

1/19/2011 NOTE to Students in Learning in Cultural Perspectives:

This is a slightly revised course description and syllabus. Please forgive me if I have caused you inconvenience by not getting this to you sooner. This is my first experience with the weekend immersion format *and* with using moodle, so I will need your help and patience!

The books on the syllabus, all of which are required (except for the list on 3/26 from which you will choose one), have been ordered at Broad St. I strongly advise reading the books before the class begins. Most of the other readings are short enough so that you can plan according to your individual schedules.

All chapters, articles and excerpts are available on moodle. The syllabus is on moodle as well, under "Course Documents" at the top of the page.

I will add several videos and miscellaneous links, but they will not require time outside of class meetings. Assignments have not been described in detail because I would like to talk about them together on our first Saturday. I can tell you that they will be short thinking papers, not research papers, based on readings, discussions, and the questions that they raise for you. Final work (somewhat longer) will be due either April 11 or April 18, depending on the class preference -- and allowing for changes due to bad weather!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns (my aol address is more reliable). I look forward to meeting you--and to seeing those of you I already know!

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SOCS 623 --- GLSP  
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### **Learning in Cultural Perspectives**

This seminar explores how people learn, in and out of school, at home and around the globe. The seminar uses cultural perspectives and interpretations to explore learning in selected locations: classrooms in the urban U.S.; cases of cultural misunderstandings and their consequences in schools and health care; alternative educational projects, particularly college in prison; and global initiatives, both state-run and privatized, market-driven standardized schooling, which depend on the internet and will exert vast personal and political influences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Central questions for the course include: What does a cultural perspective contribute to thinking about learning and why does it matter? What does culture look like and what purposes does learning serve in particular settings: classrooms, health care, prisons? How do educational institutions and practices construct and manage students' cultural identities and differences, e.g. by racial and socio-economic tracking, or by digital learning? Who decides what constitutes learning? What are the possibilities for change in education in the world today? What changes would members of the seminar advocate?

People in the class will be asked to position themselves as students, travelers, teachers, parents, community members and citizens as they engage with the texts and reflect on their own experiences of learning.

In addition to class attendance, students are required to prepare the readings in advance of each discussion. Students will work in small groups during our days together and will choose from readings listed for 3/26 to plan and lead discussion of a text and the questions it raises. There will be class time for this, although you will need to read in preparation. There will a series of one-page papers in response to the readings and videos, and longer pieces of writing designed to develop each student's particular interests.

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There are 3 required books, marked with an asterisk\*, which will be available at Broad St. Bookstore. (Please call the bookstore to make sure the books have arrived before you make a special trip.)

\* The Anthropological Lens, James Peacock

\* The Shame of the Nation, Jonathan Kozol

\* Sizwe's Test, Johnny Steinberg

In addition, Chanda's Secrets, Allan Stratton, has been ordered at the bookstore in case you have difficulty finding it elsewhere. This is one of the optional books listed for 3/26. Other books listed for 3/26, from which students will choose one to prepare together in a small group, are readily available.

Classroom Conversations, eds. Alexandra Miletta and Maureen Miletta, is a collection of excerpts from classic readings in education. It has been ordered for members of the class who have not read widely in the field and are primarily interested in classrooms in the U.S. -- it is *not* required but is a useful resource.

**All** other readings for this class (articles, chapters, etc.) are available on moodle.

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### **Required readings which should be done in advance of the first class meetings, March 5-6:**

James Peacock, The Anthropological Lens

Jonathan Kozol, The Shame of the Nation

Clifford Geertz, "On the Concept of Culture and the Concept of Man," The Interpretation of Cultures

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### **Saturday, March 5**

What does a cultural perspective contribute to thinking about learning? Why does it matter? Concepts of culture and ethnographic interpretations; in-class interviews on culture, power, and school experiences

James Peacock

Clifford Geertz

Paulo Freire, Ch.2, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed

## Sunday, March 6

How does culture “look” in classroom settings? What purposes does schooling serve in different settings?

- Jonathan Kozol, The Shame of the Nation\*
- Jules Henry, “Attitude Organization in Elementary School Classrooms,” George Spindler, ed., Education and Culture
- Herb Kohl, “I Won’t Learn from You”: And Other Thoughts On Creative Maladjustment
- Thomas Rohlen, “Building Character,” Thomas Rohlen and Gerald LeTendre, Teaching and Learning in Japan
- Lisa Delpit, “Skills and Other Dilemmas of a Progressive Black Educator,” Other People’s Children
- Sid Brown, A Buddhist in the Classroom, excerpts
- Robert Fried, “Designing a Unit” and “Dissecting the Course -- and Resurrecting It” from The Passionate Teacher

WESLEYAN SPRING BREAK

## Saturday, March 26

How does learning “look” and what purposes does education serve in different cultural settings, such as *health care*?

- Johnny Steinberg, Sizwe’s Test: A Young Man’s Journey through Africa’s AIDS Epidemic\*
- Allan Stratton, Chanda’s Secrets, novel
- Gerald Debbink and Arturo Ornelas, “Cows for Campesinos,” Susan Smith and Dennis Willms, eds., Nurtured by Knowledge
- Anne Fadiman, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down (8 Questions on)
- Abraham Verghese, My Own Country
- Tracy Kidder, Mountains Beyond Mountains

## Sunday, March 27

How do cultures look and what purposes does schooling serve in different settings, for example *prisons*?

How do educational institutions construct and manage their students’ cultural identities and differences, e.g. by practices of racial and socio-economic tracking?

Who decides what constitutes learning?

- Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom, excerpts
- Jonathan Kozol, The Shame of the Nation, excerpts
- Kathy Boudin, “Participatory Literacy Education behind Bars; AIDS Opens the Door,” Harvard Education Review (date?)
- Jeannie Oakes, “Democracy’s Canaries,” Keeping Track; How Schools Structure

Inequality

William Finnegan, Crossing the Line, excerpts

Lisa Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue," Other People's Children

**Saturday, April 2**

How can we think about global shifts in education? State-run and privatized or market-driven initiatives both emphasize standardized schooling, and they both depend on the internet. These global developments will exert vast personal and political influences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How can we evaluate these changes -- or the initiatives to resist them -- and how they affect us locally? What alternatives can we imagine?

Renato Rosaldo, "Border Crossings," Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis

Kathryn Anderson-Levitt, "World Culture of Schooling?" Kathryn Anderson-Levitt, ed., Local Meanings, Global Schooling: Anthropology and World Culture Theory

Ian Jukes, Ted McCain, Lee Crockett, Understanding the Digital Generation, excerpts (NOT yet on moodle)

Si Kahn and Elizabeth Minnich, The Fox in the Henhouse: How Privatization Threatens Democracy, excerpts

Susan Linn, "Students for Sale;" The New Press Education Reader, ed. Ellen Gordon Reeves

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