E.R.A. Seligman, an economics at Columbia, characterized the seminar in 1892 as "the wheel within the wheel, the real center of the life-giving, the stimulating, the creative forces of the university." "Without it," he continued, "no university instruction is complete; with it, correctly conducted, no university can fail to accomplish the main purpose of its being."

Seligman was an extraordinary figure in many ways (you can learn more about him in Thomas Bender, "E.R.A. Seligman and the Vocation of Social Science," Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States, Hopkins, 1993), but the kind of enthusiasm he expressed for the seminar was not especially uncommon in the still nascent American university of the 1890's. The new ideal of research and new form of academic career that went with it required new instructional forms. The recitation was case aside as a relic of the past. In its place stood the seminar, the laboratory, and the lecture.

A century later, you won't find historians or sociologists speaking about the seminar as if there was something sacramental about it. The place of research in the university is secure, while the social hopes that marked its advent have dimmed. Nevertheless I think that most of us in the humanities and the social sciences -- including those feminist scholars who with calculated irony prefer to speak of the "ovular" instead -- still regard the gathering like ours this seminar as a different kind of curricular opportunity than a garden variety "course." I know I do, at any rate. The primary emphasis here is not the historiography of education as it stands -- which explains why there is no required reading -- but on the possibilities of using local history to complicate or correct our understanding of the historiography. Who knows? In the end, with any luck, we might glimpse some ways in which to revise the historiography's understanding of itself.

The major requirement of the course is a paper, approximately 25 pages in length, on some aspect of the history of education in Kentucky. Our meetings here on campus (or possibly over dinner if you prefer) will be devoted to discussing your work in the
archives as it proceeds, as well as to whatever secondary material we may elect to take up in common. Your paper, along with enough copies for the other members of the group, will be due at the end of the term. The last few weeks of the semester will be given over to discussing your written efforts. There will of course be no final exam.

These articles should help you get your bearings in the historiography as if has developed since 1960. Don't think of them as the last work on this subject, but as first words -- as places to go from and return to.


In addition to whatever we read in advance of the visits by Valerie Summers, Kolan Morelock and others, I would also like to include:

Stephen Jay Gould, "The Iconography of an Expectation," Chapter 1 of Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History (New York, 1989), an essay which has nothing to do with the history of education per se, but everything to do with "thinking in time" and narratives of progress.

Two cartoons to supplement the torches which grace the cover of Out of Time & Tide: The Evolution of Education in Kentucky (UK College of Education, Bureau of School Services, 197): (1) "Lifting American Social and Economic Life," the frontpiece of a 1929 publication, The City School Board Member and His Task, which David Tyack used in a 1976 article, "Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory Schooling," Harvard Educational Review, (August, 1976), and (2) "What the Students

Thomas D. Clark, "Public Education," from the Kentucky Encyclopedia, and two essays of my own.

Again, I hope you enjoy the course.