

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EDUCATION

Eric Rofes

Class Location: Kresge Auditorium, Visual Arts Center
Time: Lecture: Tuesdays, 9:30-11 a.m.
Section A: Thursday 9:30-11, Mass. Faculty Room
Section B: Wednesday 1:30-3, Sills-Smith 117

Office: Ashby House 32
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30-1:00 and Wednesdays 3:30-5 or by appointment
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This semester, Education 101 is not organized as a survey course, with a class or two devoted to each of the major education issues which currently are being debated. Instead, it is organized around three key themes. After spending the first two weeks of the semester reading Joel Springs' book American Education and gaining a baseline understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and political foundations surrounding schools in the United States, we will devote about a month each to: Asian American issues in education, school reform/charter schools, and gay and lesbian issues in schools.

This thematic approach was taken to allow students the opportunity to explore a variety of contemporary controversial issues in depth and draw on the professor's interest and expertise. Education 101 attempts to grapple with a number of critical questions facing education in the United States at the end of the millennium:

- o What is the purpose of public schooling and how do different groups' understandings of this purpose affect contemporary debates about education?
- o Do schools function to maintain status quo inequities, do they support the social and economic advancement of various groups, both, or neither?
- o Should public schools be controlled locally, by the state, or by the federal government? How do various levels of control complicate contemporary educational debates?

The purpose of this course is to critically examine these questions and others using the three thematic areas as our points of inquiry. Students will be expected to think broadly about the issues raised in the class and examine not only these three issues, but also their

own experiences in K-12 schools and in college, as well as various educational issues which may arise during the semester.

Expectations of Students

Class Attendance & Participation: Students are expected to attend each and every class and bring the day's assigned readings with them to both lecture and section. Credit will be deducted from the class participation section of the grade for every class missed or when materials are not brought to class. If you need to miss class and are concerned about the absence affecting your grade, please convince your dean that the absence should not be a cause for penalty and have her/him send me an email. Participation will be graded based on a number of factors: engagement in class discussions and activities, willingness to take on leadership roles during exercises and activities, ability to ask and answer questions about the day's topic, and punctual attendance in class. Class participation constitutes 10% of the final grade.

Class Readings and Pop Quizzes: For each class, students should review the readings and be prepared for discussion. Four pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester to help ensure that students are prepared each day. They will not be announced in advance. The pop quizzes constitute 15% of the final grade.

Paper: There is one paper required for this class. It will engage issues raised in the Joel Spring book as related to our unit on Asian American issues and gay and lesbian issues in schools. The paper will be 5-8 pages long and will be due on April 22 before 5 pm to Ashby House. Students will be informed of the focus for the assignment and specific expectations on February 23. The paper will count for 25% of the final grade.

Mid-term and Final Examinations: There are two exams for this class: a midterm and a final exam. Both exams will include short answers and essay questions. The midterm exam will take place in class on March 16. It will be an in-class exam and it represents 20% of the final grade. The final exam will include essay questions assigned a week in advance and students will be expected to bring their completed answers to these questions to the exam on May 11. The in-class portion of the final exam will be the short answer questions. The final exam represents 30% of the final grade. For each exam, students will be responsible for all class readings occurring prior to the exam date (including in-class handouts), and all lectures, activities, and discussions occurring in lecture and sections. If you are absent from class for any reason, you must be sure another student in the class provides you with information and materials you missed; do not expect the professor to provide this service.

A Note About Student Writing: Your written work for this class must use standard English and be grammatically correct. Students who do not know how to write proper sentences, paragraphs, or use proper punctuation, capitalization, possessives, or organizational technique should expect no more than a C on the assignment. Exceptions will be made for students with specific learning disabilities and those students who need concentrated work on writing skills, but only if a plan is created and filed with me within the first two weeks of class, indicating that you have made arrangements for assistance from the Writing Project.

Please Note: This class has a large waiting list of students seeking entry. If you take Education 101, be sure you intend to participate in earnest, complete the readings, and come

to class prepared. Expectations and evaluation requirements are set out in this syllabus to assist students in the decision-making process related to course selection. This class is fun and will expand your thinking and deepen your socio-political analysis of the U.S. educational system, but it is also rigorous and will demand hard work.

Class Requirements, Deadlines, and Grading

o	Class Attendance and Participation	10%
o	Pop Quizzes (4)	15%
o	Midterm Exam	20%
o	Paper	25%
o	Final Exam	30%

Readings

Education 101 has five required text and a course packet. Additional readings may be handed out in class. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the readings in class. The required texts are:

- o American Education, by Joel Spring (McGraw Hill)
- o Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype, by Stacey Lee (Teachers College Press)
- o The Last Closet, by Rita Kissen (Heinemann)
- o Charter Schools, by Joe Nathan (Jossey-Bass)
- o Charter Schools, by Seymour Sarason (Teachers College Press)

A packet of additional course readings is also available at the bookstore. A copy of each of the required books, as well as a copy of the course packet, is on reserve in the library.

Two optional texts have also been ordered by the bookstore. These will be of interest to students with strong interest in two of this course's themes and have been ordered in small quantities by the bookstore:

- o The Asian American Educational Experience, edited by Don Nakanishi and Tina Nishida (Routledge)
- o The Gay Teen, edited by Gerald Unks (Routledge)

Special Notes

The Education Department hosts a monthly colloquium series on current issues in education. These are scheduled for February 11, March 11, and April 8 at 3 p.m. Your attendance is encouraged. The Brody Family Lecture this year will be presented by Ellen Langer, professor of psychology at Harvard, whose book The Power of Mindful Learning relates to some of the key themes of Education 101. The lecture is scheduled for Thursday, April 29 in the evening, and attendance by Education 101 students is required.

The Writing Project at Bowdoin offers drop-in writing conferences in evening workshops. Trained people are available to help you develop your writing skills in the Writing Project office in 106 Sills. The project offers feedback on drafts of papers and assistance at any stage of the writing process. For information on times and locations look

for the Writing Workshop bookmarks in the libraries and the Smith Union or call the project at 725-3760.

Students are urged to attend office hours throughout the semester to discuss topics raised in the class, or seek help with assignments, study skills, academic or other matters. If scheduled times are not convenient, I am happy to schedule additional times to fit your schedule. This is a large lecture class. If you would like us to get to know one another, or if you seek one-on-one assistance with your work, please make arrangements with me to attend office hours, go to coffee or a meal, or meet in the student union.

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to check-in with me as soon as possible and also stop by the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs in Moulton Union to register for support services.

Students in Education 101 are expected to check their e-mail accounts regularly as occasional messages will be sent to the entire class.

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Please note: changes may occur in this schedule during the semester. Assignments are due on the date they are listed.

Introduction

- January 26 (Tu) *Overview of Course & The Purposes of Public Schooling*
January 27/28 (W/Th)
assignment for 1/27 > Chapters 1-3 of Joel Spring's American Education
> Packet: Rethinking Schools, Finn
- February 2 (Tu) *The Politics of Education in the United States*
February 3/4 (W/Th)
assignment for 2/2 > Chapters 4-9 of Joel Spring's American Education

Asian American Issues in Schools

- February 9 (Tu) *Talking Race*
February 10/11 (W/Th)
assignment for 2/9 > Chapters 1-3 of Stacey Lee's Unraveling the 'Model Minority' Stereotype
- February 16 (Tu) *Model Minority: Myth and Reality*
February 17/18 (W/Th)
assignment for 2/16 > Chapters 4-6 of Stacey Lee's Unraveling the 'Model Minority' Stereotype
- February 23 (Tu) *Affirmative Action*
February 24/25 (W/Th)
assignment for 2/23 > Packet: All affirmative action readings: Monk, Omi, LeMann, Patterson, Epstein, Bolick, *The Daily Californian* editorial, Guillermo
> Packet: Mura, Takagi, Hom readings

Gay & Lesbian Issues in Schools

- March 2 (Tu) *Race, Class and the Construction of Sexual Identity*
March 3/4 (W/Th)
assignment for 3/2 > Chapters 10-11 of Joel Spring's American Education
> Packet: Rofes 1, Buchanan

March 9 (Tu) *Protecting Schools from the "Gay Agenda"*
March 10/11 (W/Th) assignment for 3/9 > Packet: Griffin, Rofes 2, Monteiro/Fuqua, Rofes 3

March 16 (Tu) *Gay Issues in Elementary School*
March 17/18 (W/Th) assignment for 3/17 > **Midterm Exam on March 16**
> Pages ix-117 of Rita Kissen's The Last Closet

Spring Break

April 6 (Tu) *Lesbian /Gay Teachers & the Purposes of Public Schooling*
April 7/8 (W/Th) assignment for 4/6 > Pages 119-198 of Rita Kissen's The Last Closet

School Reform / Charter Schools

April 13 (Tu) *The Charter School Movement in a School Reform Context*
April 14/15 (W/Th) assignment for 4/13 > Pages xiii-118 of Joe Nathan's Charter Schools

April 20 (Tu) *Looking at Charter Schools*
April 21/22 (W/Th) assignment for 4/20 *Sections Canceled this Week
> Pages 121-222 of Joe Nathan's Charter Schools
> Packet: US Department of Education, Kolderie, Pioneer Institute readings
> **Paper Due on April 22 before 5 pm**

April 27 (Tu) *Charter School Advocates and Boosters*
April 28/29 (W/Th) assignment for 4/28 > Preface and Chapters 1-5 of Sarason's Charter Schools
> Packet: Finn/Manno, and Rethinking Schools readings

April 29 (Th) *Brody Family Lecture: Ellen Langer on the Power of Mindful Learning*

May 4 (Tu) *Charter School Opponents and Critics*
May 5/6 (W/Th) assignment for 5/4 > Chapters 6-11 of Seymour Sarason's Charter Schools

Class Summary

May 11 (Tu) *Class Summary and Evaluations*
> **Universal attendance is required**
> **Final Exam**

