

Have you ever wondered why there is a cyclic predictability to the daily sunrise...why art is universally beloved...why the soothing rhythm of a mother's heartbeat for a baby in utero matches Mozart's waltz tempos? Do you believe that coincidences exist or in six degrees of separation? Could there be a purposeful design to the structure of reality that is reflected through quantity and authored by God? In this course, we will explore how spirituality animates quantitative topics in myriad domains (e.g., art, mathematics, music, physics, logic) as well as how these topics can deepen our understanding of spirituality. We will push back against common narratives that aim to compartmentalize or set in opposition faith and science or reason. Though this course will explore quantitative topics, it will not be computation-based, and prior understanding of any topics in mathematics, science, etc. is not required. We will take an invitational stance and surface ideas through activities, readings, discussion, and examples. Join us as we explore the mysteries of intelligible reality and the ways quantity is illuminated by the Spirit.



Belonging and the brain: Understanding self and others in academic, work, and social environments

Dr. Horane Diatta-Holgate

ESS 30810 (TTh 3:30-4:15)

NSBI - NSBH Integration/Applied Elective

area: Learning Sciences

What happens in our brains when we experience inclusion and exclusion? What does it mean to have a sense of belonging and why does it matter? What attitudes, skills, and knowledge do we need to develop to cultivate more inclusive workplaces, classrooms, and societies? This course explores how our brains process information and develop, which in turn impacts our attitudes and behaviors in various intercultural situations. We will explore experiences of belonging, inclusion, and exclusion using frameworks and concepts from neuroscience, intercultural communication, and educational and social psychology to examine these and other related questions. This course is designed to facilitate students' reflection and development of skills and knowledge to effectively and appropriately interact with individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We will engage in various immersive learning activities that challenge our ways of thinking, seeing, hearing, doing, feeling, and even tasting. These activities are designed to help us better understand ourselves and others and to develop our capacity to facilitate belonging in the workplace and post-secondary classrooms.



Multicultural Literacies and the Elementary Classroom

Prof. Jodene Morrell

ESS 30648 (TTh 12:30-1:45)

area: Language, Literacy, & Culture

Drawing on sociocultural and sociopolitical theories of literacy, we will investigate the ways in which literacy is a social, cultural, and political practice. Students will learn research based best practices in elementary literacy instruction, how to incorporate diverse multicultural literature into everyday instruction, and how to honor the rich and diverse literacy practices children bring to school. Students will unpack and re-imagine literacy learning and teaching for all students,

particularly those who have been and remain marginalized through formal education due to race/ethnicity, social class, nationality/language, dis/ability, and other socially constructed inequities. Rooted in the assumption that power circulates in culture, literacy, and education, this course will look closely at the role of power in reading, producing and disseminating texts, as well as how power works through literacy in people's everyday lives. We will address and challenge deficit discourses about children, families and communities, and explore ways to create a collaborative, supportive, and literacy rich classroom culture that encourages and enables children to become critical readers of the word and the world (Freire, 1970).



Religion, Education, & Democracy: Generational Responsibility for the American Proposition

Prof. Kevin Sandberg, C.S.C.

ESS 33523 (MW 11-12:15pm)

Catholicism & the Disciplines (2nd philo)

area: Language, Literacy, & Culture

This is a course in the philosophy of education. The goal of the course is to produce a philosophy of education that engenders in the current generation of students (i.e., you) responsibility for what has been called the “American proposition.” The notion of “America” is distinct from the United States of America, but is often conflated with and conveyed by the latter. It sits at the intersection of religion, education, and democracy, an intersection at which the atrophy of each is seen by many to be caused by the values of the other. With the discipline of education as its platform and Catholicism, among other voices, as a particular conversation partner, the course examines historical, contemporaneous, and ecclesial resources, including notions of the common good, humanism, and ecological thinking, to ask, among other questions: Are religion, education, and democracy commensurable or incommensurable in such ways as to facilitate social coherence in the 21st century? If not, what accounts for decades, if not centuries, of robust educational systems designed to bolster democratic and religious institutions alike?



Youth in Comparative Contexts: School, Society, and Public Policy

Prof. Betsy Okello

ESS 33815 (TTh 2:00-3:15)

Global Affairs Elective

area: Comparative Education and Policy

This course takes youth as the central focus for investigations into schooling, society, and policy. Children and youth are often the object of international development programs and national policies that recognize the promise of youth when channeled toward productive ends and the problem of youth when familial, social supports and formal structures break down. Many of these programs and policies argue youth are “idle” and the solution is empowerment through hard work, education, self-improvement, and formal employment. Consequently, youth have received much attention from NGOs, governments, media, and local organizations—all aim to shape youth into their version of ideal, self-empowered adults. As a result, youth are confronted with different versions of who they can and should become, contributing to the already ambiguous nature of what it means to be youth and to become an adult. Throughout the course we will investigate the various ways in which youth are constructed as both the problem and the solution. We will also interrogate the various representations of youth in cross-cultural contexts, and how these representations shape experiences in the context of schooling, the role of youth in society, and in public policy in urban cities in the U.S. and in urban contexts across Africa.



Early Childhood Development and Poverty Alleviation: A Global Perspective

Prof. Neil Boothby

ESS 33322 (TTh 2:00-3:15)

Social Science, Global Affairs Elective, NSBH Elective

area: Comparative Education and Policy/Learning Sciences

This interdisciplinary course explores the intersection of early childhood development (ECD) science and poverty alleviation initiatives in low- and middle-income countries. It provides students with an understanding of how early brain development is influenced by socio-economic factors and how evidence-based interventions can promote brain health and school readiness while also addressing developmental disparities. Early childhood years are a time of heightened biological and environmental responsiveness that coincides with the most rapid period of neurological growth in human development. They build the foundation for cognitive, emotional, and social competencies; failure to thrive in the early years is associated with not only short-term physical, cognitive, and social-emotional maladjustment but also poor adult health and labor market outcomes. Investing in ECD is one of the most cost-effective ways to address the negative individual and societal effects of poverty, and can significantly enhance developmental outcomes. Students will engage with current research, theoretical frameworks, and practical strategies to promote optimal development in impoverished and crisis-affected contexts and prevent intergenerational poverty. This course is relevant for students interested in applying the science of early child development to social issues and working in fields related to psychology, neuroscience, education, public health, or social policy.



Education Law and Policy

Prof. John Schoenig

ESS 30605 (MW 2-3:15pm)

area: Comparative Ed. and Policy

This course focuses on selected legal and policy issues related to K-12 education in the United States. A central theme is the intersection of schooling and the state, with a focus on issues of religious liberty and establishment, student/teacher speech, privacy, due process, educational opportunity, and school finance.

ESS has illuminated the intersection between education and economic, healthcare, social, and political structures. By investing in education, you are investing in people and the challenges and opportunities they face every day.

*- Reynold Hamar '22
(Fin/CST/ESS)*



Can We Improve Schools?

Prof. Frankie Jones

ESS 30640 (MW 9:30-10:45pm)

area: Comparative Ed. and Policy

This course aims to provide students with an overview of the origins, concerns, goals, and approaches of education reform past, present, and future. We will explore the breadth of tactics and policy mechanisms employed by reformers, examining the underlying assumptions and theories of action ascribed to each. We will analyze the extent to which various reform efforts have been successful while concurrently defining and redefining the benchmarks for success as we explore questions such as: Who and what are schools for? What should the goals of improvement be? How do we best improve schools and who should decide? What are the origins and implications of differing policy and reform strategies? What assumptions drive different policy levers (i.e. turnaround, incentives, mandates, capacity-building, high-stakes accountability) and how do those in turn shape implementation and outcomes.



Recess Matters: Exploring Access to Play Through Community Coaching

Prof. Andrea Christensen

ESS 23510 (MW 2:00-3:15)

Community-engaged Learning

area: Language, Literacy, Culture

In this course, students will engage with the critical developmental role of play in childhood and examine the inequities that affect access to play opportunities in diverse communities.

This course integrates theoretical frameworks with hands-on community engagement, encouraging students to explore how play contributes to cognitive, socioemotional, physical and moral growth in children. Through readings, discussions, and case studies, students will critically examine social, economic, and cultural factors that limit access to play in various communities. Each student will partner with a local elementary school to coach recess activities for two hours each week. This practical experience will allow students to implement play strategies, observe dynamics in play, and directly engage with children in the community. Students will develop a research project analyzing the effects of their coaching experience on children's play and social interactions. Note: Students in this class must be available to coach recess one day per week between the hours of 10:30am and 12:30pm. Access to transportation is helpful but not required.

Education, Schooling, & Society Intro Course *(there are two sections)*

Integration



Prof. Maria McKenna

ESS 33600-03 (MW 3:30-4:45)

(First Year students can take this section)

not codified by the Constitution, legal precedents spanning more than a century make "free and appropriate public education" a hallmark of American society. However, from its very inception, public education was (and remains) stratified by race, class, gender, and ethnicity. To understand the conditions of our education system this course explores historical, philosophical, and political markers of American education. It strives to understand learning, motivation, and instruction and how these facets of human growth/development influence, and are influenced within the world of education.



Prof. Ryan Clark

ESS 33600-01 (MW 12:30-1:45)

Formal education plays a large role in socialization processes including teaching around and about economic, political, and social structures. In the United States, while



AI Literacy for Learning

Prof. Alex Ambrose

ESS 20770 (TTh 9:30-10:45) 247 Hesburgh Library

area: Learning Sciences

As synthetic media and Large Language Models (LLMs) reshape the global landscape, the ability to communicate effectively with AI has become a foundational literacy for the 21st-century student. This course merges the technical "how-to" of prompt architecture with the transformative "why" of the learning sciences. Moving beyond basic chat interactions, students will dismantle the "black box" of AI to understand how these systems function and where they fail. Through a blend of direct instruction and hands-on experimentation, students will evolve into professional-grade AI practitioners. You will design complex prompt architectures that transform Generative AI into a sophisticated research partner, a personalized tutor, and a creative collaborator.

Central to this course is the "human-in-the-loop" philosophy—ensuring that technology serves as an equitable tool for empowerment rather than a replacement for critical thought. Students will explore the intersection of computer and learning sciences to address real-world challenges, from mitigating algorithmic bias and data privacy risks to designing personalized learning paths that bypass "one-size-fits-all" educational barriers. Whether you are a future educator, a social scientist, or an ed-tech visionary, this course provides the agency to navigate a world reshaped by AI with integrity, accuracy, and vision. No prior programming experience is required.

1-credit Courses



Indigenous Education Immersion: Cultural Revitalization in Native American Catholic Schools

Community-based Learning

Dr. Will Newkirk, Annette Romans, and Collin Gortner

ESS 23710 (Mondays, 5-6:30pm, Sep 28, Oct 5, 12, 26, Nov 2; travel Oct 19-23 for fall break)

This course will focus on the history of Indigenous education and the modern Native schooling experience. Indigenous communities are revitalizing their cultural traditions and knowledge in diverse ways through innovative educational practices. However, too often stories highlighting this meaningful exchange of teaching and learning go untold. The course will provide ample opportunities to learn from such communities and individuals carrying out this type of transformational education through both class meetings and an immersion, to Maḥpíya Lúta - Red Cloud school in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, that offers the opportunity to spend time with and learn from educators and students in a Native American Catholic school. Topics for exploration include truth and healing, Indigenous language revitalization, the intersection of Lakota culture and Catholic identity in a school, food sovereignty, and other relevant themes. Apply [here](#).



Making Sense of Your Summer Teaching Experience: A Reflective Seminar

Dr. Ryan Clark and Alec Torigian

ESS 23810 (Fridays Sept 11, 2-4pm; Oct 2, 12-6:30pm; Oct 23, 2-6pm) Warner Retreat, CSH

You've had an opportunity to try on the role of teaching over the summer, and now you want a space to process the experience. This 1-credit course is a discussion-based seminar designed to create a community of reflection around the variety of teaching roles, both domestic and abroad, taken on by students who participated in a summer teaching program of one sort or another. We will make space to reflect on what you learned about the dispositions and approaches that enabled you to come to know a new community and its context, and to know the ways in which your students embrace the opportunities and challenges of their local educational systems. We will also explore what your experiences

taught you about effective classroom strategies and techniques, ranging from planning and instructional pedagogy to assessment to engagement with the broader community. We will ask questions of ourselves and of each other about how our teaching experiences inform next steps and questions in vocational discernment, a conversation that could help you imagine what might be next for an educational system and your potential role in it.



Capstones, Labs, Thesis & Directed Readings

Capstone Seminar in Educational Research

Social Science, WRIT, Cmty-based Learning

There are three sections:



Prof. Greg O'Donnell
ESS 43640-01 (MW 3:30-4:45)



Prof. Julie Dallavis
ESS 43640-02 (TTh 9:30-10:45)



Prof. Matt Wilsey
ESS 43640-04 MW 11:00-12:15)

This course introduces students to the conduct of original social science research, which can be many things: empirical; theory-driven; biased; and importantly, exciting to conduct. As you work on your own research, the primary focus of the class, we will examine various research methods by reading various studies. You will have opportunities to practice these methods in order to understand the potential strengths and weaknesses of each. In addition to learning how to design, carry out, and write your own study, you will develop the ability to read research critically. Three themes occur throughout the course: (1) analysis of educational research; (2) development of a social science research toolkit; and (3) application of research methods in the context of one's own research project.

Research Labs ESS 47602 (variable credit) Potentially various professors, including:



Prof. Patrick Kirkland (sec 26)

The Number Sense Lab studies elementary and middle school students' mathematical thinking. Research assistants will have the opportunity to contribute to a federally-funded research project studying the progression of students' number sense.

The work we do will advance fundamental knowledge of mathematical cognition through research and ultimately help lead to a better understanding of what teachers can do to best develop students' number sense within their classroom. It is our goal that as a part of this lab, you will further your own understanding of mature number sense and the research process, all while helping lead to increased practical knowledge for teachers in the classroom.



Prof. Alex Ambrose (sec 35)

This independent study guides students through the process of conducting research on artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on education. Students will explore key issues such as AI-driven learning tools, assessment, ethics, and educational equity. The course focuses on research skill development, including formulating research questions, conducting literature reviews, understanding research methodologies, and ethical analysis. The culminating project is a comprehensive research proposal that could serve as the foundation for future research. Students will be working with Notre Dame's Kaneb Center for Teaching Excellence's Lab for AI in Teaching and Learning (LAITL).

TBA: School Choice and Catholic Schools Research Lab

Pedagogy Lab ESS 45600 (variable credit) Various professors

Thesis in ESS ESS 48100 (Seniors take 1 credit in fall, 2 in spring) Various professors

Directed Readings ESS 36615 Various professors

USEMs

These courses fulfill the University Seminar requirement by introducing first-year students to educational themes, such as schooling, moral education, and social critique, through the study of literature, including how it influences our understanding of human and social nature today.

Multicultural Education, Literature, and Social Justice

Prof. Jodene Morrell

ESS 13186-03 (TTh 11am-12:15)

Arts & Literature & Writing

How do we create classrooms that honor and celebrate the wealth of cultures, literacy practices, and experiences that all children bring to school? What role can multicultural literature play in cultivating supportive, engaging, and literacy rich learning environments?

In this course, we will explore how critical literacy, culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), and using diverse literature as “windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors” (Bishop, 1990) can nurture K-12 students’ social and emotional growth and literacy development. Students will learn about the history and current state of U.S. education by reading books, articles, chapters, and policy briefs by leading scholars and select their own education related topic to research throughout the semester. Finally, we will explore the idea of education as the “great equalizer” and how it relates to access and equity for historically marginalized groups and how schools can play an active and positive role in making social justice a reality for all students.

Good, Evil, and Moral Education in Shakespeare and Tolkien

Prof. John Staud

ESS 13186-01 (MW 9:30-10:45)

Arts & Literature & Writing

One of the most beloved storytellers of the 20th century, JRR Tolkien, contemplates the power of stories within *The Lord of the Rings*. Resting for a while on the road to Mordor, Sam and Frodo find a measure of solace and purpose as they ruminate together on the nature of “the tales that really mattered, the ones that stay in the mind.” Shakespeare also acknowledges the power of story, albeit in a different sense, when he has Hamlet assert: “The play’s the thing/Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.” Central to this course is our study of two great writers of the English tradition, Shakespeare and Tolkien, with a particular focus on their various representations of good and evil and what their works can teach us about moral education. We will read and discuss works from two authors, separated by over 300 years, that nevertheless “stay in the mind”—*Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. As we study Shakespeare and Tolkien, we will do so with attention to questions about the value and purpose of literature and its capacity to prompt readers and audiences to think deeply about evil, goodness, and their manifestations that, arguably, have much to say about human nature and our world today.

Crosslisted Courses

Economics of Education

Prof. Rebecca Thornton

ESS 30504-02 (MW 11am-12:15pm)

Educational Psychology

Prof. Andrea Christensen

ESS 30614 (MW 12:30-1:45pm)

Social Science

Social Inequality and American Education

Prof. Amy Langenkamp

ESS 20202 (TTh 12:30pm-1:45pm)

Social Science

School Stories Lab

Prof. Susan Blum

ESS 41840 (F 12:30-1:30)

Anthropology of Childhood and Education

Prof. Susan Blum

ESS 35372 (MW 11am-12:15pm)

Improving Education Outcomes in the Global South

Prof. Patrizio Piraino

ESS 30414 (MW 3:30-4:45)

Once Upon a Time: Children's Literature & Community Connections

Prof. Rachel Parroquin

ESS 30670 (Th 2:00-3:15pm; with **Cmty-based Learning** TTh 3:15-4:30pm)

Advanced Language & Culture

Basics of Film and Television

Prof. Mary Celeste Kearney

ESS 20101 (TTh 11am-12:15pm)

Statistics for Sociological Research

Prof. Steven Alvarado

ESS 30217 (TTh 11am-12:15)

Quantitative Reasoning

Autism Spectrum Disorder Practicum I / Autism Spectrum Disorder Practicum I-W

Prof. Kristin Wier

ESS 35623 / ESS 40263 (MW 2-3:15pm), classes meet at same time

Consult PATH for full details and most up-to-date data

Writing Center Theory and Practice

Prof. Matthew Capdevielle

ESS 30401 (Date and Time TBA)

Catholic Education and the Common Good (London)

Prof. Simon Uttley, et al

ESS 34355 (T 5:15pm-6:30pm)

