

Sociocultural Influences on Learning (ALD 327)
Summer, 2020
Unique Numbers: 73360
University of Texas at Austin
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction

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REQUIRED TEXTS

- Gloria Ladson-Billings, [*The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Students, 2nd Edition*](#) (e-book through PCL)
- Angela Valenzuela, [*Subtractive Schooling: U.S. Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*](#) (e-book through PCL)
- Additional articles on Canvas (see Schedule below)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is devoted to exploring the relationships between education, culture, and society. It will focus on: structures of social and educational inequality, in particular as they relate to race, class and gender; processes of power and control in education, as they are expressed in curriculum, policy, and pedagogy; education as a process of social and cultural reproduction; and teaching as a form of intervention in these processes. The course will give special attention to the experiences and educational conditions of those who have been marginalized within U.S. schools. It is expected that in this course students will become familiar with the sociological, cultural, and political contexts and dimensions of education in U.S. society, will come to understand relationships of power within society and as they are expressed in schooling, and will develop the foundational knowledge necessary for working with children and youth from diverse backgrounds.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I believe that it is important for educators to engage intellectually with central questions in their discipline in order to be effective in their work. I also believe that intellectual and practical issues in education cannot be separated from political and ethical issues: to think honestly about education means confronting injustices. I encourage everyone to express

their ideas on issues we take up, and also to think critically about the limits of our own perspectives in order to enlarge and transform them. It is important for all students to feel comfortable sharing their ideas and engaging with the contributions of others. I am committed to the learning of all, and expect students also to be committed to the course. Please do not hesitate to approach me with any questions you may have during the course.

POLICIES

Academic Integrity: All work must be your own. If referring to ideas or information from others, make sure that you cite the source. No credit will be given for work that violates this principle.

Late Work: Reading Responses and Canvas Discussion posts will not be accepted if turned in after the deadline. All other written assignments will lose two points if turned in past the deadline.

Personal Pronoun Use (She / He / They / Ze / Etc): I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING BASIS

Note: Extended guidelines for the following assignments are provided at the end of this syllabus.

Zoom Meeting Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation in Zoom meetings are important to facilitate your own learning and that of others. Our discussion depends on all voices being shared and heard. In order to engage in an informed way in class discussions, it is important that you carefully read all assigned readings prior to the meeting.

Canvas Discussions

Each week beginning on Monday, you will be assigned to a discussion group on Canvas. The weekly discussion prompt will provide you the opportunity to critically engage with cultural artifacts (films, news clips, curriculum documents, etc.) related to central themes in the course. Your weekly contributions will consist of your own original post as well as two replies to the posts of fellow group members. *The individual post is due each Wednesday at 11:59pm. Replies to two classmates are due by Friday at 11:59 pm.*

Reading Responses

For each meeting for which reading is assigned (*except for July 6*) you will turn in a response starting from a prompt that I provide. This assignment asks you to engage rigorously with key ideas in the readings. The response should make specific reference to the text while developing your own analysis. It must address the prompt explicitly. (Enter your response in the submissions field under Assignments on Canvas.) *The reading*

responses are due the day before class (Zoom meeting) by 11:59pm. No late assignments will be accepted.

Autobiographical Essay

In this essay you will reflect on your life experience as it relates to the topics and ideas covered in class. You will describe how your own identity and development have been influenced by the social and cultural processes in education we are studying, and you will analyze your experiences to explain their importance and meanings. *The Autobiographical Essay (as a Word document) is due on June 26.*

Crisis Learning Journal

Recent social crises (including the coronavirus pandemic, racist police violence, and economic dislocation) have caused wrenching changes and upheaval, revealing aspects of power and oppression; forcing us to explore new ways to live; and at times creating opportunities for new learning. In this assignment, you will describe what you are learning outside of school in this context. You can reflect on emotional struggles/strategies, social and political consciousness, communication and relationships, autonomous intellectual pursuits, or other areas. *The journal is due in two installments on June 20 and July 5.*

Group Presentation

In small groups, you will undertake a presentation at one Friday Zoom meeting related to one topic or idea from the content for that week. Your presentation should bring a new perspective or direction to the topic. This is an open-ended and creative assignment, which asks you to take initiative in your analysis. Following the formal presentation, your group will facilitate a brief discussion.

Final Reflective Essay

In this essay you will reflect on what you have learned during the course, and how it has affected your thinking about teaching, learning, and/or schooling. While you will engage with specific course concepts and readings that have made a difference to you, the assignment is subjective in nature, and asks you to describe, from your own perspective, your intellectual growth in relation to this material. *The Final Reflective Essay (as a Word document) is due on July 11.*

| Assignment | Points |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Zoom Meeting Participation | 10 |
| Reading Responses | 18 |
| Canvas Discussion | 20 |
| Autobiographical Essay | 12 |
| Crisis Learning Journal | 10 |
| Group Presentation | 10 |
| Final Reflective Essay | 20 |

93-100 points: A

90-92.9 points: A-

87-89.9 points: B+

83-86.9 points: B
80-82.9 points: B-
77-79.9 points: C+
73-76.9 points: C
70-72.9 points: C-
60-69.9 points: D
Below 60 points: F

UNIVERSITY NOTICES AND POLICIES

Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT. Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see:
<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

University Resources for Students

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we’ll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. There are also a range of resources on campus:

Services for Students with Disabilities

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329- 3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

Counseling and Mental Health Center

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. <http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html>

The Sanger Learning Center

All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Libraries: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

ITS: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

ZOOM MEETING SCHEDULE

(M and TH meetings 1:00pm-2:20pm; F meetings 1:00pm-1:50pm)

| Date | Zoom Meeting (and Module) | Reading (to be read prior to Zoom meeting) |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Thurs., June 4 | Introduction to Course | |
| Mon., June 8 | Race, Racism, and Deficit Thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tara Yosso: “Whose Culture Has Capital?” • Lois Weiner: “Challenging Deficit Thinking” • Tamika Mallory: “America has Looted Black People” (video) |
| Thurs., June 11 | Race, Poverty, and Social Reproduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedro Noguera: selection from <i>City Schools and the American Dream</i> |
| Fri., June 12 | <i>Group Presentation</i> | |
| Mon., June 15 | Power and Ideology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter McLaren: Selection from <i>Life in Schools</i> |
| Thurs., June 18 | Class, Corporatization, and Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Hursh: “Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies” • Naomi Klein: “Coronavirus Capitalism” (video) |
| Fri., June 19 | <i>Group Presentation</i> | |
| Mon., June 22 | Gender Bias and Crisis Learning Journal Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Association of University Women (AAUW): “How Schools Shortchange Girls” |
| Thurs., June 25 | Gender, Sexuality, and Discrimination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claudia Cervantes-Soon: “<i>Mujeres Truchas</i>: Urban Girls Redefining Smartness in a Dystopic Global South” • Cris Mayo: “The Tolerance that Dare Not Speak Its Name” |

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|-------------------|--|---|
| Fri., June 26 | <i>Group Presentation</i> | |
| Mon., June 29 | Culture, Language, and Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valenzuela, Chapter 2: pp. 33-60; Chapter 3 (partial): pp. 61-75 |
| Thurs., July 2 | Cultural Difference and Marginalization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valenzuela, Chapter 3 (partial): pp. 75-113; Chapter 5 (partial) pp. 161-181 |
| Fri., July 3 | <i>Group Presentation</i> | |
| Mon., July 6 | Teaching, Curriculum and Social Context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladson-Billings, Chapters 2-4: pp. 17-84 |
| Thurs., July 9 | Culturally Relevant Teaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladson-Billings, Chapters 5-7: pp. 85-156 |

Reading Responses

For each meeting for which reading is assigned (*except for July 6*) you will turn in a response starting from a prompt that I provide. This assignment asks you to engage rigorously with key ideas in the readings. The response should make specific reference to the text while developing your own analysis. It must address the prompt explicitly. (Enter your response in the submissions field on Canvas.) *The reading responses are due the day before class (Zoom meeting) by 11:59pm. No late assignments will be accepted.*

Additional Notes:

- Responses should be 300-400 words.
- If you are having technical difficulties with Canvas, email your response directly. Responses must be posted or received by 11:59pm on Monday to receive credit.
- The response should directly address the prompt; it asks you to develop your own analysis, with close reference to the reading.
- Your response should focus on key ideas in the text, rather than on general speculations. Be specific in your writing.
- 9 reading responses will be due during the course; each is worth 2 points.

Canvas Discussions

Each week beginning on Monday, you will be assigned to a discussion group on Canvas. The weekly discussion prompt will provide you the opportunity to critically engage with cultural artifacts (films, news clips, curriculum documents, etc.) related to central themes in the course. Your weekly contributions will consist of your own original post as well as two replies to the posts of fellow group members. *The individual post is due each Wednesday at 11:59pm. Replies to two classmates are due by Friday at 11:59 pm.*

The content for Canvas Discussions will vary by week. Links to artifacts will be posted directly to the Discussions page.

4 points each week over 5 weeks = 20 points total for Canvas Discussions.

Evaluation

Individual posts (worth 2 points) will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Has length of 150-200 words
- Demonstrates a substantial engagement with the selected artifacts for that week
- Offers at least one thematic connection to the concepts explored in course literature

Replies to two classmates (worth 2 points total) will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Each reply has a length of 50-100 words
- Demonstrates a thoughtful consideration of classmates' ideas
- Offers a follow up question, extension, or connection

Group Presentation

In small groups, you will undertake an oral presentation at a Friday Zoom meeting related to one topic or idea from the modules for that week. Your presentation should bring a new perspective or direction to the topic. This is an open-ended and creative assignment, which asks you to take initiative in analyzing the topic.

The presentation must relate to one of the themes for the week; it may or may not start from a specific point in the text. This is not a report, but rather an analysis and discussion. Plan your presentation carefully for **15-20 minutes**; do not go over 20 minutes so that there is time for discussion.

Following the formal presentation, your group will facilitate a discussion for 20-25 minutes. This should be planned and structured. It can involve consideration of questions in small or large groups, an interactive activity, or some other format.

Some ways to approach the presentation (there are other possibilities):

- Description of a particular current context, event, organization, or institution for which one of the topics of the week is relevant or dramatized
- Consideration of a possible application of one of the ideas from the reading in a school or other social context
- Contextualization of one of the topics of the week in a historical tradition, social movement, school of thought, etc.

Notes:

- You will need to prepare slides for the presentation; you will share your screen to present them during the Zoom meeting. (Please also upload your slides to Canvas through the Group Presentation assignment.)
- All group members must be involved in planning and delivering the presentation.
- Avoid video clips in your presentation, unless absolutely necessary.

Evaluation

Presentations will be evaluated on: 1) depth of analysis and creativity of presentation; 2) quality of planning and collaboration among presenters; 3) insights offered on one of the week's topics; 4) preparation of discussion to follow presentation.

Autobiographical Essay

In this essay (**4 typed double-spaced pages**), you will reflect on your own previous life experience as it relates to the topics and ideas we have been considering in class. The question for you to respond to in this assignment is:

- **Who are you, and how has your identity been influenced by, and constructed in relationship to your educational experiences?**

“Educational experiences” includes school, but can also include other educational experiences in your family, with peers, or in other contexts. This essay is concerned with how your development has been connected to the educational, social, and cultural context you have come from. Along the way you should consider how some of the **racial, class, cultural, and gender understandings, differences, and processes that we have discussed** have affected you (and also, if you want, how you have responded). You should provide **specific descriptions of experiences** to make your essay more vivid, and should **analyze these experiences to explain their importance and meanings**. (You do not need to tell your whole life story.)

For this assignment, it is important to connect your description to the topics and ideas we have been concerned with in class; however, you do not have to cite specific pages in the texts or lectures.

The Autobiographical Essay (as a Word document) is due on June 26.

Evaluation

This essay will be evaluated according to the following criteria: 1) specific discussion of personal experience and identity, 2) depth of analysis and insights, 3) connections drawn to ideas and topics considered in the course.

Crisis Learning Journal

Recent social crises (including the coronavirus pandemic, racist police violence, and economic dislocation, and others) have caused wrenching changes and upheaval, revealing aspects of power and oppression; forcing us to explore new ways to live; and at times creating opportunities for new learning. In this assignment, you will describe what you are learning outside of school in this context. You can reflect on emotional struggles/strategies, social and political consciousness, communication and relationships, autonomous intellectual pursuits, or other areas. Consideration of learning during this time is not intended to minimize the suffering these crises have caused, but on the contrary to provide an opportunity to reflect on our experiences and to think about how we can confront challenges more powerfully as individuals and as collectives.

In this assignment, you will describe what you have learned or are learning (understood broadly) during the time period of the class and in the context of the current historical moment. This journal does not need to focus on the formal content of the course (although connections are fine), but rather on your out-of-school experiences and reflections.

It is up to you how you want to structure the journal (e.g. as occasional entries or as one larger reflection); you are not expected to organize your journal in essay format. It is due in two installments (*approx. 700 words each*): *the first due on June 20 and the second due on July 5. Enter responses directly into the submission field on Canvas.*

The emphasis in this assignment is on giving you a space to reflect. All journals responding to the guidelines will receive full credit.

Final Reflective Essay

In this essay (**5-7 typed double-spaced pages**), you will reflect on what you have learned during the course and its various assignments, and how it has affected your thinking about teaching, learning, and/or schooling. In the course of your discussion, you should **engage explicitly with specific course concepts and readings** that have made a difference to you. The assignment is subjective in nature; in this essay, you should coherently describe, from your own perspective, **your intellectual growth** in relation to this material. (Some questions that might spur your thinking for this assignment: How did the course, and connected experiences, challenge or change your thinking? How did it confirm or extend your own insights or experiences? How did it feel to you to work through the arguments presented? What remains as an important problem or gap for you?)

In referring to course texts, **make sure you use specific citations to authors, including quotations** (provide page numbers for quotes). Do not summarize the texts; instead, they will serve as tools to help you work through your ideas. You can also refer to your own life experience to help you develop your narrative if you wish; however, this is not an autobiographical essay but rather a narrative of your own response to the course content.

The Final Reflective Essay (as a Word document) is due on July 11.

Evaluation

The final reflective essay will be evaluated according to the following criteria: 1) depth and interest of reflections, analysis, and ideas, 2) specific engagement with course readings and concepts, and 3) organization and coherence of overall argument/narrative.