MTLA 602 Critical Issues in Contemporary Education
Fall, 2011

Instructor: Dr. Reid Adams

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Meeting Time and Place: Thursday: 5:00 PM – 7:45 PM ECTR 216

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 to 3:00; Wednesday 1:00 to 4:00, or by appointment

Course Description
This course examines current issues in American public education, focusing on issues facing today’s students, teachers, and the teaching profession.

Course Text/Materials
- PEN NewsBlast (go to PEN's website (http://www.publiceducation.org) and follow the instructions in the lower left-hand section of the homepage.
- Additional readings available on OAKS.

Course Objectives
1. Explore underlying philosophical, historical, and cultural underpinnings of contemporary educational issues
2. Analyze the effect of standards, testing and accountability on students, the teaching and learning process, and the teaching profession
3. Examine issues in teacher recruitment, training, retention, compensation, and evaluation
4. Examine different ways of structuring and financing educational delivery (e.g., privatization, charter movement, virtual schools)
5. Explore issues of student engagement considering influences within and outside of the classroom

Course Outcomes
All teacher education programs in the School of Education are guided by a commitment to Making the Teaching and Learning Connection. Teachers who make the teaching and learning connection: 1. Understand and value the learner; 2. Know what and how to teach and assess and how to create an environment in which learning occurs, and 3. Understand themselves as professionals. These three elements of teacher competency are at the heart of the EHHP conceptual framework and guide what you will learn and how your learning will be assessed. Each course in the teacher education programs provides opportunities for you to develop and extend your knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to become an effective teacher.
ETC 1- Outcomes related to understanding and valuing the learner: The course will examine current issues within and outside of school that influence student engagement.

ETC 2- Outcomes related to knowing what and how to teach and assess and how to create an environment in which learning occurs: The course will explore current debates about the effect of testing and accountability on curriculum and instruction. We will also explore the effects of current school financing issues and how these issues impact on teaching and learning and on school and classroom climate.

ETC 3- Outcomes related to understanding self as a professional: The course will focus deeply on issues related to teacher recruitment, retention, evaluation, compensation, and professional advancement. We will also explore how teachers can become more effective advocates for students and the profession.

Course Requirements
Demonstration of SOE Dispositions and how students express them in this course:
• Belief that all students can learn (attitudes expressed about students and learning)
• Value and respect for individual differences (participation in class discussions)
• Value of positive human interactions (participation in class discussions)
• Exhibition and encouragement of intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm about learning, and willingness to learn new ideas (participation in class discussions; completion of reading assignments; quality of course projects)
• Dedication to inquiry, reflection, and self-assessment (quality of course assignments; active participation in class discussions; support and encouragement of diverse ideas)
• Value of collaborative and cooperative work (participation in class activities)
• Sensitivity toward community and cultural contexts (insights expressed in class discussions and reflected in course assignments)
• Engagement in responsible and ethical practice (performance on course assignments and contribution to class activities)
• Development of professional mastery over time (performance over time on all assignments)

Students are responsible for:
• Completion of all assigned readings and projects on time
• Responsibility for all course content (lecture, text, outside reading, handouts, research)
• Responsibility for all missed assignments/notes from someone in class, not the instructor
• Utilization of internet, word processing, email and OAKS.
Please consult with instructor to arrange tutoring if you are unfamiliar with any of these applications.
Projects/Assignments and Evaluation Criteria

Reading notes
Each week you will bring to class notes on the reading. You should identify three to five quotes or statements from each reading that you want to discuss further. You may agree or disagree with the statement or you may find it thought provoking. Write a thoughtful paragraph about why you selected each statement, reflecting on your own experiences and/or prior readings. Also prepare questions or discussion points based on the statements that you want to discuss in class. Reading notes will be submitted to a dropbox in OAKS. 10 pts each x 10 weeks = 100 points

PEN Newsblast
Each Friday the Public Education Network (PEN) sends out a Newblast. This service compiles recent information about education issues from government agencies, nonprofits, universities, newspapers and foundations. The Newblast provides easy links to the full reports or articles. Each week you should go onto the site and read articles of interest to you and relevant to our discussions. Using the OAKS discussion feature, you will discuss the articles with your classmates. You will be graded on the level and quality of your discussion. (10 points each x 10 weeks – 100 points)

Discussion Facilitation
Each week two people will be responsible for facilitating the Newsblast discussion. At the beginning of each class you and your partner will be responsible for taking the lead in the discussions and ensuring that they provide a meaningful avenue for extending our understanding of issues. You may facilitate this discussion in whatever format you like. (50 points)

Research paper
You will be responsible for a major research paper (with annotated bibliography) on an issue or policy of your choice. The paper should present a clear statement of the issue, a theoretical framework from which you discuss the issues, a carefully and fully documented review of the literature (scholarly and policy), and an analysis of the data and arguments surrounding the issue. You will present your findings to the class at the end of the term. (200 Points)

Initial annotated bibliography = 50 points
Research paper = 100 points
Presentation = 50 points

Participation
This seminar calls for a high degree of student participation in class discussion. For each class, students are expected to critically analyze all readings; offer comments and raise salient points in class, based on the readings; and make helpful comments on the work of other students. For most classes, students will be asked to make specific contributions. I will alert you if your participation needs improvement. (50 Points)
Reading Notes .......................... 100 points
PEN Newsblast ....................... 100 points
Research Paper ...................... 200 points
Discussion Facilitation ............ 50 points
Participation .......................... 50 points
Total ..................................... 500 points

Evaluation Scale
A = 100 – 93 C+ = 82-78
B+ = 92-88 C = 77-74
B = 87-83

Attendance
Class attendance and punctuality are expected professional behaviors. Excessive absences (i.e., more than 15% (5.25 hours/2 classes) may result in receiving a “WA/F.”

Academic Integrity
Students are expected to comply with CofC’s Honor Code and Student Code of Conduct. See http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php
Note especially that academic dishonesty includes:
*Cheating, which includes submitting the same work for more than one course without approval. If you plan to use portions of work submitted for other courses you must see me to discuss this.
*Fabrication, the falsification or invention of data, information, or citations.
*Plagiarism, representing another person's words or ideas as one's own, including failure to attribute quotations and paraphrases.
*Facilitating academic dishonesty, helping another to commit academic dishonesty.

Late Work
You are expected to turn in work on the assigned dates. Late work will be penalized 20% for each day that the assignment is late.
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/25</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/1</td>
<td>Cultural, historical, &amp; philosophical underpinnings</td>
<td>Darling-Hammond (Ch. 1-2)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Policy Instruments/Tools</td>
<td>Hannaway, J; &amp; Woodroffe, N. (2003), Policy Instruments in Education (OAKS)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Think About:</td>
<td>Schneider, A. &amp; Ingram, H. (1990), Behavioral Assumptions of Policy Tools (OAKS)</td>
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<td>What tools are the most powerful?</td>
<td><strong>Find &amp; review</strong> components of No Child Left Behind. Look for Policy Tools in Law</td>
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<td>The most difficult to apply?</td>
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<td>What tools are best for education?</td>
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<td>What conditions are needed for the success of each tool?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>School “Reform” Standards and Accountability</td>
<td>Darling-Hammond (Ch. 3)</td>
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<td>Nelson, Palonsky, and McCarthy – (Ch. 5)– Standards-Based Reform: Real Change or Political Smokescreen – (Handout)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/22</td>
<td>School “Reform”</td>
<td>2 Million Minutes (DVD)</td>
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<td>Zhao (Ch. 2-3) – Google Books: (OAKS)</td>
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<td>Kohn, A. (2004) NCLB and the Effort to Privatize Education</td>
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<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading/Lecture</td>
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| 8    | 10/13  | The Politics of School Reform | • Stupid In America (DVD)  
|      |        | * research paper “workshop”   |                                                      |
| 9    | 10/20  | The Politics and Representation of School Choice | • Waiting for Superman (DVD)  
| 10   | 10/27  | Special Topic - TBA           | TBA                                                  |
| 11   | 11/3   | Next Steps for Schools        | Darling Hammond (Ch. 5 & 6) Annotated Bibliography Due |
| 12   | 11/10  | Next Steps for Schools        | • Darling-Hammond (Ch. 8 & 9)                       |
|      |        | * Research Paper Workshop     |                                                      |
| 14   | 11/24  | Thanksgiving Break            | Thanksgiving Break                                   |
| 15   | 12/1   | Paper Presentations           | Research Papers Due Presentations                    |
| Exam | TBA    | Paper Presentations           | Presentations                                        |