

## Education 310 \* Defining Educational Practice \* Fall 2009 \* Bryn Mawr College \* (Taylor D)

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**Define** (from the Oxford English Dictionary):

*To bring to an end; to come to an end. (obs. rare); To demonstrate the boundary or special extent of; to settle the limits of. (also fig.); To make definite in outline or form; To set bounds to, to limit, restrict, confine; To determine, lay down definitely; to fix, decide; To determine, decide (obs.); To state precisely, to specify.; To state exactly what a thing is; to set forth or explain the essential nature of; To set forth or explain what a word or expression means; to declare the signification of a word; To frame or give a precise description; Of properties: To make a thing what it is; to give a character to, characterize; To separate by definition; to distinguish by special marks or characteristics (rare).*

### Course Overview: Ways of Knowing

This challenging course, the first of a two-course seminar for seniors completing the Educational Studies Minor, explores ways of knowing through and about education – how people (including us) study, research, and understand what teaching and learning are, how they are shaped by their contexts, and how they foster, and respond to, change. As the foregoing dictionary definitions suggest, the process of definition includes recognizing and choosing boundaries; describing; deciding; specifying; and engaging with language.

In this connection with these ideas, **over-arching questions** of the course include:

- How do people’s understandings of educational practice set, or change, the boundaries of teaching and learning in their particular contexts of action and thought?
- How do definitions of educational practice establish or challenge the boundaries between individuals and cultures, and between ways of understanding social and political processes that both limit and enable people’s learning, opportunities, lives?

For our purposes, “defining educational practice” means attending carefully and imaginatively to the contexts (of study, action, and interaction) and the lived and remembered experiences in and across which teaching and learning occur. This semester we will study and practice using various **tools of attention**. I hope we will create a classroom community/culture that enables us to explore these challenges with one another as guides, puzzles, challenges, gifts, and sources of energy through both harmony and conflict.

This course asks a lot of you as a scholar, educator, and community member. In addition to our classroom community, you will be participating with a second learning community through your field placement. A central challenge of this course and of Education 311 is for you to create roles and ways of thinking in/about your field placement that are educative and productive. Each of you will need to

choose/find pathways through our course that cohere with it and with your specific experiences and goals. You are strongly encouraged to take an active role in this process and to engage our seminar for support and inspiration in so doing. At the same time, I hope - and will work to realize the hope - that the class itself will be a learning journey where we will support one another in the struggle to make new meanings and gain new skills. I am glad to work with students individually and provide support or guidance as needed.

### **Course Topics**

**Social Justice Education** – What is it? How does it work? What theoretical and practice-oriented challenges does it pose? How does our study of modes of investigating education speak to it?

**Research Methodologies We Bring/Are Learning** – What is their range and variation? What are the significant similarities and differences between them?

### **Research Methodologies We Study Together:**

Oral history – What is it? How does it work? How can we use it in different settings to build community and knowledge?

Ethnography/Qualitative Research – What are they? How do they work? How can they become tools you have available for fueling your own and others' reflective practice?

**Embodied Learning** (dance/movement/video) – How can we get smarter about the role/knowledge of the body in education? How can we use and reflect on dance and movement as tools of attention and learning? How can we get smarter about taking up the language of movement in film and other visual media?

**Exploring Conflict** – What is the work of conflict in learning, in communities, in relationships, in individuals, in brains? How can we find out about this in our work with each other, and on the other topics and questions of the course?

### **Course Learning Goals**

The course has been designed with the intention that students will:

- Form a close class community in which everyone is comfortable teaching and learning from one another.
- Gain skills, experience, confidence, and a critical framework for reflective practice in education.
- Develop strength in inquiring and planning critically, generatively, and imaginatively for and about educational practice.
- Gain skills, experience, confidence, and a critical framework in reading critically and imaginatively qualitative and other forms of educational research; Gain understanding of the

differences and intersections between research paradigms of students' majors and the education minor.

- Gain depth of insight, informed by observation, study, action, and reflection, into the meaning, practice, and problems of education for social justice.
- Gain experience, skills, confidence, and insight into the work of being a participant observer, community builder/change agent, and educator in the specific settings of our class and the field placement.
- Gain experience and knowledge in integrating embodied with verbal/linguistic forms of learning.
- Gain skills in understanding, experiencing, and facilitating collaboration and generative conflict as educational processes.
- Become able to articulate a clear and evolving philosophy of education, a stance towards research that integrates the student's major and minor in education, and a plan for further field work and research in semester II.

### **Course Policies**

Please be on time, present, and alert for all class meetings and field visits.

If illness or an immovable problem causes lateness or absence to class or placement, please notify me and your field mentor beforehand, if possible, and plan to make-up the missed time. More than 2 absences from class or placement will lower your course grade by one third for each class missed and will occasion the need for me, and likely you, to work in tandem with your Dean. More than 4 of either will cause you not to earn a merit grade for this course and, combined with other problems, could lead to failure of the course. You must communicate honestly and in a timely way about any issues in this connection. Communication can improve almost every problem.

More broadly, please communicate in a timely way any questions, concerns, and suggestions you have about your course and/or placement experience, assignments, expectations, and/or relationships.

Assigned reading and writing is due on the day assigned. If you need an extension, please let me before the due date. In most cases, I will give an extension. If you want to revise a paper after I return it with comments/grade, you may, in consultation with me to make a plan for revision and resubmission.

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course due to the impact of a learning, physical, or psychological disability are encouraged to meet with me privately early in the semester to discuss their concerns. Bryn Mawr students should also contact Stephanie Bell, Coordinator of Access Services (610-526-7351 or sbell@brynmawr.edu), as soon as possible, to verify their eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Haverford students should contact Rick

Webb, Coordinator, Office of Disabilities Services, 610-896-1290 or [rwebb@haverford.edu](mailto:rwebb@haverford.edu). Early contact will help to avoid unnecessary inconvenience and delays.

If you have questions about your grades on assignments, I am happy to talk with you about them. I regard 3.7-4.0 as work distinguished by analytic depth, creativity, and engagement; 3.3-3.0 as strong, capable work; 2.7-2.3 as adequate though missing important elements; 2.0 as missing important elements; and below 1.7 as not demonstrating having met standards for moving forward.

### **Course Texts**

Books (available in the Bryn Mawr Bookstore and on reserve in Canaday Library)

Sharon Todd, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis, and the Ethical Possibilities of Education*  
Holliday, Adrian, *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*

Selected Ethnographies (Each student will pick one to read?, available in the Bryn Mawr Bookstore)

Willis, *Learning to Labor*

Thorne, *Gender Play*

Gallas, *Sometimes I Can Be Anything*

Fine and Weis, *The Unknown City*

Howard, Adam, *Learning Privilege*

Articles/Chapters on Blackboard under Course Documents (Be sure to scroll down thoroughly to find everything.)

### Films

*Jupiter's Wife*, Michel Negroponte

### **Course Assignments**

**Attendance and Participation (20% of course grade;** particularly problematic or exemplary attendance and participation can further impact your grade positively or negatively.)

- **Learning Profile (due Week 2)** – to introduce me to your expectations, goals, and processes as a student
- **Weekly Notes/Logs/Reflections** (approx. 2 pages) on reading, class activities, field work, and individual experience). Please post to the Blackboard discussion board set aside for these and bring a copy to me in class. We will periodically meet in discussion groups to respond to these during class.

- **Community- and trust-building activity:** With 1 or 2 randomly selected partners, plan and lead a 5-minute warm-up for a single class meeting to help our group continue to build trust and community over the course of the semester.
- **Field Work** – You’re required to complete 3-5 hours per week of field work in a classroom or other education-related setting over the course of at least 10 weeks this semester. Early in the semester, you will complete a **field placement learning contract** with your field mentor. As part of this process, please create a plan to meet for a regular check-in (once per week or once every other week) with your field mentor. You and your field mentor will outline a plan for your responsibilities and activities on site and will clarify their connections to goals – those of the field setting and your own.

Your first responsibility is to **do no harm** at the field site – not to breach trust, confidence, or community. You also need to be responsible to your own safety and hopes. Beyond that, you are responsible for trying to make a positive contribution, being patient, imaginative, and flexible in finding ways to learn from your experiences, and maintaining a positive relationship between the field site and the Education Program and the Bi-Co.

**Everything** you write about your field experience, must **use pseudonyms** for all people and places.

If at any time and for any reason you are concerned about your own safety and/or dignity in the field site, please tell me as soon as possible so that I can work with you and others as needed to resolve the problem. Safety guidelines, which we will review in class, for the field experience may be found in the Education Program minors’ handbook.

**Field Notes** – As soon after each placement visit as possible, you are responsible for writing a set of notes about your observations, experiences, interpretations, questions, and plans. Consider using the format: *What? So What? Now What?* You will be required to post these to Blackboard and sometimes to read your classmates’ notes as well. Each entry of field notes must be dated, with a brief overview of the hours spent in the site and your activities for that visit at the top. **A compilation, accompanied by a 2-3 pp. learning/research memo, are due at midcourse and final.**

**“Being [Smart -- or another term of your choice, i.e., strong, able, etc.]:” Oral History Project (20% of course grade), 8-10 pp.**

Part 1 – Doing the oral history of a classmate (taking off from The Three Doors of Serendip Experience)

Part 2 – Translating oral histories into dance/movement and video

Part 3 – Oral History Report and Analysis (**due week 6**). This paper has two parts: one descriptive and one analytic. In the report section, summarize your activities as an oral history interviewer and participant. What did you do? How did you do it? In the analysis, explore and articulate what you learned from the process. Questions to consider include:

1. What did you learn about oral history as a form of research, from the standpoint of an interviewer, narrator, and reader?
2. What did you learn from working through dance as well as words?
3. What did you learn about “being smart” in your educational history?
4. What did you learn about other course topics – for example, social justice education, research, and the role of collaboration and conflict in learning?
5. What did you learn FROM, rather than AB OUT, your partner (see Todd)?
6. What questions do you now have/have you arrived at/created as a result of this process?

**Poster Presentation (15 % of course grade).** This poster presents research interests/paradigms from your academic major, together with indications of and questions about how they connect with your ways of seeing/knowing/questioning in your field placement. *For this assignment, please create a poster (formats to be discussed in class) that teaches our class how you are learning to understand and do research in your major(s) and minor(s).*

- How are you learning to formulate questions, make observations, locate your work within broader fields of scholarship, and tell others stories about your research?
- What are the relationships between this learning and your research as an education minor?
- What questions do you have about all of this? Why does this matter?

**Group Projects on Selected Educational Ethnographies and their linkages to field placement experiences (20% of course grade).**

For this project, you will work with 3-4 classmates to read and develop a **25-minute interactive presentation** to teach our class about an educational ethnography. This assignment will also give you practice reading ethnographic critically and will require you to use the Holliday course text as a critical tool.

Questions to consider in planning your presentation:

1. What roles and relationships are central to the study?
2. What is the author’s theoretical orientation?
3. What did the author spend the most time on? Leave out?
4. How is the study designed? The book organized? How are these two related?
5. What are the main research questions? How did they emerge/evolve through the research?
6. What problems, in the world and in the world of scholarship (“the literature”) does the book respond to/address?
7. How does , and how well does, the author do description? Interpretation?

8. What kind of “writer voice” (Holliday, chapter 8) does the author use?
9. How well does the author “show the workings” (Holliday, chapter 3) of the research?

**Final Portfolio (Due at the end of finals period; 25% of course grade)**

In class, we will discuss and revise as needed these elements.

*Note: Each Working Paper should take off from 1-3 critical incidents from your experience in the course/placement:*

1. Working Paper on Current Educational Philosophy and Key Questions Arising From It (2-3 pp.)
2. Working Paper on Current Orientation to and Key Questions about Educational Research/Modes of Investigating Education (taking off from a critical incident/narrative and looking ahead to next semester) (2-3 pp.)
3. Working Paper on Current Understanding of and Key Questions about Social Justice Education (taking off from a critical incident/narrative) (2-3 pp.)
4. Working Paper on Current Understanding of and Key Questions about the role and working through of conflict in learning (2-3 pp.)
5. Compilation of field notes, with research memo (2-3 pp.) highlighting cross-cutting observations, themes, concerns, questions, and plans for your placement work next term.
6. Progress Report on/self-assessment of your learning, growth, and goals for semester 2 (3-4 pp.)

**Class Schedule (SUBJECT TO CHANGE GIVEN EVOLUTION OF COURSE, INDIVIDUALS, CONTEXTS)**

**Class 1 8/31** Introductions, exploring and building class community, orienting to course, embodied learning

**Texts:** Todd, Hyde

**Visitor:** Sara Narva, The Crefeld School

**Class 2 9/7** Valuing and Working with Conflict (in/with education, this class, the brain, other people life, and the world) – crafting class approaches to pushing into and working from struggle; launching oral history project.

**Reading due:** Todd, Introduction and Chapter 1

Appadurai, "The Right to Research" (Blackboard)

**Other assignments due:** learning profile (due in class week 2)

**Visitor:** Paul Grobstein, Biology Department, Bryn Mawr College

**Class 3 9/14** – Reflecting on the 3 Doors of Serendip, setting up the oral history project (oral histories of being smart): developing interview questions and approaches, practicing. Examples: What issues about being smart in your life are engaged by playing the 3 Doors? By beginning in your placement?

**Reading due:**

Shopes, "What is Oral History?" (Blackboard)

Anderson, K. & Jack, D.C. (1991). Learning to listen: Interview techniques and analyses. In Gluck, S.B. & Patai, D. (eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*. New York and London: Routledge. (Blackboard),

Holliday, chapter 1

**Other assignments due:** Play the Three Doors of Serendip over the course of the week, deciding as it best suits you on process and pace. Keep track of your process, feelings, questions, and embodied experiences of playing the game in a private log and online at the forum at the end of the game (your choice where you write about which). At some point in the week, meet with your oral history partner and talk about your experiences playing the game.

**Visitor:** Paul Grobstein

**Class 4 9/21** – Oral History Projects In Process – translating texts into dances

**Reading due:** McIntosh, "Finding Authentic Ways of Coming Into Conflict" (Blackboard)

Todd, chapter 2

Griss, "Creative Movement: A Language for Learning" (Blackboard)

Lutz T. & Kuhlman W. "Learning about Culture Through Dance in Kindergarten Classrooms" (Blackboard)

McClelland, et al.; "Learning in the Ivory Tower: Students' Embodied Experiences" (Blackboard)

**Other assignments due:** Spend two hours with your partner, one for each of you to interview the other. With your partner's consent, bring to class 1-3 typed passages (no more than a page long) from the interview that are ripe for further exploration.

Visitor: Sara Narva

**Class 5 9/28** – What does it mean to learn from another without “understanding?” How to do it? Should we? What are the implications for schooling?

In class: *Jupiter’s Wife* (film), discussion with oral history partner and class

**Reading due:** Class Members’ Excerpted Oral Histories (Blackboard)

**Other assignments due:** Again, spend two hours with your oral history partner, an hour for each interview. Then, create a 2-page document excerpting your oral-histories-in-progress and post them to Blackboard by Saturday, 10 pm. By class time, read all of the posted documents.

**Class 6 10/5** – From oral history to ethnography: reflecting on oral history project, setting up ethnography projects

**Reading due:** Todd, chapter 5

Other assignments due: **Oral History Essay Due**

**Visitor:** Michaile Rainey (CDO), Careers in Education Discussion  
7-8 p.m

**\*\*\* FALL BREAK: Read the ethnography for your group project \*\*\***

**Class 7 10/19:** De-briefing Oral History Project: Where might other research methods come in/help?

**Visitor:** Elliot Shore, CIO, Director of Libraries, and Department of History, Bryn Mawr College.

**Reading due:** Group ethnography text; Holliday, chapters 2 and 3

Other Assignments due: Field Notes Compilation and learning/research memo (using course readings as launch points)

**Class 8 10/26** Field Mentors’ Evening: Defining Mentorship, Establishing Relationships to Further the Field Work/Community Partnerships

**Reading due:** Holliday, chapters 4 and 5

**Class 9 11/2** Exploring Research Paradigms: Poster Presentations/discussion

**Reading due:** Holliday, chapters 6-8

**Class 10 11/9** Exploring Research Paradigms: Poster Presentations/discussion

**Reading due:** Cammorata, J., and Fine, M. “Youth Participatory Action Research: A Pedagogy for Transformative Resistance”

Fine, “An Epilogue, of Sorts” (Blackboard)

**Class 11 11/16** Ethnography presentations/discussion/linkages to field work

**Class 12 11/23** Ethnography presentations/discussion/linkages to field work

**\*\*\* THANKSGIVING – Enjoy! \*\*\***

**Class 13 11/30** Gathering Strands Together

**Reading due:** Todd, chapter 3

Freeland, R. "The Necessary Revolution in Undergraduate Education"

**Other assignments due:** Please bring notes, drafts, and questions for an in-class portfolio writing workshop

**Class 14 12/7** Prospect and Retrospect

Reading due: Hyde, "The Labor of Gratitude" (Blackboard)

North, More Than Words: Delving Into the Substantive Meaning(s) of "Social Justice" in Education. North, C. E., *Review of Educational Research*, 2006, 76(4), 507-536.

Final portfolio due at the end of finals period, hard copy and online, if possible.