

## **Education 266: Schools in American Cities Course Syllabus**

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MW, 11:30-1:00  
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HC Office Hours: Wed. 4-6 pm  
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Spring 2012  
Classroom: BYC 106  
Bryn Mawr Office: Bettwys Coed 307  
BMC Office Hours: Mon 9-11 am  
Meetings by appointment

### **The course**

An elective offered through the Education Program that also meets a requirement for Cities and Sociology majors, this course is designed for students to investigate the issues, challenges and possibilities of urban schooling. The purpose of the course is to create a community of learners who will conduct inquiry into both theory and practice to build an understanding of critical issues in urban education. Through readings, writings, field experiences and discussions, participants will address a range of factors that create the conditions for teaching/learning and reform in city schools.

In the first section of the course, we address socioeconomic, legal, and cultural issues in terms of their impact on urban education. The second part of the course examines students' and teachers' identities and perspectives and issues of curriculum and pedagogy in urban settings, especially in contested terrains such as language and literacy and mathematics. In the final stretch of the course, we investigate current topics in reform in urban schools and districts. Since we are located right outside Philadelphia, a key site for urban school reform, the course utilizes Philadelphia as an illustrative "case"; we consider recent initiatives and pay particular attention to the city's current reform effort. Via course texts, we look at the case studies of Chicago and New York as well. Field placements in school settings and conversations with urban educators and students offer us opportunities to explore the relationship of macro-conditions to particular people, places, and programs. Students engage in a Praxis field placement, which provides us with practice-based experiences to extend and deepen our knowledge. The Praxis dimension of the course ensures that we grapple with real issues, using these to inform and revise theory, and that we use our resources to address felt needs in the field.

### **Class requirements**

The course is demanding in terms of reading, writing, and participation. Because it is writing intensive, the course is limited to 25 students. Priority goes to students in the Education and Cities Programs and to Sociology majors. Students also complete a Praxis field experience in an urban education setting. We are fortunate to be working with Anne Bradley at the Praxis Office: [abradley@brynmawr.edu](mailto:abradley@brynmawr.edu), Civic Engagement Office, by appointment.

**Attendance and preparation:** This course will involve students as critical readers and writers of texts, active participants in class discussions, and participants in urban schools and other education-related settings. Your presence and active engagement are essential. If you must miss a class, please email me ahead of time if possible. Missing more than two class meetings will affect your participation grade.

Students are expected to turn in all work on time. All work submitted late will be marked down one grade (3.7 to 3.3) for each day it is late. Work turned in more than a week late will not be accepted. Only extensions requested by Deans will be granted.

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a learning difference are encouraged to meet with the course instructor privately early in the semester. Students who attend Bryn Mawr should also contact Stephanie Bell, Coordinator of Access Services, at [sbell@brynmawr.edu](mailto:sbell@brynmawr.edu) or 610-526-7351 in Canwyll House, as soon as possible, to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations.

Haverford Students should contact Rick Webb, Coordinator, Office of Disabilities Services, at [rwebb@haverford.edu](mailto:rwebb@haverford.edu) or 610-896-1290.

## Assignments:

All course writings referring to your field placement **must use pseudonyms for schools, programs, and all participants**. All sources must be cited completely and properly, using APA, MLA, or Chicago style guidelines. (For instruction in citation style, please consult [www.brynmawr.edu/Library/Docs/citation.shtml](http://www.brynmawr.edu/Library/Docs/citation.shtml))

**1. Field-based writings:** These will provide a series of opportunities for you to examine what's going on in your field site in the context of our readings and discussions. You will share these with your field group and also turn some of these writings in for comments.

*(a) Field log:* You will keep a field log that includes entries for each time you enter your field site. Remember to use pseudonyms for places and people in order to preserve confidentiality. We will discuss a variety of ways to use your field log to document what you are learning. Field logs will provide a source for all field-based work.

*(b) Vignette from the field:* Select an incident from your field log that illustrates a key theme emerging in your field experience. Write this up as a focused narrative; then frame the narrative with interpretive commentary.

*(c) Letter to your site teacher(s)* about what you're learning from your experience in their classroom and your ongoing questions and ideas about your work at the site. Please format your letter appropriately and write it to your site teacher as your audience, since we will send these letters to your placement.

*(d) Your evolving question or focus:* What question or issue seems most central to the school/classroom/student(s)? What information and impressions do you already have pertaining to this question? What kinds of knowledge would further your inquiry?

*(e) Final field paper:* First, you will collect data in the context of your field experience for this class. This will involve keeping a weekly log and also gathering relevant site documents (to be discussed in detail in class). Then, as your final paper for this class you will write an extended (approx. 10 page) paper in which you integrate what you have observed and learned in your experience with teachers and students in an urban education setting with relevant readings and discussions of critical contextual and educational issues.

Your *field portfolio* should include 3 selections from (a) as well as (b), (c), (d) and (e) above. Due at end of exam period, May 11<sup>th</sup> at noon if you are a senior and May 18<sup>th</sup> for everyone else.

**2. Posts to journal group via Blackboard site:** In class we will form journal groups of 4-5 people; you will post four times to your group in response to prompts about the readings and/or your Praxis experience (see focus for these posts under relevant dates). You will read and print out your group's posts prior to class, and in class you'll have time to discuss issues raised in your posts. In some instances I'll ask you to bring a hard copy for me to respond to. You may also be asked to post occasionally on topics arising from our class discussions.

**3. Issue Analysis (5-7 pages):** Use our readings and discussions to locate and analyze a "core issue" in urban education. For example, what is the so-called 'achievement gap' and how should educators address this? What are the dimensions and implications of the issue? How do legalities and funding impact this issue? Do you detect significant differences in the ways this issue get discussed and defined across our readings? In the news? What questions and perspectives seem to you most useful in terms of addressing this issue in urban education? Draw on our readings, field experiences if relevant, and any other sources that inform your analysis.

**4. Using the medium of film to re-view urban education (3-5 pages):** Select one or more film(s) from those on reserve in Canaday [including *I am a Promise*, *Hard Times at Douglass High*, *First Person*, *Freedom Writers*, *Waiting for Superman*, *School Colors*, *The Wire*, *Season IV* (choose scenes from one or more episodes)] and use the film(s) to examine students' perspectives, teachers and teaching, or issues in school reform. How do our readings and/or your placement experiences inform your viewing of the film, and conversely, how does your viewing of the film inform your reading of texts and/or of your placement experience? You may choose to focus on one or several scenes, in which case you should specify your narrowed focus. Additionally, please include specific references to all sources—filmic, textual, and experiential.

**5. Strategies for Change (5-7 pages):** During the course, we've considered the challenges of urban education at multiple levels, from the contextual issues of poverty, racism and public policy to the classroom-based issues of students' and teachers' experiences. Bearing in mind these challenges as well as the directions for change suggested by our readings, discussions and experiences, write a paper in which you propose a map for change; discuss your rationale for the strategies you recommend. You may focus at any level (e.g. the classroom, school, district, city, state or more broadly still), but wherever you focus, keep in mind the importance of linking levels in any ultimate plan for change.

**Assigned Texts (available at Bryn Mawr Bookstore and on reserve at Canaday):**

Michie, Greg, *Holler If You Hear Me*

Noguera, Pedro, *City Schools and the American Dream*

Payne, Charles, *So Much Reform, So Little Change*

**All other assigned readings will be available via our Blackboard site.**

Bring each day's readings to class with you so that you can use them in our discussions (this includes articles printed from Blackboard and/or notes taken from the readings if you choose not to print out articles. It is very important that you annotate as you read and come to class ready to discuss).

### **Class Meetings and Assignments**

All assignments are due on the day they are listed.

#### **Week 1:**

Wednesday, January 18

- Orienting to the course

#### **Week 2: Socioeconomic, cultural, and legal lenses**

Monday, January 23

Reading due:

- Noguera, *City Schools and the American Dream*, chaps. 1 & 2
- Praxis Orientation (bring completed forms next class)

Wednesday, January 25:

Reading due:

- Noguera, *City Schools*, chaps. 3 & 4 and Long (Blackboard)

- **Post #1 to your group's blog on our Blackboard site by Sun. at 5 pm:** Locate a quote or specific issue from the reading that you want to think more about, and write a 1-2 page response. Come ready to discuss your group's posts on Mon.

### **Week 3: Socioeconomic, cultural, and legal lenses**

Monday, January 30

Reading due:

- Schaffi, K. (2008). "Book Review on Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community *Rural Sociology*. 73(2). 2008. pp. 300-315.
- Rural Education at a Glance. (2003). Rural Development Research Report Number 98

Wednesday, February 1:

Reading Due:

- Payne, chap. 4 and Fruchter, chap. 1 ("The Achievement Gap...") (Blackboard)
- **Post #2 to your group's blog on our Blackboard site by Sun. at 5 pm:** Locate a quote or specific issue from the reading that you want to think more about, and write a 1-2 page response. Come ready to discuss your group's posts on Mon. And please bring a hard copy of one of your posts to turn in to me.

### **Week 4: Socioeconomic, cultural, and legal lenses, con't**

Monday, February 6

Reading due:

- Noguera, *City Schools*, chap. 5 and Anyon & Greene (Blackboard)

Wednesday, February 8

- Ladson-Billings ("From the Achievement Gap...") (Blackboard) and Payne, Introduction

### **Week 5: Students' and teachers' identities and perspectives**

Monday, February 13

Reading due:

- Payne, chap. 1 and Wilson & Corbett (Blackboard)
- **Post #3 to Blackboard site by Tues. at 5 pm:** Select an excerpt from your field notes that highlights a question, concern, or idea you have about your site, and add some context and commentary. Remember to use pseudonyms for the school and everyone involved! Come ready to discuss your group's posts on Wed.

Wednesday, February 15

Reading Due:

- Dance, chap. 4 (Blackboard)

### **Week 6: Students' and teachers' identities and perspectives**

Monday, February 20

Reading due:

- Casella, chap. 3, Ladson-Billings ("I ain't writin' nutting'..."), and Noguera, "Schools, Prisons..." (Blackboard)

Wednesday, February 22

Reading due:

- Payne, chaps. 2 & 3

### **Week 7: Students' and teachers' identities and perspectives**

Monday, February 27

Reading due:

- Michie, *Holler If You Hear Me* and Michie article (Blackboard)

Wednesday, February 29

Reading due:

- Michie, *Holler If You Hear Me* and Duncan-Andrade, chap. 9 (Blackboard)

➤ **Writing Due: Issue Analysis on Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> by 2 pm in the box outside my office**

## **Spring Break**

### **Week 8: Inside Classrooms: Teaching and Learning**

Monday, March 12

Reading due:

- Monkman et. al and Bondy et. al (Blackboard)

➤ **Writing due: Letter to your site teacher**

Wednesday, March 14

Reading due:

- Haberman (Blackboard)

### **Week 9: Inside Classrooms: Teaching and Learning**

Monday, March 19

Reading due:

- Fecho, “Why Are You Doing this?” and “Yo, Wazzup?”; Strolin-Smith, chap. 8; Lee, chap. 3 (Blackboard)

Wednesday, March 21

Reading Due:

- Werkema & Case and Davis et. al, chap. 5 (Blackboard)

### **Week 10: Changing Schools and Districts**

Monday, March 26

Reading Due:

- Nieto and Shuang Ji & Koblinsky (Blackboard)

➤ **Post #4 to Blackboardsite by Tues. at 5:** Vignette from the field (see Field Paper Assignments). Remember to use pseudonyms! Come ready to discuss your group’s posts in class on Wed. And please bring a hard copy of your post for me.

Wednesday, March 28

Reading Due:

- Ginwright, Blanchett et. al, and Ceballo et. al (Blackboard)

➤ **Writing due: Film Paper by 2 pm on Friday in the box outside my office.**

### **Week 11: Changing Schools and Districts**

Monday, April 2

Reading due:

- Darling-Hammond, Au, and Crocco & Costigan (Blackboard)

Wednesday, April 4

Reading due:

- Tough, Thernstrom & Thernstrom, and Bazelon (Blackboard)

**Week 12: Urban school reform**

Monday, April 9

Reading Due:

- Payne, chap. 5 and Ancess & Allen (Blackboard)

Wednesday, April 11

Reading due:

- Payne, chaps. 6 & 7

➤ **Writing due: Field research question or focus (see Field Paper Assignments)**

**Week 13: Urban school reform**

Monday, April 16

Reading due:

- Theoharis (Blackboard) and Noguera, Conclusion

Wednesday, April 18

Reading Due:

- TBD

➤ **Writing Due: Strategies for Change (see assignments above)**

**Week 14: Praxis**

Monday, April 23

- Praxis panels

Wednesday, April 25

- Praxis panels and Closing

**DUE:** The Field Portfolio (which includes final paper and select field assignments) is due outside Heather's Office at Founders 028 at 12:00 pm on Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup> (or the 11<sup>th</sup> if you are a senior).