

SYLLABUS: EDU 455/C&I 555
Learning from Finland: Best Practices for Teaching and Learning
Fall semester, 2019
2 credits



Instructor

Ann Ellsworth, PhD (ann.ellsworth@montana.edu)

Required Text

Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish Lessons 2.0*. New York: Teachers College Press.
ISBN 978-0807755853

Additional Readings and Resources

CIA World Factbook: Finland. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

European Literacy Policy Network. (2016). Literacy in Finland Country Report. http://www.elinet.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Finland_Long_Report.pdf

OECD PISA Website: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

Robinson, K. (2006). Ted Talk. “Do schools kill creativity?”
https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

Shanahan, T. (2015). “Finland’s ‘joyful, illiterate kindergartener.’” Thomas B. Fordham Institute.
<https://edexcellence.net/articles/finlands-joyful-illiterate-kindergarteners>

Walker, T. (2015). “The joyful, illiterate kindergartners of Finland.” *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/10/the-joyful-illiterate-kindergartners-of-finland/408325/>

Course description: This 2-credit self-paced course is designed to develop participants’ knowledge of the Finnish model of education. We will study the teaching philosophy and practices of Nordic educators that result in students performing as world leaders on national assessment measures in core areas of reading, mathematics, and science.

Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the Finnish compulsory education system with the American Pre-K12 public school system.
2. Describe Finland’s approach to teaching two national languages: Finnish and Swedish.

3. Describe the history of the PISA assessment and Finland's performance in the three core areas.
4. Identify aspects of Finnish culture, including the indigenous Sami people.

Major Topics

Overview and foundational language principles

Finland's model for instruction

Recent educational reform measures

Cultural factors that support schools and educators

Finland's performance on international assessments (PISA)

Teacher preparation

Rigor and length of programs

Percentage of students accepted into teacher training

Teaching is considered prestigious career choice



Instructional best practices in Finland

Educational mission: Schools and families as partners

Students are trusted

Communities value education, not sports

Frequent breaks & shortened school days

Expert instruction by master-level teachers

Grading

Total Points Available: 100

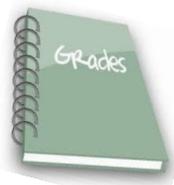
93-100 A

85-92 B

77-84 C

76-70 D

69 or lower F



Discussion Requirements

• Posting requirements

1. There is a sense in the posting that ideas lead to each other and connections are being made. The posting is more than a summary.
2. The initial post integrates readings with the world of practice.
3. The post meets the length specification (at least 300 words.)
4. There are no distracting English language conventions that would interfere with the meaning the writer wants to convey and the meaning the reader is seeking.

• Reply requirements

1. The reply posting is not merely commentary or "I agree with you" type of (passive thinking) response; these are not casual entries as if in a blog. Instead, there is evidence of higher-level thinking.

Reflection Paper (20 pts.)

For graduate-level participants only. Drawing from our readings and course material, prepare a 2-3 page (d.s.) reflection that discusses what you've learned about Finland's approach to teaching and learning. Reflect on what changes you plan to make in your instruction and explain how you might realize these goals. Use APA formatting when referencing any outside sources.

SCHEDULE

Week	Topics	Assignment
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions and course overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion Board Introductions.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Finland: CIA World Factbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CIA World Factbook—Be the Expert! Create a narrated PowerPoint (4-5 minutes) about your category.
3	Sahlberg pp. 1-53, 237 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We can learn from Finland• The Finnish Dream: A Good School for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion Board post #1 of 3 and responses (pp. 1-53, 237). One original post and at least one reply. (10 pts.)
4	Sahlberg pp. 54-97 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Finnish Paradox• History of PISA assessment and analysis of student performance data <p>OECD PISA Website: http://www.oecd.org/pisa/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion Board post #2 of 3 and responses (pp. 54-97). One original post and at least one reply. (10 pts.)
5	Sahlberg pp. 98-138 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Finnish Advantage• Creativity in Schools• TED Talk on creativity in education https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• View Sir Ken Robinson's TED talk and take notes to include in your comparison paper.
6	Sahlberg pp. 139-172 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Finnish Way• "The Joyful, Illiterate Kindergartners of Finland." <i>The Atlantic</i>. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/10/the-joyful-illiterate-kindergartners-of-finland/408325/• Shanahan, T. (2015). "Finland's 'joyful, illiterate kindergartener.'" https://edexcellence.net/articles/finlands-joyful-illiterate-kindergarteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion Board post #3 of 3 and responses (pp. 139-172). One original post and at least one reply. (10 pts.)
7	Sahlberg pp. 173-206 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Finnish Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comparison of Two Education Systems paper (25 pts.) 3-4 double-spaced pages minimum. Reference course material, APA style. 

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second language learning model• Indigenous populations and neighboring countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection Paper (20 pts.) 2-3 double-spaced pages minimum. Reference course material, APA style.
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