

**Webster University**

**Course Syllabus**

**EDUC 5220.02**

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Course Number

**Dr. Peggy Holton-Hall**

Instructor

314-469-6363

**Contemporary Educational Issues**

Course Title

**Summer 2004**

term

**3**

credit hours

**WEBG**

site

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to educational foundations and will provide an overview of important educational topics past and current. The major goal is to identify and analyze educational issues through reading, writing, discussing, and presenting ideas in oral and written form. The course will explore relationships between current issues and historical perspectives, philosophical theories, and sociologic influences. Class participants will utilize higher level thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as well as skills of listening to and considering various points of view.

**Learning Outcomes and Related Missouri Standards**

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 and 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, and collaborate with classmates on assigned tasks, MoStep 1.2.1.2, 1.2.2.3, 1.2.7.1, 1.2.9.1, 1.2.10.1

**Topical Overview, Activities, and Readings** (subject to change)

**Week 1. June 1, 2004**

Introduction, expectations, overview of course; effective discussion strategies; developmental discussion; perspectives on a current issue; discussion of news articles; historical figures selection.

**DUE:** selection of historical figure (in class)

**Week 2. June 8, 2004**

Education in Colonial America and the Revolutionary Era; relevance to current issues; group discussion of news articles; resource exploration; library research orientation.

**DUE:** Read Gutek chapters 1 & 2.

**IN PROGRESS:** newspaper assignment

term project topic under consideration

**Week 3. June 15, 2004**

The Common School; alternative education; The Changing Landscape of U.S. Education; Gallup Poll; group discussion of readings and articles; individual reports.

**DUE:** Read Gutek chapters 3 & 4  
term project topic approved

**IN PROGRESS:** newspaper assignment  
article analyses  
trends/patterns of current issues

**Week 4. June 22, 2004**

American Higher Education and Teacher Education; school culture and climate; school safety; school violence; group discussion of readings and articles; individual reports.

**DUE:** Read Gutek chapter 5 & 6.  
Read assigned articles.  
Newspaper assignment is due.  
Two article analyses are due.

**IN PROGRESS:** Trends paper

**Week 5. June 29, 2004**

Education reform; school improvement; accountability; standards and assessment; group discussion of readings and articles; individual reports

**DUE:** Read Gutek chapter 7.

**IN PROGRESS:** Trends paper

**Week 6. July 6, 2004.**

Education reform; Effective Schools; accountability; standards and assessment; group discussion of readings and articles; individual reports.

**DUE:** Read Gutek **ch. 9** & pp. 229-233 “A Nation at Risk”& pp. 315-318 “Effective Schools.”  
Trends paper is due.

**IN PROGRESS:** term paper research

**Week 7. July 13, 2004**

The Recent Past; desegregation; diversity; poverty; group discussion of readings and articles; individual reports.

**DUE:** Read Gutek **ch. 8** & pp. 299-302, *Brown vs. Board of Education*.

**IN PROGRESS:** term paper research

**Week 8. July 20, 2004.**

Legal issues; special education; current trends; looking ahead; teaching as a profession; discussion of term projects; course summary.

**DUE:** Read Gutek chapter 10.  
Term paper is due.

## **Resources**

**Required text:** Gutek, G.L., An Historical Introduction to American Education. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1991. Supplemental readings will be assigned from library materials, newspapers, journals, handouts, and other relevant materials.

### **Audio visual and other resources used by Instructor (not required for students)**

Annual Editions Education 03/04, Education Week, Educational Leadership, “Eyes on the Prize” video, Ruby Payne audiotape.

### **Assessment** (460 points possible)

Class participants will be evaluated on:

1. Class attendance, preparation, and participation, including reading and discussion of all assigned materials = 40 points
2. Oral presentation of an historical figure pertinent to education issues = 50 points
3. Ongoing newspaper assignment = 35 points
4. Two article analyses = 80 points (40 points each)
5. Trends paper = 55 points
6. Term project = 200 points

Deductions will be taken for late assignments.

Attendance at 7 of the 8 sessions is necessary in order to complete course requirements.

**Grades in the M.A.T. program** are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, I, and W; or CR, NC, I, and W. Grades reflect the following standards:

A, A-	superior graduate work
B+, B, B-	satisfactory graduate work
C	marginal graduate work
CR	satisfactory graduate work (the equivalent of B- or better)
NC	unsatisfactory graduate work
I	incomplete
W	withdrawn from course

### **Supplements**

Outlines/requirements for the following tasks are included in this syllabus:

- (1) News Analysis, (2) Historical Figures Presentation, (3) Term Project

## (1) NEWS ANALYSIS

The news analysis assignments are designed to:

- increase awareness of current events and issues relevant to education,
- encourage analysis of events, issues, and trends relevant to education,
- examine news media coverage of events and issues in education.

**A. Collect articles.** From newspapers or news media, read and collect **15-20 articles** about issues pertaining to education. Organize into a notebook, binder, scrapbook, etc. On **1-2** sheets of paper, record the following:

1. your name
2. your sources - names of newspapers or news media
3. dates of monitoring
4. total number of articles pertaining to education
5. list of all educational issues addressed in your articles
6. Narrative: Can you link any of these issues with any historical issues from readings and/or class discussion? (Hint: “No” would not be a good answer to this question!) Give evidence from the articles and readings/class discussions to support the “links.” It is expected that you will be able to link 2-3 issues in the articles with one or more historical issues.
7. Include a reference page citing all articles collected. Use APA format.

**DUE: Week 4.** Be prepared to share and discuss your findings. (35 points)

**B. Analyze two articles.** Select 2 **articles** from your newspaper clippings to analyze in depth. Submit a **one-page** (double-spaced) analysis on **each article**, and address each point below.

1. Identify the article by publication, date, title, and page number.
2. Summarize the article content.
3. Describe how schools (other than those in the article) currently address the topic.
4. Speculate on how schools might need to change in order to fully respond to the issues raised by the article. Give rationale for your speculation.
5. Evaluate the national priority of this topic. Cite evidence to support.
6. Evaluate the reporting. Is there evidence of balanced reporting? Can you cite bias and/or faulty reasoning by the writer? Support your observations by citing word choices, style of reporting, placement of the article, etc.

**DUE: Week 4.** Be prepared to share and discuss your findings. (40 points each)

**C. Analyze one trend of current issues.** After collecting all of the articles in assignment A (above), review the material you have collected, and submit an analytical summary (2 pages total) of **one important issue** that you identify from your articles. Address the points below:

1. Name **1 major issue** relevant to education covered in the material you collected.
  - a. Briefly summarize the issue.
  - b. Explain your rationale for selecting this issue by citing the frequency of coverage, length of articles, depth and balance of reporting, etc.
2. Analyze the coverage.
  - a. Describe what kind of image of education the news media is projecting by their coverage of this major issue.
  - b. Give evidence from the articles to support your contention.
3. Recommendations
  - a. What recommendations for action can you suggest for an individual to create a greater impact on information the public receives about this issue?
  - b. What recommendations can you suggest for a school staff?

- c. What recommendations can you suggest for a school district?  
4. Include the same reference page from newspaper assignment A (above).

**DUE: Week 6.** Be prepared to share and discuss your findings. (55 points)

## **(2) HISTORICAL FIGURE PRESENTATION**

The purposes of this assignment are:

- to explore the biography of and issues faced by significant historical figures in education,
- to determine their contributions to education,
- to make connections with current educational issues.

The assignment involves an oral presentation and a one-page outline based on research. The steps below will help in preparing the report.

1. Select one historical figure from the list provided by the Instructor (Week 1).
2. Find and review material about your figure. Use any reference materials including biographies, original writings by the historical figure, and histories of education. Develop a reference list using APA format.
3. Study 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 were the important factors in this person's life?
  - b. What was the nature of the national debate on education, and what were other important issues of that time?
  - c. What was the involvement of the historical figure in education and/or national issues?
  - d. Why was this person's work significant then, and why is it significant today?
4. Speculate on the following questions. (Note that these questions are inferential, thus you may not find answers to them in your materials.)
  - a. What evidence of this historical figure's work/influence do you see in education today?
  - b. Identify one or more contemporary educational issues similar to issues faced by this historical figure. Speculate on how your historical figure would respond to this (these) current issue(s). Give reasons/evidence to support your conclusions.
  - 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. Summarize using any personal understandings you may have reached after studying this person.
6. In preparing your presentation, be creative with the format. Do not read your report to the class.

### **Be sure that:**

- (a) the format of your presentation effectively communicates your materials,
- (b) it is interesting to the class,
- (c) you have a one-page outline and reference list with copies for each class member, and
- (d) you keep within the 15-minute time limit.

There will be peer review as well as the Instructor's evaluation of each presentation.

### **(3) TERM PROJECT**

The term project gives you the opportunity to explore an educational issue of interest to you. The 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 resources. Use the guidelines below for selecting a topic and organizing your report.

#### **Guidelines for term project**

**1. Select a topic and develop a research question.** Be specific in your topic selection so that the issue is not vague, yet may apply to various situations. In other words, the topic must be broad enough to cover a variety of situations and be generalizable, but narrow enough to be accomplished in an eight week course. A topic that is too broad may result in data overload, while one that is too narrow may yield insufficient data from which to draw your research. The topic may be a current, historical, or philosophical issue relevant to the field of education. The Instructor must approve the topic and research question by week 3.

**2. Develop a reading list on the topic.** Include books, journal articles, and information from the world-wide web. Various bibliographies and ERIC CIJE (Current Index to Journal in Education) in the library will assist you in finding relevant materials. Use the content from the original articles (full text), not summaries or abstracts. (See <http://library.webster.edu/database.htm>.) Include current and historical sources.

**3. Format** – The paper should be a total of 12-15 pages in length excluding title page and reference pages. It should be typed (word processor), double-spaced with 12-point standard font, 1-inch margins on all sides, and stapled. (No plastic covers, no faxed papers, no e-mail papers). Type in headings for each section (e.g. Introduction, Review of the Literature, etc.) of the paper.

#### **Outline of Term Project**

**A. Graphic organizer** (semantic web) of the content of the project (1 page).

**B. Introduction** (1-2 pages)

1. Describe your topic and research question.
2. Rationale: Why is this topic compelling? Why is the topic important to the field of education?
3. Nature of the controversy: Describe the debate regarding your topic, and state the various opinions.

**C. Review of the Literature** (5-7 pages)

From the literature review, describe the viewpoints on your question. Limit the review to points relevant to your topic. Organize your literature review in some consistent fashion, e.g. themes, sources, historical time periods, pro versus con, etc.

**D. Critique and Discussion (4-6 pages)**

1. Analysis and synthesis:

- Analyze the content of the Literature Review.
- Synthesize a position on the issues based on your study.
- Cite evidence/examples from the research to support your thinking.

2. Link the historical issues and historical figures discussed in class with your topic where they naturally fit. This should be two to four links and should comprise only one page of the discussion.

**E. Conclusions and Recommendations (1-2 pages)**

1. Based on your study, what conclusions can you draw?
2. Answer your research question, citing evidence from your study.
3. What recommendations can you make for educators, educational systems, and other persons of influence?

**F. Bibliography** (1-2 pages) of at least 10 sources including books, periodicals, historical research, and current research. Use APA format.

**G. Optional:** Any appendices, if necessary or appropriate, including diagrams, charts, etc.

**Note:** Grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, spelling, and accurate reference citations are very important. Be sure to proofread and edit.

**Additional Information Concerning Final Projects**

The term paper is **due week 8, July 20, 2004**. You have several options:

- a. If you would like to have your graded paper mailed to you, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope **with sufficient postage**.
- b. If you do not wish to have your paper returned but would like a postcard with final grades mailed to you, please provide a stamped, self-addressed postcard.
- c. You may elect to wait for the university grade report.

**Note: Papers will not be available for pick-up from the School of Education Office.**

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.

Regular class attendance is required. Missing more than 1 class will result in withdrawal from the course.

**Inclement Weather:** 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.