



BRANDON UNIVERSITY

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Faculty of Education Graduate Studies & Field Research

07:752 (NET) Overview of Educational Issues Spring Term 2012

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A. Course Description:

This course will engage students in critical discussion of the main issues facing the educational system, including public, private, and band-operated schools. The course is designed to broaden students' knowledge and understanding bringing multiple perspectives to bear upon complex educational issues as viewed through the perspective of critical theory and critical pedagogy.

B. Course Objectives:

One of three core courses in the graduate program, *Overview of Educational Issues* is part of the foundation for subsequent course work. Participants will:

1. engage with and think critically about the literature related to current issues,
2. use an inquiry approach to connect literature to policy and practice
3. apply critical analysis to address practical, school-based issues.

C. Required Text:

Darder, A., Baltodana, M.P., and Torres, R.D. (Eds.) (2009). *The critical pedagogy reader* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Recommended Reference:

Wink, J. (2005). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson

D. Course Assignments (APA version 6.0 required):

This issues-based course is divided into three sections. Assignments for each of the sections will require reading, critical reflection, dialogue, group participation and writing. Section One on 'Good Schools' will require an individual paper of 3 – 5 pages in length. In addition, students will be expected to respond to postings on Moodle from other members of the class. Section Two on 'Critical Pedagogy' will require two group collaborative papers of 5 - 7 pages in length for each. The first paper on Critical Pedagogy is required then groups may choose one topic from either 'Race and Social Class' or 'Transformative Practice'. Section Three on 'Good Schools Revisited' will require a group collaborative synthesis paper of 12 – 15 pages in length and include responses to postings on Moodle from other collaborative group work in the class. Refer to 'Section H Group Collaborative Process' for further information on the expectations for completing course assignments.

Students will be required to participate in Moodle forums based on assigned readings from the text. For each assigned reading, a set of questions is provided as a guideline for students' responses. Students will be assigned to small working groups (three members) for purposes of discussing and presenting critical perspectives on educational issues in Sections Two and Three. For each of the forums, each group is expected to post their paper and then read and respond to the other groups' postings.

SECTION ONE: What Is a Good School - 20%

In this section of the course, students will read a number of journal articles related to 'good schools'. Some sources for related articles will be posted on the Moodle course site. Students are encouraged to read other related articles as well, in order to bring multiple perspectives to bear on the notion of a good school. Students will be expected to write an individual 3 – 5 page discussion paper relating best characteristics of good schools, as per the current literature, to schools they have been professionally involved with. This assignment is intended to provide opportunities for professional exchange through critical analysis and to collectively construct an ideal model for a good school within a local context.

SECTION TWO: Critical Perspectives on Educational Issues – 50%

In this section of the course, students will respond to two topic areas within the textbook. These topics include: i) what is critical theory and pedagogy as a theoretical perspective and one of the following: i) issues related to race and social class in our schools and classrooms **OR** ii) how does critical pedagogy lead to transformative practice. This will assist inquiry into educational issues as they may be understood to be social concerns intersecting with processes of schooling. It is anticipated that there will be some competing and/or dissenting points of view regarding the content of assigned readings. These alternative perspectives encourage dialogue and assist students' critical thinking, engagement and action.

REQUIRED

Section two: Topic #1: Critical Pedagogy (30%)

Students will work in their collaborative groups and are expected to read all of Part One, pp. 1–100, including introduction and chapters by Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren and Maxine Greene. The assignment will include a written response of 5 – 7 pages in length and developing a concept or web map to represent the ideas of the 'Critical Theorists' and how their ideas have impacted our current teaching philosophy and practice.

CHOOSE ONE of the FOLLOWING TWO TOPICS

Section two: Topic #2: Race and Social Class (20%)

Students will work in their collaborative groups to develop a 5-7 page paper summarizing the main ideas discussed within three of the four assigned readings: "Against Schooling: Education and Social Class" by Stanley Aronowitz (pp.106 – 122), "Confronting Class in the Classroom" by Bell Hooks (pp. 135 – 141), "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" by Gloria Ladson-Billings (pp. 167 -182) and "American Indian Geographies of Identity and Power: At the Crossroads of Indigena and Mestizaje" by Sandy Marie Anglas Grande (pp. 183 - 207).

OR

Section two: Topic #3: Transformative Practice (20%)

Students will work in their collaborative groups to develop a 5-7 page paper summarizing the main ideas discussed within three of the five assigned readings: "Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire" by Michelle Fine (pp. 240 – 261), "What is Critical Literacy" by Ira Shor (pp. 305 – 323), "Beyond the Methods Fetish: Toward a Humanizing Pedagogy" by Lilia Bartolome (pp. 338 – 355), "Writing, Identity, and the Other: Dare We Do Disability Studies?" by Linda Ware (pp. 397 –416) and "Critical Media Literacy for the Twenty-First Century: Taking Our Entertainment Seriously" by Pepi Leistyna and Loretta Alper (pp. 501 – 521).

SECTION THREE: Synthesis Paper - Good Schools Revisited – 30%

In this section of the course, students will work in their collaborative groups and are expected to incorporate their ideas from the first assignment about 'good schools', into a position paper. This paper should focus on an issue most relevant to current practice and indicate the relationship to critical theory and other topics and issues addressed within the course. Working in their collaborative groups, students will develop a 12 - 15 page paper that adheres to APA guidelines and includes a minimum of 10 references. These references may come from a variety of sources, including the assigned readings within the course. Additional information is provided in the Moodle course.

E. Course Grade Evaluation:

- Minimum grade requirement for graduate program: B

- Grade Equivalencies:

A+	96-100	B-	70-74
A	90-95	C+	65-69
A-	85-89	C	60-64
B+	80-84	D	50-59
B	75-79	F	Under 50%

Academic dishonesty will cancel out all the calculations above and result in a final grade of F-AD (Fail-Academic Dishonesty)

(refer to the Graduate Calendar, section 5.3.2)

Financial & Registration Information

Students are advised to check the Graduate Studies Calendar (online) for all information related to deadline dates for Voluntary Withdrawal from courses and subsequent tuition refunds.

Students are advised that an 'Incomplete' grade (extension) will be approved only under the following two conditions: i) a student provides a compelling argument to the course instructor that an extension is warranted ii) the student has completed at least 50% of the course work to that point.

F. Instructor / Course Evaluation:

The anonymous course evaluation will be completed online. All students are expected to complete the evaluation. Dates of the evaluation will be communicated by the instructor through the Graduate Studies Office.

G. Proposed Class Schedule:

This course will be delivered as an online course, which means most of the instruction will take place in an asynchronous fashion. Students will work independently and as a member of a collaborative group. The specific course assignments and due dates are provided below:

Assignments & Due Dates

Assignment	Due Date	Grade Value
Assignment #1 - The Good School (individual)	Sunday May 13 th	20%
Assignment #2 – Critical Pedagogy (group)	Sunday May 27 th	30%
Assignment #3 - Social Class and Race (group) OR - Transformative Practice (group)	Sunday June 3 rd	20%
Assignment #4 - Good Schools Revisited - Final Paper (group)	Sunday June 17 th	30%

H. Group Collaboration Process

Students will be randomly assigned to a group of three members for purposes of building knowledge using a collaborative process. In order to support the success of the group collaboration, the following procedures will be followed:

- a) each member of the group will choose a role. Roles will include: i) leader/captain ii) recorder iii) facilitator. Specific responsibilities are outlined on Moodle.
- b) each group is expected to present their ideas and to provide critical feedback to the other groups in the class
- c) each group is expected to communicate among its members using a variety of electronic methods including: blogs, Google docs, Skype, and email

The course instructor may schedule a meeting with each group during the course in a variety of ways including: Skype, teleconference, chat room, or email.

I. Instructor Suggestions for Getting the Most Out of the Course:

This course will be delivered primarily in an asynchronous mode using a combination of Moodle and other resources. Students are expected to share their ideas and provide feedback and discussion on-line. This delivery method depends on the full cooperation of students to meet the given deadlines for course assignments. Failure to meet deadlines without a justifiable reason may result in a lower grade.

This course requires a fair amount of reading, writing, and collaboration of ideas. The following suggestions should be considered:

- a) purchase the textbook early and begin some of the readings, especially the readings on the critical theorists (pp 1 – 100). This section can be pretty 'heavy' reading, so get an early start on this section.
- b) connect with your group members as soon as possible after the course opens up so you can begin to discuss strategies, responsibilities, and setting up on-going lines of communication.