EDU 442 Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in American Education
Spring 2010 • Tuesday 4:50 – 7:30 • 2-110E

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Course Objective:
The purpose of this course is to explore how and in what ways schools produce social inequalities based on socially constructed conceptions of identity (e.g., race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, language). Students will critically analyze relevant literature and their own experiences as raced, classed, gendered, abled, etc. individuals in order to develop an understanding of how educational institutions serve as agents of the transmission of social injustice. Students will understand race, class, gender, disability and other identity markers as interrelated and interactive, not as isolated variables. This course will also examine how human diversity frames and is framed by our lives, and how the transformation of social and educational practices might re-frame lives.

This course was designed to help students develop a sense of social responsibility and a desire to effect change in their own lives, their teaching practice, and in the wider society. Our goal is for students to understand that we have a collective responsibility to improve society, and that in their roles as “cultural workers” teachers are uniquely placed to either reproduce or rupture historical patterns and practices of exclusion, disrespect, and marginalization of students in schools.

Through readings, graded assignments, class discussions, and other activities, students will develop a critical understanding of how race, class, gender, disability, and other markers of social difference reveal the privileging of some and the marginalization of others within K-12 schools. Furthermore, by considering their potential to act as agents of change, students will devise and share tentative yet tangible strategies for anti-oppressive educational practices. These strategies will provide a basis for students’ continued and ongoing explorations of identity, difference, and social justice in American schooling.

Class discussions and assignments will be guided by the following questions: Whose knowledge is of most worth? Who selected this particular knowledge? Why is it organized and taught in this way? How does this organization and pedagogy marginalize other forms of knowledge? What (whose) values, beliefs, and practices are embedded in current educational practices and policies? How do race, class, ethnicity, gender, etc. structure people’s access to institutional resources and privileges? How do race, class, ethnicity, gender, etc. interact to produce economic and political inequalities in society and in schools? How can educators and other stakeholders work toward providing transformative and empowering educational experiences for all children and youth?

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1 Additional rooms: 4-160K, 4-160M, 2-162 (from 6:00 - 7:15)
2 See web links for information about how this course meets the relevant NCATE standards (http://www.ncate.org/public/unitStandardsRubrics.asp?ch=4) and the Warner School portfolio requirements (http://www.rochester.edu/warner/programs/teach.html)
In order to underscore the relevance of the issues that surface in this course, students will be asked to wed broader analyses of the social contexts of education with personal reflections on their own experiences with race, class, gender, disability, and other forms of difference in American schools and society. The purpose of such reflections is two-fold: first, to emphasize everyone's stake in addressing the dilemmas raised in class discussions and assigned texts; and second, to identify blind spots and opportunities for growth for each student in the course. Regardless of the insights gained from previous personal and professional experiences, all of us have the potential to deepen our awareness of how asymmetrical relations of power shape who we are and how we interact with others. This course will require students to introspectively explore how their social and cultural identities inform their engagements with schools and society, and to construct strategies that will facilitate such praxis (reflection and action) throughout their research and teaching careers.

Warner's Diversity and Inclusion Goals and Values:
The Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development is dedicated to fostering a learning community that represents and builds on the rich diversity of human experiences, backgrounds, cultures, histories, ideas, and ways of living. Consistent with our dedication to education, leadership, counseling, and human development that can transform lives and make the world more just and humane, we recruit, support and learn with and from students, staff, and faculty from the broadest spectrum of human diversity. Likewise, we seek the same through our interactions with the broader local and global community (http://www.rochester.edu/warner/warneratataglance/diversity.html). See http://www.rochester.edu/diversity/philosophy.html for the University of Rochester's statements about diversity.

Classroom Environment:
This course is designed to facilitate students' examination of privilege and inequality and demands a good deal of reflection and action, or praxis, to do so. Class discussion will be difficult or challenging. We share, as a classroom community, the task of negotiating the dual priorities of authentic free speech and active regard for all others. Given the important work of leading social change, we need to have these discussions in a safe, supportive, and anti-oppressive environment. In this course, an anti-oppressive environment means that we work against language, actions, interactions and ideologies that hurt people. It is important that we listen to each other about how our words and actions are affecting one another and that we talk about a class moment in which something may feel hurtful. Therefore, hate speech of any kind will not be permitted. This includes use of racial, sexual, gender, or abled slurs and personal attacks on others' ideas. We will negotiate other guidelines about classroom discussions throughout the course.
Course Requirements:

1. **Research Project and Final Paper** (45% of grade): This project requires students to examine the prejudices, biases, and stereotypes they hold about a particular community or group. Each candidate will conduct a microethnographic study of the identified community or group in an attempt to explore the basis of personal biases. After determining where personal biases, prejudices, or stereotypes may lie, students will enter the selected community and observe activity of this group or community in context and write a personal reflection paper, critically examining their experience. Questions to consider (in addition to those listed above): What current myths/assumptions exist about this group of people? What did you observe? What did you observe that might inform educational practices and policies? What did you learn from this observation and reflection that will inform your future work?

2. **Identity Representation and Essay** (20% of grade): Each student will create a representation of who she or he is as a raced, classed, gendered, sexed and abled person. These representations should creatively reflect the communities and groups with whom you identify and reflect the cultural influences that have helped shape who you are as a person. We will share these representations with each other as a group. As a supplement to the identity representation, each student will write a 3 page (no more, no less) essay which responds to the following questions:
   - In what ways does society support/not support who you are as a cultural being?
   - What did this project ask you to confront that you found challenging?
   - What structures and/or systems of power are linked with the realities you represented regarding your identity?

3. **Deconstruction Paper** (20% of grade): Students will analyze a selected text with respect to the questions stated in the course objectives. Students may select from a wide variety of texts including: textbooks (at any grade level), newspapers, films, articles, books, websites, etc.

4. **Critical Commentaries** (15% of grade): Students will be required to post 10 commentaries on the class blog, and to respond at least 5 times to other students’ postings. Commentaries should address substantive theoretical, methodological, and practical issues that emerge from your reading of the texts, your research project, class discussion, and experience (focus on your student teaching experiences if you are currently in a classroom or your own classroom or school). These postings will help to frame our class discussions, and they will provide opportunities for you to exchange ideas outside of class. Posts are due the day AFTER class (by 5:00pm) so that class discussion of the readings can be taken into account in your posting. An asterisk (*) by class session dates indicates when postings are due the following night (e.g. on Wednesdays by 5:00).

NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED

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Required Texts:

Selected readings posted on Blackboard.

Grading
Research Project: 45 points
Identity Representation/Essay 20 points
Text Deconstruction Paper: 20 points
Critical Commentaries: 15 points
Total: 100 points

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Class Schedule:
[1] January 19

Overview of the course

[2] January 26*

Orienting positions: The social construction of difference

Readings:

[3] February 2*

Race and racism

Readings:

[4] February 9*

Critical race theory

Guest Speaker: Professor Stephanie Waterman

Readings:
[5] February 16

**NO CLASS SESSION**

*Rethinking multiculturalism*

Readings:


*Intersectionality, culture, and language*

**Identity Representation and Essay Due**

Readings:


[7] March 2*

*Who is the audience of schooling in the US?*

Readings:

[8] March 9*

*The Word and the World*

Readings:


[9] March 16*

Class and schooling

Readings:


[10] March 23*

Gender and Sexuality

Guest Speaker: Professor Ed Brockenbrough

Readings:


The "F" Word

Text Deconstruction Paper Due

Readings:


[12] April 6*

Stigma, inclusion, and constructing others

Readings:

[13] April 13*

Whose privilege?

Readings:

[14] April 20*

Challenging Futures

Readings:

[15] April 27

Closing discussions
Research papers due
Student Presentations