Nancy Barnes Email: <u>nb172@aol.com</u> GLSP -- SOCS 624 Spring, 2009

Lives in School

What can we learn about education in the contemporary U.S. by looking closely at the stories people tell about their schooling? Do you believe that most people have had generally similar experiences in school in the U.S.? If not, why not? How would you describe the changes that education may have made in the life of your family between your parents' generation and your own, or that of your children? Are the identities that define you to yourself the same as the identities that have defined your careers in school? What meanings does school have to people in other cultures?

School is among the most powerful institutions in American culture, often reproducing inequalities of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality, and more. At the same time, narrative accounts reveal that school can bring about great transformations in the lives of individuals, and can play a critical part in social change that affects significant groups of Americans. This seminar explores these contradictory realities through the lenses of autobiography and memoir, ethnography and social science research, journalism and documentary film and video. The readings will be framed by education studies as a field, and will focus on urban school reform as a specific set of circumstances that we investigate from different perspectives.

The course asks students to think critically about their educational experiences as students, teachers, parents, and citizens. Students will develop and interpret their own educational autobiographies and will research and present educational narratives drawn from the lives of individuals quite different from themselves. In addition to required attendance, weekly reading and participation in class discussion, there will be frequent short writing in class and three required papers.

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PLEASE NOTE:

All books for the course have been ordered at Broad St. Books. Books with a double asterisk ** are required. A single asterisk * indicates that students will choose <u>one</u> book from the group of texts assigned for that date. We will make certain decisions about the course together during the first class meeting, after which the final syllabus <u>and</u> additional required short readings will be available.

ALL STUDENTS please read Dalton Conley, Honky, before the first class, 1/28/09

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January 28 Dalton Conley, <u>Honky</u> ** James Herndon, "Flax" from <u>How to Survive in Your Native Land</u> (hand-out in class)

February 4	Students select one reading: Theodore Sizer, <u>The Red Pencil</u> * Brian Schultz, <u>Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way</u> * Gregory Michie, <u>Holler If You Hear Me</u> *
February 11	Sherman Alexie, <u>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time</u> <u>Indian</u> ** "Out of the Past" video
February 18	Beverly Daniel Tatum, <u>Can We Talk about Race? And Other</u> <u>Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation</u> **
February 25	Curtis Sittenfeld, <u>Prep: A Novel</u> ** Jeffrey Blitz, "Spellbound" video
March 4	Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed **
March 11 & 18	Spring Break – No class
March 25	Students choose one reading: Tracy Kidder, <u>Mountains Beyond Mountains</u> * Anne Fadiman, <u>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</u> * Abraham Verghese, <u>My Own Country</u> * Nicolas Philibert, "To Be and To Have" video
April 1	Mike Rose, Lives On the Boundary **
April 8	Michelle Fine, et al, "Off Track" video
April 15	Students select one reading: Temple Grandin, <u>Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My</u> <u>Life with Autism</u> * Mark Haddon, <u>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time</u> *
April 22	Jane Lazarre, Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness **
April 29	Ron Suskind, <u>A Hope in the Unseen</u> **
May 6	Last Class Final paper due