

Syllabus Version 5 from February 25, 2021. Please find the latest version [here](#). You can see the list of changes between versions in the [Changes](#) section.

Education A810R: Children, Schools, and Communities in Low- and Middle-Income Countries After COVID

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Class: W 10:30AM-12:30PM & 7:30-9:30PM ET

Class Room: 10:30AM-12:30PM & 7:30-9:30PM

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2PM ET & 11PM-Midnight ET

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COVID-19 has disrupted school systems worldwide through school closures, learning loss, and shifting child care responsibilities. Schools will, however, eventually reopen. How can this be done safely and responsibly while attending to the resource constraints in low- and middle-income countries? This course will consider how to structure schools and the communities they support to come back after the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare students to be responsible actors in this re-opening. Class readings and sessions will be retrospective to understand the impact COVID has had on children, schools, and communities, while the class assignment will be prospective and ask students to consider how to bring children back to schools in a safe and equitable way. Students should come to the class ready with a context in mind they wish to spend the module analyzing.

Many of the strategies for bringing students back to school safely are emerging out of high-income countries. Solutions like improved ventilation, widely available testing, mandated PPE, and physical distancing are often luxuries available in high-resource contexts. How do we think and adapt these solutions to places that are more resource constrained?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

HGSE is committed to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to an accurate assessment of your achievement in the course, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact KellyAnn Robinson, Ph.D., Associate Director of Student Support Services for an appointment. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests for accommodations should be made as soon as possible.

COVID

The world is not okay. You may be dealing with illness, or its aftermath. You may know people who have lost their jobs, have become sick, have been hospitalized, or perhaps have even lost their lives. You may have increased work and/or increased family care responsibilities. You may be facing uncertain job prospects, or have lost a job you depended on before coming to HGSE. The pandemic, the U.S. government's inept response to the pandemic, and further cruel migration policies have prevented many of you from coming to the United States, and all of us from being present together on Appian Way. You are probably attempting to complete schoolwork in a setting that is less than ideal, without access to quiet study spaces or other resources you could rely on on campus.

This is especially salient as this is a class *about* COVID. Many of you will be looking to work in contexts that have been hit hard by COVID and the associated economic and social harms. I want you to learn lots of things from this class and be engaged with your peers, but, more importantly, I want you to stay healthy, balanced, and grounded during this crisis. To that end, let's all aim to be flexible and supportive of each other. Please don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it and as a teaching team, we will try support you as best we can. You should also know that HGSE is committed to these same goals and has a number of resources to support students that you can find at <https://osa.gse.harvard.edu/student-support-tips-sheets>.

Signing-Up for the Class

The class will meet at two different times – 10:30AM-12:30PM ET and again from 7:30-9:30PM ET – during the day to allow for greater access across time zones. You will not be able to sign-up for a different class session on canvas. Instead, please fill out [this survey](#) that we will also send out to all enrolled students. You are expected to choose and attend the same class session throughout the semester to build community with the class session. Please let us know ahead of time if for whatever reason you are unable to attend the class session to which you were assigned.

A Note About Syllabus Changes

Under normal circumstances, the syllabus represents a contract, set in stone, between student and instructor of what will happen during the semester and how. You are all here because you recognize that these are not normal times. What we know and are learning about the disease is still changing rapidly, almost daily. Some of the materials I thought would be suitable in September 2020 might be out of date by January 2021. As a result, there are likely to be frequent changes to the syllabus. While I will send out emails when elements of the syllabus change, it is up to you to ensure you have the latest version of the syllabus. I will version and date the top of the syllabus, so please make sure you have the latest version. You can also find the latest version [here](#).

Assignments and Evaluation

There is one major assignment that will be scaffolded through smaller assignments over the course of the semester. The full break down of these assignments along with their value towards the final grade are presented below.

1. **Class Participation:** 20%
2. **School Re-Opening Plan:** 80%

Class Participation: 20% of Grade

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in detail. Participation in class provides the opportunity to develop the ability to present ideas effectively as well as the ability to listen to others and identify the main direction of a conversation and contribute in ways that advance it in constructive ways in contrast to the common — and less productive — experience of team members talking past each other or to themselves.

Readings are accessible two different ways - via the [Reading List](#) page, and via direct web links. The syllabus indicates where to locate each reading. For the readings available in the reading list, we have embedded persistent links (all you need to do is click on the hyperlink “Reading List”) that should take you directly to the articles via HarvardKey log-in. If a link does not work, which is always a possibility, please let the teaching team know and we will upload the correct link.

If you know you will be absent, please inform me by the end of the first full week of class (Friday, January 29). Beyond that date, all absences will be considered unexcused except for those due to serious illness or death in the family. More than one unexcused absence will negatively affect your grade.

School Re-Opening Plan: 80% of Grade

The final assignment for this course will be a school re-opening plan. You are encouraged, but not required, to work collaboratively with others in the class and towards a plan that will serve you after your time in this class to better prepare you for your own work. The assignment will be divided into a series of smaller assignments designed to get you to start working on your plan early and divide the assignment into a series of smaller steps.

Policy making is often made with great uncertainty and less than perfect data. Operating in this environment will be crucial for most of your future professional careers. This assignment will force you to operate in this environment. As you will see, there is still a lot we do not know about COVID, and much we may never know. Despite this, policies have to be made. Should we re-open? If so, how? If not, how will we support children’s learning outside of schools? What are the interests of children’s primary caretakers inside and outside of schools and how are they being attended to with any policy?

Some of you may also be interested in working on regions that have either already re-opened, are in the process of re-opening, or have opened and then closed again. For those cases, assignments 1, 2, and 3 will be the same, but please see assignment 4 for how your work will be different.

1. Country or Region Identification: 5%

In this assignment, we will have you focus and select the country, subnational unit, or region you plan on writing your final report on. First, identify and describe the country or region you intend to work on for your school re-opening plan. In the plan, you should answer the following questions:

- How many children have been affected by school closures? For how long? How many schools?
- How many COVID cases and deaths do they have?
- What are our best estimates of instructional time lost as a result of COVID?

This is due by **7AM ET on Wednesday, February 3**

2. Identify Actors and Interest Groups: 5%

Identify the primary actors and interest groups that will be affected by any plan you might design. Who are the main actors and interests groups in the education sector in your country and region of interest? What has their position been on COVID, school closures, and potential learning loss?

This is due by **7AM ET on Wednesday, February 10**

3. Critique Two Re-Opening Plans: 20%

The goal of this exercise is to familiarize yourself with what school reopening plans look like and what concerns they attempt to address. You will first read two school reopening plans – one a school district in the United States, and one from a ministry of education from either India, South Africa, or Kenya.

After reading the two plans, you will compare the plan from the United States with the plan from the LMIC of your choice. What are the key differences and what are issues they both try to address? Why do you think there are differences between the two plans? Next, try to understand who the plans are written for. Is it parents, teachers, or other stakeholders within the education space in the district or country? Or is it some other stakeholder? Why were they prioritized? Finally, what do you think is missing from each plan, or what other information would you have liked to see? Why do you think it is missing?

This is due by **7AM ET on Wednesday, February 17**

4. Design Your Own Re-Opening Plan: 50%

Taking into account what you have found that was most effective in the school reopening plans, now it is your turn to try writing your own for the region, country, or district you chose in the first exercise. Your school re-opening plan should be between 15-20 pages double spaced and address the actors and interest groups that will be most affected by reopening schools as an explicit audience.

If you are working in a group, please include a "Contribution Statement" at the beginning of the document so that we as a teaching team can better understand who worked on which parts of the re-opening plan and how each group member contributed.

Regions that have already re-opened or are in the process of re-opening If you choose to work on a region that has already re-opened, your school re-opening plan should do two things differently than a re-opening plan:

1. Critique and describe areas in the currently existing re-opening plan that you believe fall (realistically) short of an ideal, and what can be done to improve on that. This should be based on your work done for assignment 2 and 3. Are there any groups you believe could be supported that are not supported? Why?
2. Provide guidance on providing continued support for groups of students or members of the community that are unable to return to school. Does the current re-opening plan intend to bring *everyone* back? Is the region returning to business as normal? If not, what are plans to get there and when?

Regions that re-opened but then closed again If you choose to work on a region that has already re-opened but closed again, your school re-opening plan should do two things differently than a re-opening plan:

1. Identify why schools had to close again after re-opening. What were the failures in the system that could have been prevented?
2. Identify ways to prevent these failures in future re-openings, or address how things should be done differently this time around.

Re-Opening Plans Across Regions You may also choose to work on a re-opening plan for a group of countries or regions. There are many good reasons to do so, but you have to convince us that there is sufficient cooperation across regions to make this worthwhile. To that end, in your re-opening plans, you should do the following:

1. Provide evidence that the region you are interested in working is sufficiently interdependent that constructing a united plan makes sense. This can take the form of showing us that there is substantial migration between countries in the region that we should think of schools and communities as functionally part of similar administrative units, provide evidence that children or adults will have substantial contact with people across countries.
2. Differentiate between policies and actions that need to be taken inter-regionally and policies and tasks that need to be taken within countries. This should be strongly guided by what jurisdiction either regional or international cooperation organizations (ASEAN or UNICEF as examples of each).

This is due on **Monday, March 15**.

Overview of Class Sessions

1. Wednesday, January 27: Shocks and Opportunities for Reform
2. Wednesday, February 3: What Do We Know About Children and COVID?
3. Wednesday, February 10: What Do We Know about School Closures and Education Interruptions Before COVID? During COVID?
4. Wednesday, February 17: Building Back, Better: Reopening Schools After COVID
5. Wednesday, February 24: What Has The Impact of COVID Been on Learning?
6. Wednesday, March 3: What Has the Impact of COVID Been on Education Finances?

Wednesday, January 27: Shocks and Opportunities for Reform

In our first week together, I would like to spend some time reflecting on what we have lost, both this year and more generally when communities lose schools.

- **Guiding Questions:**

- What roles do schools play in communities?
- Who is most impacted by school closings?
- What opportunities do shocks present to improve?

- **By Class:**

- Complete the qualtrics survey for the teaching team [here](#).
- Introduce yourself on the Canvas class discussion page [here](#).

- **For Class:**

- UNICEF. January 12, 2021. "Children cannot afford another year of school disruption: Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore" [Link](#).
- United Nations. August 22, 2020. "Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond." [Link](#).
- The Daily Nation. January 5, 2021. "Thousands of learners fail to report back as Kenyan schools open". [Link](#).
- MacGillis, Alec. September 28, 2020. "The Students Left Behind by Remote Learning." *Pro Publica* and *The New Yorker*. [Link](#).
- Ewing, Eve. 2018. *Ghosts in the Schoolyard*. The University of Chicago Press. Pgs. 48-52 & 125-153.
- Moe, Terry M. 2019. *The Politics of Institutional Reform*. Cambridge University Press. Pgs. 1-6 & 129-146. [Link](#).
- Tijoux, Ana. 2011. "Shock." *La Bala*. [Spotify link](#).

Wednesday, February 3: What Do We Know About Children and COVID in Low- and Middle-Income Countries?

This week, we review the sociological, economic, and epidemiological evidence on the impacts of COVID on children.

- **Guiding Questions:**

- What does the epidemiological evidence say about the impact of COVID on children?
- Are there differences in public health strategies between low- and middle-income countries and high-income countries?
- Do these differences impact how we should think about school reopenings and education as a result of COVID?
- What else would it be useful to know before making policy decisions?

- **By Class:**

- Country or Region Identification: 5% of final grade.

- **For Class:**

- Vogel, Gretchen. May 22, 2020. "How Sweden wasted a 'rare opportunity' to study coronavirus in schools." *Science*. [Link](#).
- Ludvigsson, Jonas F., Lars Engerström, Charlotta Nordenhäll, and Emma Larsson. January 6, 2021 "Open Schools, Covid-19, and Child and Teacher Morbidity in Sweden." *New England Journal of Medicine*. [Link](#).
- Auger, Katherine A., Samir S. Shah, and Troy Richardson. 2020. "Association Between Statewide School Closure and COVID-19 Incidence and Mortality in the United States." *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 324(9): 859-70. [Link](#).
- Zimmerman, Kanecia O., Ibukunoluwa C. Akinboyo, M. Alan Brookhart, Angelique E. Boutzoukas, Kathleen McGann, Michael J. Smith, Gabriela Maradiaga Panayotti, et al. 2021. "Incidence and Secondary Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 Infections in Schools." *Pediatrics*. [Link](#).
- Mobarak, Ahmed Mushfiq, and Zachary Barnett-Howell. August 10, 2020. "Poor Countries Need to Think Twice About Social Distancing." *Foreign Policy*. [Link](#).
- Oster, Emily. October 9, 2020. "Schools Aren't Super Spreaders". *The Atlantic*. [Link](#).

Wednesday, February 10: What Do We Know about the Impacts of School Closures and Educational Interruptions Before COVID? During COVID?

- **Guiding Questions:**

- Are there any lessons we can learn from previous pandemics and their impacts on society?
- What are the broader impacts of school closures and larger societal disruptions on women, informal labor, and children?
- Is there any reason to think that this time is different? Why or why not?

- **By Class:**

- Identify Actors and Interest Groups: 5% of final grade.

- **For Class:**

- Ager, Phillip, Katherine Eriksson, Ezra Karger, Peter Nencka, and Melissa A. Thomasson. December 2020. "School Closures During the 1918 Flu Pandemic." NBER Working Paper. NBER Working Paper Series. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. [Link](#).
- Makino, Momoe, Shonchoy, Abu S., Wahhaj, Zaki. 2021. "Early Effects of the COVID-19 Lockdown on Children in Rural Bangladesh". Working Paper. [Link](#).
- Agarwal, Bina. 2021. "Livelihoods in COVID Times: Gendered Perils and New Pathways in India." *World Development* 139. [Link](#)
- Archibong, Belinda, and Francis Annan. 2021. "'We Are Not Guinea Pigs': The Effects of Negative News on Vaccine Compliance." Working Paper. [Link](#).

Wednesday, February 17: Build Back, Better: Reopening Schools After COVID

- **Guiding Questions:**

- How are school districts bringing or have brought students back to school after COVID?
- Are there differences between school districts in the United States and in low- and middle-income countries? Do they appear to be reasonable differences?

- **By Class:**

- Critique two re-opening plans
- **For Class:**
 - Read one of the following school reopening plans:¹
 - * Cambridge, Massachusetts School Reopening Plan. [Link](#).
 - * Hamilton County, Tennessee School Reopening Plan. [Link](#).
 - * Los Angeles County, California School Reopening Plan. [Link](#).
 - Read one of the following school reopening plans:
 - * Delhi, India. Use the search tool under [Click Here to View Circulars Datewise & Branch Wise here](#) between March 1, 2020 and the current date and search for “Close”.
 - * The press release of the Ministry of Education of Kenya [here](#) and the school reopening plan for Kenya [here](#).
 - * South Africa school reopening plans [here](#). NB: Schools in South Africa are currently open.
 - Saavedra Chanduvi, Jaime, Aedo Inostroza, Mario Cristian, Arias Diaz, Omar S. 2020. *Realizing the Future of Learning: From Learning Poverty to Learning for Everyone, Everywhere*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. [Link](#).
 - * Pick one of “Learners”, “Teachers”, “Learning Resources”, “Schools”, or “System Management” and read the respective sub-sections under “The Future of Learning” and “Bringing Forward the Future of Learning: Key Policy Actions” for that section.
 - Greer, Scott L., and Phillip M. Singer. 2017. “The United States Confronts Ebola: Suasion, Executive Action and Fragmentation.” *Health Economics, Policy and Law* 12(1): 81–104. [Link](#).
 - Greer, Scott L., and Phillip M. Singer. 2017. “Addressing Zika in the United States: Polarization, Fragmentation, and Public Health.” *American Journal of Public Health* 107, 6 (June 2017): 861–62. [Link](#).
 - You may also find it useful to explore the [Data Sources](#) at the end of the syllabus.

Wednesday, February 24: What Has The Impact of COVID Been on Education Finances?

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - What impact has COVID had on education financing?
 - How can we expect this to constrain future education policy-making?
- **For Class:**
 - Ferreira, Francisco H. G., and Norbert Schady. 2009. “Aggregate Economic Shocks, Child Schooling, and Child Health.” *The World Bank Research Observer* 24(2): 147-81. [Link](#).
 - The World Bank. May 2020. *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education Financing*. Washington, DC: World Bank. [Link](#).
 - Bassier, Ihsaan et al. 2021. “Locked down and Locked out: Repurposing Social Assistance as Emergency Relief to Informal Workers.” *World Development* 139. [Link](#).
 - Carvalho, Shelby, and Susannah Hares. November 24, 2020. “The Economic Shock of COVID-19 May Hit Private School and Contract Teachers Hardest.” *Center for Global Development*. [Link](#).

Wednesday, March 3: What Has The Impact of COVID Been on Learning?

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - What do we know about learning loss as a result of COVID?
 - Do good data exist on children out of school and gaps in learning in the context you are interested in?
- **For Class:**

¹Please email me if these links are broken or no longer publicly available. I have copies current as of January 18, 2021.

- Angrist, Noam, Peter Bergman, and Moitshepi Matsheng. January 2021. "School's Out: Experimental Evidence on Limiting Learning Loss Using "Low-Tech" In a Pandemic". Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper. [Link](#).
- McCoy, Dana Charles, Jorge Cuartas, Jere Behrman, Claudia Cappa, Jody Heymann, Florencia Ló Bóo, Chunling Lu, Abbie Raikes, Linda Richter, Alan Stein, and Günther Fink. Working Paper. "Short- and long-run consequences of COVID-19-related preschool closures". Will be shared on canvas before class session.
- Read one of:
 1. Asanov, Igor, Francisco Flores, David McKenzie, Mona Mensmann, and Mathis Schulte. 2021. "Remote-Learning, Time-Use, and Mental Health of Ecuadorian High-School Students during the COVID-19 Quarantine." *World Development*. 138 (February 2021):105-225. [Link](#).
 2. Hasan, Syed M., Attique Rehman, and Wendong Zhang. 2021. "Who Can Work and Study from Home in Pakistan: Evidence from a 2018-19 Nationwide Household Survey." *World Development* 138 (February 2021): 105-197. [Link](#).
- Read one of:
 1. Dreesen, Thomas et al. 2020. "Promising Practices for Equitable Remote Learning: Emerging Lessons from COVID-19 Education Responses in 127 Countries." Innocenti Research Brief. United National Children's Fund. [Link](#).
 2. McAleavy, Tom, Kristine Gorgen. April 2020. "Summary: Overview of Emerging Country-Level Response to Providing Educational Continuity under COVID-19". *Education Development Trust*. [Link](#).

Additional Resources

Given that the situation with COVID is constantly changing, and something we read at the beginning of the semester might be out of date by the end, it's also important to keep up to date with the latest information coming out. Some material that I have found useful are listed below. Please email me if you come across something that you find particularly useful or interesting that should be included on this list and I will include it for all of us to jointly learn.

Data Sources

- The University of Oxford has come up with a [tracker of trackers](#). It contains most of the trackers and data sources listed below. I will largely stop updating this section given that *most* sources will be at the tracker of trackers. If it is not, and you think it is important, please let me know.
- The Center for Global Development has been maintaining a [school closure tracker](#).
- The World Bank has created a [COVID-19 High-Frequency Monitoring Dashboard](#) that provides data on 14 topics including education, health, coping, and finances among others.
- Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) has launched the [RECOVR survey](#), a panel survey that tracked disruptions to public and private life since the pandemic began in ten low- and middle-income countries. They also regularly provide blog updates on their work.
- DataMeet, a community of open-source data scientists in India, have collected as many of the publicly available data sources on COVID in India that they could find. The data is available on their [github page](#).
- The King's India Institute at King's College London has been putting together resources on decentralization, federalism, and COVID in India across various domains including economics, public health, and social security. Their data and analysis can be found [here](#).
- The Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Programme, has put together a simulation of potential learning losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The resource can be found [here](#).
- A consortium funded by the European Commission has been maintaining data on government responses to COVID called CoronaNet. Information about their efforts can be found [here](#).
- Although no longer updated, the Harvard Business School COVID Global Policy Tracker tracked early policy and economic responses to COVID across 50 countries in the world and can be found [here](#).
- The Observer Research Foundation is maintaining a vaccine tracker [here](#).
- Although not the focus of the class, Emily Oster and colleagues have been maintaining a [school response dashboard](#) of school responses to COVID in the United States. An introduction to the dashboard can be found [here](#).

Research Repositories

- Researchers at Cornell and Facebook are maintaining a list of ongoing research in the social sciences on COVID. You can find the repository [here](#).

Twitter Accounts

- Susanah Hares: Director of the Center for Global Development's Education arm. Has done a ton of work on school closures after COVID.
- Zeynep Tufekci: A professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She normally works on the relationship between technology, particularly social media, and society. She now writes a lot about the sociology of COVID: How can we ensure compliance with quarantine, shelter-in-place orders, the use of PPE? Her particular pet-peeves are "hygiene theater" and the vilification of people being outside safely.

Newsletters

- Emily Oster: A development economist at Brown. Her books and newsletter used to focus on pregnancies and child-rearing, and to a certain extent still do. Given the disproportionate impact of COVID on the social and private lives of women and children, she has naturally turned her focus to COVID.
- Zeynep Tufekci maintains her own newsletter in which she writes opinions and critiques about COVID and invites others who disagree with her to respond.

Podcasts

- In June, El Hilo, a Spanish language podcast, recorded an episode on school closures in Paraguay and Uruguay. You can listen [here](#).

Changes

- Changes between V₁ (January 18, 2021) and V₂ (January 23, 2021):
 - Added more data resources
 - Added article on school reopening in Kenya to Wednesday, January 27
 - Added Agarwal, Bassier, and Marteleto readings to Wednesday, February 10
 - Removed Jain et al. reading from Wednesday, February 10
 - Moved two readings from Wednesday, February 10 to Wednesday, March 3
 - Added Saavedra et al. to Wednesday, February 17
- Changes between V₂ (January 23, 2021) and V₃ (February 6, 2021):
 - Added details on assignments for re-opening plans for:
 - * Regions that have already re-opened or are in the process of re-opening;
 - * Regions that re-opened but have closed again;
 - * Plans across countries and within regions.
 - Add grade value to re-opening plans
 - Added the Oxford tracker-of-trackers. No more trackers will be added after this.
 - Added Makino et al., and Archibong & Annan to Week 3 readings
 - Moved Bassier et al. from Week 3 to Week 5 readings.
 - Moved Dreesen et al. from Week 3 to Week 6 readings.
 - Removed Ravindran and Shah, and Marteleto and Dondero from week 3 readings.
- Changes between V₃ (February 6, 2021) and V₄ (February 16, 2021):
 - Added Ferreira & Schady, and Carvalho and Hares to readings for Wednesday, February 24
- Changes between V₄ (February 16, 2021) and V₅ (February 25, 2021):
 - Provide choices for Week 6 readings