

NOTE to Prospective Students:

Please reserve Sunday, April 15, 2012, as a make-up day if we are forced to miss one of the scheduled classes due to bad weather.

Plan your reading time carefully, especially if you have not taken an immersion class before. I strongly advise reading as many as possible of the assigned books before the course begins. Other readings are relatively short, so that you can plan according to your individual schedules. All excerpts and articles will be available on moodle by Jan. 11 (at the latest). The syllabus will be on moodle as well, under "Course Documents" at the top of the page.

Writing assignments will be manageable since our class meetings are widely spaced. They are described briefly in the syllabus that follows here because we will talk about them together on our first Saturday. Final work will be due either April 21 or April 28, depending on the class preference and allowing for rescheduling if necessary.

This is a *preliminary* syllabus. There will not be any changes in the required books, but I will add videos, guests, and selected other readings. There may be some changes in the order of readings.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns before you register or before the class begins. (Use my aol address, please.)

SOCS 624-01
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Spring, 2012

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Lives in School

What can we learn about education in the contemporary U.S. from 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?

School is one of 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 memoir, ethnography, social science research, documentary film and video.

Key questions for the course include: How do educational institutions and practices construct and manage students' identities and differences, e.g. by racial and socio-economic tracking? Who decides what matters as learning, in school and out, and how does that look in diverse contexts, such as health care, or prison? What constitute meaningful educational experiences and why -- for you and for others? What changes in education would members of the seminar advocate?

The course asks students to formulate questions and think critically and creatively about education from their perspectives as students, teachers, parents, and citizens. Students will investigate and analyze their own educational autobiographies, and research and present educational narratives drawn from the lives of people quite unlike themselves.

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Course requirements

In addition to attendance and participation at every class, students are required to prepare the readings in advance of each day's discussion. Everyone will be expected to work in small groups during class time, and to prepare and lead occasional discussions. There will be frequent short writing in class and several one-page papers in response to the readings and videos.

Longer writing for the course, which will be graded, consists of 3 papers: an interview-based narrative of the educational experiences of someone you consider to be significantly different from yourself, an educational autobiography, and a final paper that we will decide on together.

Required readings are on order at Broad St. Books. (Please check with the bookstore about availability before you make a trip to purchase the books.) The books marked with an asterisk* are available in kindle editions as well.

The New Kids; Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens*,
Brooke Hauser, Free Press, 2011.

Privilege: The Making of an Educational Elite at St. Paul's School, Shamus Rahman
Kahn, Princeton, 2011

Black Ice*, Lorene Cary, Vintage Books, 1992

Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness; Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*, Jane
Lazarre, Duke, 1996

Honky*, Dalton Conley, Vintage, 2000

Classroom Conversations*, eds. Alexandra Miletta and Maureen Miletta, The New Press,
2008. This is a collection of sections from classic readings in education.

Students are encouraged to read widely in the book, identifying and exploring
your own interests, though you will not be expected to read the entire book.

All other readings for this class (articles, chapters, excerpts) will be available on moodle.
The moodle readings will be posted by Jan. 11, 2012.

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Saturday, Feb. 11

How does school work for diverse individuals and populations in the U.S.?

Course introductions and questions.

In-class interviews on culture, power, and identity in school experiences.

Brooke Hauser, The New Kids

Lorene Cary, Black Ice

Herb Kohl, “I Won’t Learn from You”: And Other Thoughts On Creative Maladjustment (on moodle)

Michelle Fine, “Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire”

Sunday, Feb. 12

What purposes does education serve in radically dissimilar cultural and institutional settings, for example *health care* and *prisons*? What does it look like and how does it affect individual lives?

Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom, excerpts

Johnny Steinberg, Sizwe’s Test: A Young Man’s Journey through Africa’s AIDS Epidemic, excerpts

Abraham Verghese, My Own Country, excerpts

William Finnegan, Crossing the Line, excerpts

Kathy Boudin, “Participatory Literacy Education behind Bars; AIDS Opens the Door,”

Megan Comfort, Doing Time Together, excerpts

Sunny Schwartz, Dreams from the Monster Factory, excerpts

Ernest Gaines, A Lesson Before Dying

Interview methods: Glesne and Peshkin, Becoming Qualitative Researchers, ch. 4

Saturday, March 24

How can we think about the role of race and class in stories of schooling?

Shamus Rahman Kahn, Privilege: The Making of an Educational Elite at St. Paul’s School

Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, The Hidden Injuries of Class, excerpts

Dalton Conley, Honky

Jeannie Oakes, “Democracy’s Canaries,” Keeping Track; How Schools Structure Inequality

Robert Fried, “Designing a Unit” and “Dissecting the Course -- and Resurrecting It” from The Passionate Teacher

Sunday, March 25

How do people discover and construct creative thinking and creative work lives, especially in the arts? What is the role of formal education in that process? What should it be? What are the forces working against progressive education? How can imaginative educational alternatives make a difference?

Sid Brown, A Buddhist in the Classroom, excerpts
Ivan Illich, “Deschooling Society”
John Holt, “Instead of Education”
Grace Llewellyn, “Sweet Land of Liberty”
Si Kahn and Elizabeth Minnich, The Fox in the Henhouse; How
Privatization Threatens Democracy, excerpts
Susan Linn, “Students for Sale”

Saturday, April 14

Final projects and re-vision of course questions

Jane Lazarre, Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness
Renato Rosaldo, “Border Crossings” from Culture and Truth
Mike Rose, Lives On the Boundary, ch. 7
