

WEBSTER UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
COURSE SYLLABUS  
**SPRING II, 2004**

**EDUC5220: Contemporary Educational Issues. 3 credit hours. Site: WEBG**

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**Description** This course will enable participants to: (a) develop a familiarity with important thinkers who have influenced education philosophies and practices; (b) examine historical issues and relate them to current ones; (c) read and synthesize written and electronic materials on current issues; (d) conduct an in-depth investigation on an educational issue and present their findings in written and oral form; and (e) THINK!  
**Goals:** Writing, discussing, analyzing, synthesizing, exploring, and presentation skills will be developed and honed through the investigation of a variety of contemporary education issues within an historical perspective.

**Learning Outcomes**

Class participants are expected to:

- 1) become familiar with, and demonstrate knowledge of, important thinkers who have influenced education philosophies and practices, MoStep 1.2.1.3, 1.2.2.2;
- 2) examine historical issues and relate them to current ones, MoStep 1.2.1.4, 1.2.4.1, 1.2.5.2, 1.2.7.1, 1.2.7.2;
- 3) read, analyze, and synthesize written electronic materials on current issues, MoStep 1.2.1.2, 1.2.1.3, 1.2.1.4, 1.2.2.2, 1.2.5.2;
- 4) conduct an in-depth investigation of an educational issue and present findings and recommendations in written and oral form, MoStep 1.2.2.2, 1.2.5.2, 1.2.7.1;
- 5) participate individually in class discussions and activities, collaborate with classmates on assigned tasks, MoStep 1.2.1.2, 1.2.2.3, 1.2.7.1, 1.2.7.2, 1.2.9.1, 1.2.10.1

**Procedures for achieving the outcomes:** The above outcomes will be met through class discussions, lectures, films, readings from handouts, newspapers, and web sites and one oral presentation, 2-3 short written projects and one in-depth term project.

**Topical Overview, Activities, and Readings** (Sessions 1-8 also correspond to Special Editions Readings and additional topics which will be distributed on the first night of class. Subject to Change.)

1. Introduction and overview of course; perspectives on a current issue; resource exploration methods. (March 17, 2004)
2. Discussion of news articles, individual reports, responding to selected readings. ITEMS DUE: first draft of term project topic. (March 24, 2004)
3. Education in Colonial America and Revolutionary Era . ITEMS DUE: term project topic; News Analysis #1 (March 31, 2004)

4. Educational Alternatives: The Common School . ITEMS DUE: News Analysis #2 (April 7, 2004)
5. American Higher Education and teacher education . ITEMS DUE: Patterns/Trends in Newspapers and/or list of web sites or report of BOE meeting, (April 14, 2004)
6. The Progressive Movement . ITEMS DUE: any unfinished projects. (April 21, 2004)
7. Education 1945-2000. ITEMS DUE: **MAJOR TERM PROJECT** (April 28, 2004)
8. Discussion of term projects and course summary and evaluations. (May 5, 2004)

### **Resources**

**Text** Annual Editions: Education 04/05; Dushkin, McGraw-Hill

Readings will be assigned from daily newspapers, handouts, web sites and additional relevant materials throughout course.

Parts of four videos will be shown.

### **Assessment**

Class participants will be evaluated on (a) attendance, participation in class discussions, group activities and other in-class assignments; (b) class presentation on a historical figure in education; (c) written activities regarding newspaper and/or web sites and/or a report from a BOE meeting; (d) SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF MAJOR TERM PROJECT

Specific assessment items include but are not limited to:

- 1) Reading and discussion of all materials and recommended readings. Exploring a variety of web sites and an intensive use of the world wide web and e-mail.
- 2) Attendance at 7 out of 8 sessions in order to be eligible for highest grade. If a second class must be missed, student would have the option of making up that session when the course is offered in the fall to be eligible for highest grade, or withdrawing.
- 3) Detailed oral presentation of an historical figure pertaining to educational issues.
- 4) Collection of news articles for a three-four week period and completion of 3 out of 4 of the following projects:
  - a) one page single newspaper article issues paper
  - b) second one page single newspaper article issues paper
  - c) two page trend paper on collection of newspaper articles
  - d) surfing and listing twenty educational web sites that you find helpful.

or
- 4a) a) one page single newspaper article issue paper  
and  
b) attend and report (one page ) on Board of Education meeting of your choosing
- 5) Major course project that involves the development of an issue, review of literature, discussion and analysis, and recommendation for future study of that issue.
- 6) Class activities include:
  - a) Large and small group discussions
  - b) Ongoing newspaper activity

- c) Lecture/presentation on a variety of topics and issues
- d) Reacting and responding to classmates' oral presentations
- e) Viewing of portions of several videos

### **ANNUAL EDITIONS, EDUCATION 04/05; MCGRAW HILL/DUSHKIN**

Text will not be available until late December 2003 and specific assignments will be included in packet on first night of class.

### **NEWS ANALYSIS**

The purpose of the News Analysis assignments is to increase awareness of current events and issues relevant to education.

I. On-Going Newspaper Assignment: Read and clip articles from one daily newspaper about issues pertaining to education. Record the name of paper, date and page number of article. Clip articles through week 5. Bring previous weeks' collection to class prepared to discuss.

II. Article Analysis: Select two (2) major articles from your newspaper clippings to analyze in depth. Submit a one-page analysis on each article which addresses each point below. Due: week 2-4

- a. Identify the article by newspaper name, date, title, and page number.
- b. Describe the article's content.
- c. Describe how schools currently address the topic, especially schools not mentioned in the article (you may consult other sources).
- d. Speculate on how schools might need to change in order to fully respond to the issues raised by the article.
- e. Evaluate the national priority of this topic.
- f. What are the editor's or writer's biases in the article? Support your observations by citing word choices in the headline or article, style of reporting, placement of the article, etc.

III. Patterns of Current Issues: After three weeks of clipping articles, review the material you have collected and submit an analytical summary (two pages) addressing the points below. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO TURN IN ARTICLES**

- a. Name at least 2 but no more than 3 major issues relevant to education covered in the material you collected. Explain how you decided these issues were major by citing the frequency of coverage, length of articles, or by describing the depth and balance of the reporting.
- b. Describe what kind of image of education the newspaper is projecting by the coverage of these major issues.
- c. What recommendations for action can you suggest for an individual to create a greater impact on information the public receives about these issues? What recommendation can you suggest for a school or school district?

IV. List of Web Sites: Produce a list of 20 education web sites that you have explored and find valuable. Beside their www address, give a very brief description of the content. Do not include more than 5 sites mentioned in class!

V. Attend And Report on Board of Education Meeting: Attend a meeting in a district of your choice and write a one page analysis of two issues discussed and your impressions of

professionalism/understanding/communication/interaction among board members, staff and audience.  
DO THREE OUT OF FOUR FROM #II/III/IV OR DO ONE #II AND #V

### **GUIDELINES: HISTORICAL FIGURES PRESENTATIONS**

The purpose of this assignment is to explore the biography and issues faced by historical figures in education. The assignment involves an oral presentation and a one page outline based on library and web research. The steps below will help in preparing the reports.

1. Select one historical figure from the list provided by the instructor.
2. Find and review material about your historical figure. Use any reference materials including biographies, original writings of the historical figure and histories of education.
3. Review the individual's life for information pertinent to educational issues dealt with by that person in his/her time period. Use the following questions as guidelines:
  - a. What are the important factors in this person's life?
  - b. What was the nature of the national debate on educational and other important issues of that time and what was the historical figure's involvement?
  - c. Why was this person's work on the issues significant then and now?
4. Speculate on the following questions. (Note that these questions are inferential, and you may not find answers to them in your materials.)
  - a. What evidence of this historical figure's work do you see in today's education?
  - b. Identify one or more contemporary educational issue similar to issues faced by this historical figure. Speculate on how your historical figure would respond to these current issues.
  - c. In what ways are the characteristics of contemporary American education (or culture) similar to and different from the educational (or societal) context during the period of this historical figure?
5. Prepare the presentation. Be imaginative about the presentation format, but also be sure (a) the format effectively communicates your material, (b) it is interesting to the class, (c) you have a one page outline with copies for each class member, and (d) that you keep within a 15-minute time limit.

Name of Historical Figure you selected: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

## GUIDELINES FOR TERM PROJECT

The term project gives you the opportunity to explore an issue in education which interests you. The term project should take the form of a research paper, i.e., an in-depth analysis of a specific question or issue, using books, journal articles, web sites and other materials. Use the guidelines below for selecting a topic and organizing your report.

1. Select a topic. Preferably, write it in question form. Be specific in your topic selection so that the issue is not too vague, and yet, find a way to state your topic so it may apply to various situations. In other words, the topic must be broad enough to cover a variety of situations and be generalized, but narrow enough to be do-able in an eight week course. By the same token, if it is too broad, the data overload will doom you and if too narrow, there may not be sufficient data from which to draw your research. The topic may be a current, historical, or philosophical issue relevant to the field of education.
2. Develop a reading list on the topic. Include books, journal articles, and information from the world wide web. Various bibliographies and ERIC CD-ROM from the library will assist you in finding relevant materials. Use the content from the original articles not just the summaries or abstracts.
3. Follow the outline below. The paper should be a maximum of 13-15 pages. It should be typed (word-processed!), double spaced with a minimum of 12 point type face.

### OUTLINE OF TERM PROJECT

- A. Semantic web (visual network) of the ideas/contents of project (1 page)
- B. Introduction (up to 1 page)
  1. Describe your topic/question.
  2. Rationale: Why is this topic personally compelling to you? Why is the topic important to the field of education?
  3. Nature of the controversy: Describe the debate regarding your topic and state the pros and cons.
- C. The Literature Review (about 5 pages)
 

Describe the viewpoints on your question from the literature you reviewed. Limit the review to points relevant to your topic. You should organize your literature review in some consistent fashion , e.g., themes, sources, authors, historical time periods, pro versus con, etc. The purpose is to have some logical structure to reporting the different sources you use. Though you may include more sources in your bibliography than cited or quoted, only do a lengthy literature review on those portions of the books or article that relate directly to your topic.
- D. Critique and discussion (4-7 pages, total)
  1. Personal analysis and synthesis: Describe your personal view or position on

the issue after doing this study. What aspects of the literature review helped to change or strengthen your views.

2. Link the historical issues and historical figures discussed in class with your topic where they naturally fit. This should be two to four references and only about one page of the discussion. Don't force it; if it is not clear, don't do it!

E. Recommendations and Conclusions (1-2 pages)

Based on your study, what do you see as the future of this topic and what recommendations do you make for yourself, other educators, educational systems, and other persons of influence?

F. Bibliography: List of sources and materials used. (1-2 pages)

G. Optional: Any appendices if necessary or appropriate that would include diagrams, charts, etc.

Note: The total paper should probably be between 10-15 pages without the web, bibliography or any appendices or indices. Much shorter and discussion and research may not be complete. Much longer and it may be too rambling and shotgunish.

Note II: Grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and accurate reference citations are very important. Be sure to proofread and seek help in editing.

### **FINAL PROJECTS**

If the final major project is turned in by week 7 (April 28, 2004), the graded, annotated paper with grading rubric will be returned on week 8. If the paper is turned in on week 8 (May 5, 2004), it must be accompanied by a SASE.

Papers will not be available from the School of Education Office.

### **OTHER NOTES**

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.  
Regular attendance and participation are required

In the event of hazardous weather conditions, the following radio stations will announce school closing information for Webster University: WIL 92.3 FM, Y98 98.1 FM, KMOX 1120 AM, WRTH 1430 AM, KTRS 550 AM, AND TV Channels 2, 4, 5, and 30