

This is Not a Test: The Sociocultural Foundations of Modern American Education

Course Description:

How did American education evolve? What determines what is considered a “good” education today? What are the social, political, and economic goals of the dominant educational practices in our society? This course will provide a space for students to learn about how the American educational system has evolved over the centuries while interrogating the historical discourses that have shaped it the most. The first half of the course will focus on understanding the history and theoretical underpinnings of American education from the colonial period through the 1960s. In this section, we will focus on the impact of colonization, industrialization, and modernization on how and why people went to school.

The second half of the course will focus on contemporary issues and tensions of American education since the 1960s with a particular focus on globalization, neoliberalism, and multicultural education. The coursework will involve reflection essays on class lectures and readings as well as intergroup dialogue and group activities that will encourage students to examine their own connection to the theoretical concepts presented in the lectures and homework assignments. The culminating project/final will be a research paper wherein students will explore one aspect of their own educational journey and connect it to the course content. Students will be provided a course pack for this class with all required reading materials.

Course Objectives:

- Understand how historical forces such as colonization, industrialization, modernization, globalization, and neoliberalism has impacted the American educational system
- Evaluate evidence within one’s own educational experiences as well as within the class readings that supports/contradicts the efficacy of the social, political, and economic goals of American educational practices
- Gain experience and familiarity with different ways that people have conceptualized the goals and impact of the American educational system from different social positionalities
- Develop historical and theoretical background to understand critical perspectives to modern American education

Course Requirements and Grading:

- Attendance and class participation (35%)
 - Dialogue will be an essential component to the learning objectives of the course.
 - We will meet for 13 classes
 - Each class will consist of dialogue and group activities based on the readings and assignments
 - Students must complete watch the lecture and do the readings before each corresponding class
 - Requirements
 - Students must notify the professor no later than 24 hours before a class if they are unable to attend class due to a personal emergency and/or sickness. If an emergency presents itself on the day of class, the student has until the end of that day to contact their professor detailing the emergency if they would like to have that absence excused.
 - Students are only allowed two excused absences during the course of a semester. If the student requires more than two excused absences, accommodations must be arranged through the student's class dean to verify the issue and identify workarounds.
 - Rubric for attendance and class participation
 - 5- The student attends and participates as they are able in every class. Participation includes actively listening and responding to the experiences and thoughts of others during class as well as actively adding to the dialogue space by sharing reflections on the topic. The student recognizes that a significant portion of their learning is connected to how they actively share their perceptions, experiences, concerns, (mis)understandings and personal connections with others during the class. It is evident through how they participate in class that the student challenges themselves to be critically self-reflective, non-judgmental, and open to imperfection.
 - 4- The student attends and participates as they are able in most classes. Participation includes actively listening and responding to the experiences and thoughts of others during class as well as actively adding to the dialogue space by sharing reflections on the topic. The student sometimes shares their perceptions, experiences, concerns, (mis)understandings and personal connections with others during the class. The student values being critically self-reflective, non-judgmental, and open to imperfection.
 - 3- The student attends and participates as they are able in some classes. Participation includes actively listening and responding to the experiences

and thoughts of others during class as well as actively adding to the dialogue space by sharing reflections on the topic. The student seldom shares their perceptions, experiences, concerns, (mis)understandings and personal connections with others during the class. Sometimes it is evident that the student values being critically self-reflective, non-judgmental, and open to imperfection.

- Needs Improvement- The student's attendance and participation in class is inconsistent. The student does not challenge themselves to be critically self-reflective, non-judgmental, or open to imperfection.
- Homework assignments (35%)
 - There will be response/reflection papers due at the beginning of the course in addition to in-class and out of class activities that will further students' content mastery. You should complete the assignments in the following progression:
 - Class 1 and 2 reflection response
 - Class 3, 4, and 5 reflection response
 - Old assignment reflection essay
 - Class 5, 6, and 7 reflection response
 - Schooling assesment reflection essay
 - Self grading reflection essay
 - All readings and assignments will be shared through a class google team drive ([link](#))
 - All homework assignments should be submitted to the professor by creating a google drive folder and sharing it with your professor
 - Once you have uploaded your assignment into the folder, email your professor/share the link to submit it.
 - Rubric for homework assignments
 - 5- The student responded well to all of the assignment prompt(s). The student showcases a clear understanding of the main arguments in the texts and intentionally places their own personal experiences (i.e. thoughts, feelings, behaviours, misconceptions, etc.) in conversation with the perspectives of the authors. There is a clear intention to go beyond shallow connections and truly discover/uncover/reveal something to and for themselves. The student takes the time and effort to challenge their own arguments and perceptions and reflect on why they are interpreting the authors' texts in a particular way and the potential implications of their beliefs. The student incorporates information from the supplemental readings and sources not provided by the professor (such as readings from previous classes, current events and news articles,

family stories, personal history, memes and social media, wikipedia) to deepen their understanding of the context and implications of the authors' text and their own experiences/beliefs. The student connects their own interpretations and arguments to the course objectives and how the course is impacting their own development. The assignment was turned in on time.

- 4- The student responded well to some of the assignment prompt(s). The student showcases an understanding of the main arguments in the texts this week and intentionally places their own personal experiences (i.e. thoughts, feelings, behaviours, misconceptions, etc.) in conversation with the perspectives of the authors. The student takes the time and effort to make sure that their thoughts are clearly ordered and communicated. The assignment was turned in on time or at least one week after the original due date.
- 3- The student responded to the assignment prompt(s). The student showcases that they have read some of the readings and have an opinion about what they have read. They turned the assignment in and met all basic requirements about the length and content of the assignment
- Needs improvement- the response to the texts were incoherent and/or very little to no personal connections to the arguments made were present
- Incomplete- student did not turn in the assignment
- Extension Policy
 - If you need an extension on an assignment, you must email the professor at least 24 hours before the assignment due date explaining what is preventing you from completing the assignment on time.
 - Since all the homework assignments have to be done in a sequence by the end of the month before you can start the Spring semester, extensions can only be granted up to 4 days after the original deadline
- Final project (30%)
 - The final project will be a research paper wherein students will explore one aspect of their own educational journey and connect it to the course content.
 - Rubric for final project
 - 5- The student responded well to all of the assignment prompt(s). The student takes the time and effort to challenge their own arguments and perceptions and reflect on why they are interpreting the authors' texts in a particular way and the potential implications of their beliefs. The student incorporates information from the supplemental readings and

sources not provided by the professor (such as readings from previous classes, current events and news articles, family stories, personal history, memes and social media, wikipedia) to deepen their understanding of the context and implications of their arguments and reflections. The student connects their own interpretations and arguments to the course objectives, class texts, and how the course is impacting their own development. The assignment was turned in on time.

- 4- The student responded well to some of the assignment prompt(s). The student takes the time and effort to make sure that their thoughts are clearly ordered and communicated. The assignment was turned in on time or at least one week after the original due date.
- 3- The student responded to the assignment prompt(s). The student showcases that they have read some of the readings and have an opinion about what they have read. They turned the assignment in and met all basic requirements about the length and content of the assignment
- Needs improvement- The student didn't adequately respond to the assignment prompt(s). The response to the texts were incoherent and/or very little to no personal connections to the arguments made were present
- Incomplete- student did not turn in the assignment

Course Topics:

1. Class 1- What is education?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Philip Jackson- What is Education?
 1. Introduction
 2. Chapter 1: Dewey's Parting Words
 3. Chapter 2: Trafficking in Truth
 4. Chapter 3: Preconditions of Education
 - ii. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Donald Oliver and Kathleen Gershman- Education, Modernity, and Fractured Meaning: Toward a Process Theory of Teaching and Learning- Chapter 1: Prologue and Introduction
 - iii. Videos

2. Class 2- What did education look like in the colonial and early national American period (pre-1776 - 1820s)?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Edward Janak- A Brief History of Schooling in the United States
 1. Chapter 1: Education in Precolonial/Colonial North America
 2. Chapter 2: Education in the Early Revolutionary and Early National Periods
 - ii. Wayne Urban, Jennings Wagoner, and Milton Gaither- American Education: A History- Chapter 5: Class, Caste, and Education in the South
 - iii. Videos
3. Class 3- What did education look like in the common school and progressive periods (1830s-1920s)?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Wayne Urban, Jennings Wagoner, and Milton Gaither- American Education: A History-
 1. Chapter 6: Beginning a Modern School System
 2. Chapter 7: Organizing a Modern School System
 - ii. (*strongly suggested but not required*) Joel Spring- Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States- Chapter 1: Deculturalization and the Claim of Racial and Cultural Superiority by Anglo-Americans
 - iii. Videos
4. Class 4- What did education look like in early 20th century America?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Wayne Urban, Jennings Wagoner, and Milton Gaither- American Education: A History-
 1. Chapter 8: Completing the Modern School System
 2. Chapter 9: The Effects of Depression and War on American Education
 - ii. Videos
5. Class 5- What did education look like in early 20th century America?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Wayne Urban, Jennings Wagoner, and Milton Gaither- American Education: A History- Chapter 10: Education During and After the Crucial Decade
 - ii. Videos
6. Class 6- What did education look like in mid-20th century America?
 - a. Texts

- i. Joel Spring- Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States- Chapter 6: The Great Civil Rights Movement and the New Culture Wars
 - ii. Wayne Urban, Jennings Wagoner, and Milton Gaither- American Education: A History- Chapter 11: The Pursuit of Equality
 - iii. Videos
- 7. Class 7- What did education look like in mid-20th century America?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Edward Janak- A Brief History of Schooling in the United States- Chapter 5: Education in the Five E's Period
 - 1. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Ivan Illich- Deschooling Society- Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Phenomenology of School, Chapter 3: Ritualization of Progress
 - ii. Videos
- 8. Class 8- What is neoliberalism and how has it impacted American education?
 - a. Texts
 - i. Edward Janak- A Brief History of Schooling in the United States- Education in the Neoliberal Period
 - 1. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Fredrik DeBoer- The Cult of Smart: How Our Broken Education System Perpetuates Social Injustice Ch 0- Introduction (education studies)
 - 2. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Fredrik DeBoer- The Cult of Smart: How Our Broken Education System Perpetuates Social Injustice Ch 3- Equality of Opportunity, Liberalism's Great Lie (education studies)
 - 3. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Fredrik DeBoer- The Cult of Smart: How Our Broken Education System Perpetuates Social Injustice Ch 7- Before the Veil of Ignorance (education studies)
 - 4. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Fredrik DeBoer- The Cult of Smart: How Our Broken Education System Perpetuates Social Injustice Ch 9- A World to Win (education studies)
 - ii. Alderik Visser- Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up Ch 1- Testing Towards Utopia: Performativity, Pedagogy, and the Teaching Profession (education studies)
 - 1. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Jelmer Evers and Rene Kneyber- Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up Ch 0- Introduction (education studies)

2. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Dick van der Wateren and Audrey Amrein-Beardsley- Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up Ch 2- Measuring What Doesn't Matter: The Nonsense and Sense of Testing and Accountability (education studies)
3. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Rene Kneyber- Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up Ch 3- On Neoliberalism and How It Travels: An Interview with Stephen Ball (education studies)

iii. Videos

9. Class 9- What is neoliberalism and how has it impacted American education?

a. Texts

- i. John Holmwood- Decolonising the University Ch 3- Race and the Neoliberal University: Lessons from the Public University (postcolonial studies, critical university studies)
 1. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Kehinde Andrews- Decolonising the University Ch 8- The Challenge for Black Studies in the Neoliberal University (postcolonial studies, critical university studies)
 2. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Angela Last- Decolonising the University Ch 12- Internationalisation and Interdisciplinarity: Sharing Across Boundaries? (postcolonial studies, critical university studies)
- ii. Amanda E. Lewis and John B. Diamond- Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools Ch 6- Conclusion (education studies)
 1. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Amanda E. Lewis and John B. Diamond- Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools Ch 1- Introduction (education studies)
 2. *(strongly suggested but not required)* Amanda E. Lewis and John B. Diamond- Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools Ch 5- Opportunity Hoarding: Creating and Maintaining Racial Advantage (education studies)

iii. Videos

10. Class 10- What is globalization and how has it impacted American education?

a. Texts

iii. Videos