

Sociocultural Influences on Learning (ALD 327/AFR 372D)

Fall, 2018

Unique Numbers: 09030

University of Texas at Austin

Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction

M, W, F, 11 am – 12 pm

SZB 278

Instructor: Alex Armonda

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-3pm or by appt.

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## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Students*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition
- Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling: U.S. Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*

Note: Additional required readings will be posted on Canvas.

## **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. By the end of the 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.

## **POLICIES**

*Attendance:* After the first absence, for each additional absence (with the exception of documented illnesses or medical emergencies) students will lose 3 points from their final course grade.

*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 will not be accepted if turned in after the deadline. All other written assignments will lose two points if turned in past the deadline.

## **REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING BASIS**

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

### **Reading Responses**

You will write a paragraph describing what you believe to be the **principal argument** of the assigned readings for the coming week. This response should be specific and brief, and should describe, from your perspective, the authors' key ideas.

Access the Reading Response through the assignments/modules page on canvas.

There are 11 opportunities to receive the 10 points of credit throughout the semester. This means you are allowed to choose a week to skip the Reading Response, or earn extra credit by completing an additional Reading Response.

*Your responses are due by 11:59 pm on the Sunday before our first class of the week. No late assignments will be accepted. Responses will be completed and submitted on Canvas.*

### **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 own experiences to explain their importance and meanings. *The Autobiographical Essay is due on October 5. Essays will be turned in on Canvas.*

### **Service Learning**

This course includes a **15-20 hour service learning component** which you must complete in order to receive credit for the class. It is your responsibility to contact one of the sites on the Service Learning Opportunities list (or an equivalent site) to complete your volunteer service learning. The supervising staff member at your site will be asked to sign off on a form certifying that you have completed your required hours.

**Service Learning Analysis**

This assignment consists of five brief reflections on your experiences at your service learning site. Each of the reflections will focus on a different topic, and in each you will combine close observation with careful interpretation and analysis. The reflections will be turned in in two installments. *Service Learning Analysis (Part I) is due on Nov. 16; Service Learning Analysis (Part II) is due on Dec. 7. These will be turned in on Canvas.*

**Group Presentation**

In small groups, you will undertake an oral presentation at the beginning of one Friday class session. This presentation should be related to the topic and readings of the week, but should examine the key themes in relation to a pop-culture artifact. This is an open-ended and creative assignment, which asks you to take initiative in analyzing the topic and opening the discussion of it. Please see the extended description at the back of the syllabus for more information.

**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 and emotional growth in relation to this material. *The Final Reflective Essay is due on Dec. 14. Essays will be turned in on Canvas.*

**Participation**

Participation is a very large component of your grade in this course. Besides the reading responses, it will be the primary way by which I will assess that you are keeping up with the reading assignments. Both attendance and participation in class is 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 class discussions, it is important that you carefully read all assigned readings prior to class, and that you bring the readings with you to class.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Reading Responses	10
Autobiographical Essay	15
Service Learning Analysis	20
Group Presentation	10
Final Reflective Essay	25
Participation	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: University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/utmail/1564>.

### Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (video phone).

- Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, course packets are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).
- Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).
- Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

### Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.

- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

**SCHEDULE**

Week	Topic	Readings	Due
1 (Aug. 29, 31)	<b>Introduction to Course</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Baldwin:</b> “A talk to teachers” (time permitting)</li> </ul>	<i>Review Service Learning Sites, begin to contact site supervisors</i>  <i>Select weeks for group presentation</i>
2 (Sept. 5, 7, No class on labor day Sept. 3)	<b>Race, Racism, and Deficit Thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yosso:</b> “Whose Culture Has Capital?”</li> <li>• <b>Weiner:</b> “Challenging Deficit Thinking”</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 1: Sept. 4</i>
3 (Sept. 10, 12, 14)	<b>Race, Poverty, and Social Reproduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pedro Noguera:</b> selections from <i>City Schools and the American Dream</i></li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 2: Sept. 9</i>
4 (Sept. 17, 19, 21)	<b>Power and Ideology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>McLaren,</b> Chapter 5: pp. 131-154</li> <li>• <b>Paulo Freire:</b> Selections from <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i></li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 3: Sept. 16</i>
5 (Sept. 24, 26, 28)	<b>Class, Corporatization, and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>McLaren,</b> Introduction: pp. 1-29</li> <li>• <b>David Hursh:</b> “Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies”</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 4: Sept 23</i>  <i>Deadline to select service learning site Sept. 28</i>
6 (Oct 1, 3, 5)	<b>Neoliberal Reform and the Image of the Teacher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dumas:</b> “‘Waiting for Superman’ to Save Black People”</li> <li>• <b>Britzman:</b> “Cultural Myths in the Making of the Teacher”</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 5: Sept. 30</i>

		<b>Film:</b> Waiting for Superman	<i>Autobiographical Essay</i>  <i>Oct. 5 at beginning of class</i>
7 (Oct. 8, 10, 12)	<b>Gender, Separation, and School</b>  <b>Service Learning De-Briefing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Barrie Thorne:</b> selections from <i>Gender Play</i></li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 6: Oct. 7</i>
8 (Oct. 15, 17, 19)	<b>Gender, Sexuality, and Discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>American Association of University Women (AAUW):</b> “How Schools Shortchange Girls”</li> <li>• <b>Michelle Fine:</b> “Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females”</li> <li>• <b>Cris Mayo:</b> “The Tolerance that Dare Not Speak Its Name”</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 7: Oct 14</i>
9 (Oct. 22, 24, 26)	<b>Culture, Language, and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Valenzuela,</b> Chapter 2: pp. 33-60; Chapter 3 (partial): pp. 61-75</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 8: Oct. 21</i>
10 (Oct. 29, 31, Nov. 2)	<b>Cultural Difference and Marginalization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Valenzuela,</b> Chapter 3 (partial): pp. 75-113; Chapter 5 (partial) pp. 161-181</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 9: Oct. 28</i>
11 (Nov. 5, 7, 9)	<b>NO CLASS (Alex out of town)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Start on readings for next week, work on Service Learning Analysis 1</b></li> </ul>	
12 (Nov. 12, 14, 16)	<b>Culture and Resistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Simpson:</b> “Land as Pedagogy”</li> <li>• <b>Daniel Solórzano &amp; Dolores Delgado Bernal:</b> “Examining transformational resistance”</li> <li>• <b>Suina:</b> “The Pueblo People and the Dominant Culture”</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 10: Nov. 11</i>  <i>Service Learning Analysis I</i>  <i>Nov. 16</i>

13 (Nov. 19, No class Nov. 21, 23)	<b>Rethinking Resistance</b>	<b>Omatsu:</b> “The ‘four prisons’ and the movements of liberation” pp. 298-330	<i>Enjoy break!</i>
14 (Nov. 26, 28, 30)	<b>Teaching, Curriculum and Social Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ladson-Billings</b>, Chapters 2-4: pp. 17-84</li> <li>• <b>Giroux:</b> “Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals”</li> </ul>	<i>Reading Response 11: Nov. 25</i>
15 (Dec. 3, 5, 7)	<b>Culturally Relevant Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ladson-Billings</b>, Chapters 5 &amp; 6</li> <li>• <b>Paris &amp; Alim:</b> “What are we seeking to sustain through culturally relevant pedagogy?”</li> </ul>	<i>Service Learning Analysis II</i>  <i>Dec. 7</i>
16 (Dec. 10)	<b>Writing Workshop, Summing up</b>		<i>Service Learning Comp. Form;</i>  <i>Final Reflective Essay Due Dec. 14 by 4 pm.</i>



## **Reading Responses**

You will write a paragraph describing what you believe to be the **principal argument** of the assigned readings for the coming week. This response should be specific and brief, and should describe, from your perspective, the authors' key ideas.

Access the Reading Response through the assignments/modules page on canvas.

*Your responses are due by 11:59 pm on the Sunday before our first class of the week. No late assignments will be accepted.* There are 11 opportunities to receive the 10 points of credit throughout the semester. This means you are allowed to choose a week to skip the Reading Response, or earn extra credit by completing an additional Reading Response.

### **Additional Notes:**

- Responses should be approximately 200 words.
- If you are having technical difficulties with Canvas, email your response directly. Emailed responses must be received by 11:59 pm on Sunday to receive credit.
- On days when two or more readings are assigned, the response only needs to focus on one of the readings. You can choose to discuss two readings if you prefer, but three is too many.
- Don't use quotations from the text, since you need the space for your own comments.
- Your response should focus on the key points of the text, rather than on general speculations. Be specific in your writing.
- Ten reading responses will be required during the course; each is worth 1 point.

### **Autobiographical Essay**

In this essay (**4-5 typed double-spaced pages**), you will reflect on your own 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 is 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 is due on Oct. 5 at the beginning of class. Assignments are to be turned in on Canvas.*

### **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.

### **Group Presentation: Popular Culture Analysis**

In small groups, you will undertake an oral presentation at the beginning of one Friday class session. This presentation should be related to the topic and readings of the week, but should discuss how the week's readings (themes, argument, content, etc.) relates to a particular pop-cultural artifact. *This is an open-ended and creative assignment, which asks you to take initiative in analyzing the topic and opening the discussion of it to the class.*

I am leaving the definition of Pop-cultural artifacts intentionally vague. They can range from a specific episode of a TV show, a piece of curriculum, a popular song, a film, a website, or anything along those lines. Once you make your decision as a group, run it by me along with your plan for analysis.

It is great to engage with the reading, but do not summarize it. This is not a book report, but rather a comparative analysis between the readings and the artifact you have chosen. Plan your presentation carefully for about **15 minutes**; if you reach 20 minutes you will be stopped.

**Key guidelines: 1) choose a relevant, interesting pop-cultural artifact. 2) do not summarize the text. 3) plan for 15 minutes.**

#### **Notes:**

- You will come up to the front of the class for the presentation.
- Powerpoint/Prezi is good, but not required; however, it helps to have some kind of visual aid.
- Do not leave time in your presentation for discussion, since I have already planned discussion time after each presentation.
- If you invite interaction from the class, make sure it is for no more than 5 minutes (it should be well-structured and relevant).
- If you show a video clip, it should be no more than a few minutes so that you have time to present your own analysis.

### **Evaluation**

Presentations will be evaluated on:

- 1) depth of analysis and creativity of presentation/connection to cultural artifact
- 2) quality of planning and collaboration among presenters
- 3) insights offered on topic and/or readings of the week.

## **Service Learning Analysis**

This assignment consists of five brief reflections (**1 full typed single-spaced page for each**) on your experiences at your service learning site, in which you will explore aspects of the work you are involved in, the organization itself, and your own responses and accomplishments. Each of the reflections will focus on a different topic, and in each you should include the following two elements:

1) **Description:** Provide specific and detailed description of what you see, hear, and learn. Try to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind of the place or actions you are observing.

2) **Interpretation:** Reflect upon the meanings of the events and processes you have described. Using the questions provided as a guide, suggest what you think might be some of the reasons for what you have described, as well as its effects and significance.

Your descriptive and interpretive comments do not necessarily have to be separated in different sections, but both should be present in each reflection.

*Service Learning Analysis Part I (reflections 1-3) is due on Nov. 16*

*Service Learning Analysis Part II (reflections 4-5) is due on Dec. 7. Assignments will be turned in on Canvas.*

### **Reflection 1: Organization Context (Part 1)**

Describe the context and mission of the organization you are working with, and your own thoughts about it. Consider the communities served by the site, the range of participants, the needs it aims to address, the mission or values of the organization, and its structure and setup. You can draw from conversations with staff, observations, organization literature, etc.

- Interpretation questions: Why has this organization chosen to focus on their particular mission? What are some of the key challenges associated with the central projects that this organization has taken on? What are your initial impressions of the structure and relationships at the site?

### **Reflection 2: Your Role and Relationships (Part 1)**

Document the specific role and tasks you have at the organization, your relationship to participants and staff, and your feelings about your service learning at this early stage. Describe specific responsibilities, interactions, events, or projects that give texture to your individual experience as a volunteer, rather than focusing on the organization as a whole.

- Interpretation questions: How does it feel to you so far to be engaged in this project? What is exciting about your experience? What is difficult? How are you negotiating the relationships you are involved in with participants?

### Reflection 3: Asset-Based Description (Part 1)

In class we have emphasized the importance of an asset-based perspective on students and communities (as opposed to a deficit perspective). Focusing on the students/participants you have been working with, describe the strengths and resources that they bring from their experience, families, and/or communities, including the specific interactions that demonstrate these assets.

- Interpretation questions: What strengths and resources allow this person(s) to persist and progress in their lives and/or learning? What understandings have you gained from working with them? How can the assets they bring with them from their family/community help to challenge deficit perspectives that might be applied to them or to their community?

### Reflection 4: An Accomplishment (Part 2)

Describe one accomplishment or achievement, however large or small, that you were either responsible for yourself, or that you have been involved in, with regard to serving participants of the organization. (This could be a student making progress in one area, leading a dialogue or conversation, establishing a curriculum or plan of action, etc.)

- Interpretation questions: What were the essential factors that made this accomplishment possible? How can this achievement be sustained and deepened? What can be learned from this experience that could be applied to other similar situations?

### Reflection 5: Social Justice Commitment (Part 2)

Consider in what ways the site at which you are participating is committed to a project of social justice that aims to broadly transform social conditions for the communities it serves. Describe whether the staff and participants see the work they are involved in as reaching beyond the amelioration of individual cases to broader change, and the ways in which they enact this commitment.

- Interpretation questions: What does social justice mean to this organization? In your view, does the work of this site move toward this goal? Has your participation altered your own understandings and views of social justice?

### Evaluation

The Service Learning Analysis will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- 1) carefulness and specificity of descriptions of site and experiences
- 2) depth and interest of interpretive comments
- 3) evidence provided of engagement with service learning organization
- 4) clarity and coherence of writing.

### **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 specifically with 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 and emotional growth** in relation to this material. (Some questions that might spur your thinking for this assignment: How did the course, and connected field 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 references, including quotations** (provide page numbers). 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 is due Dec. 14 by 11:59 pm. The assignment will be turned in on Canvas. (Assignments turned in late will be lowered two points.)*

### **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
- 3) organization and coherence of overall argument/narrative.