

SED 561: Sociocultural Theory, Education Policy, and Pedagogy

Wednesdays 4:00 – 6:50 • HBS 212

Fall 2017

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Catalog Description

In this course, students examine the social and cultural construction of schooling, and the implications of multiculturalism, school structure and educational policy.

Expanded Description

Teaching is a political act. What we teach and what we don't teach, what we say and what we don't say, what we do and what we don't do impacts the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. We teach in the context of a social and cultural terrain that is bumpy with power and difference. Unequal relations around race, class, sexuality, ability, gender and the like enter our teaching spaces.

As teachers, educational theorist [Peter McLaren](#) suggests,

...we must begin candidly and critically to face our society's complicity in the roots and structures of inequality and injustice. It means, too, that as teachers we must face our own culpability in the reproduction of inequality in our teaching, and that we must strive to develop a pedagogy equipped to provide both intellectual and moral resistance to oppression, one that extends the concept of pedagogy beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills and the concept of morality beyond interpersonal relations (29).

This course will begin to unpack the social and cultural contexts of education and explore how these contexts inflect our own classroom practices. The first part of the course will lay out some theoretical tools to help us frame this analysis, and the second part of the course will offer case studies for us to examine using these tools. Throughout the course, you will also be exploring your own classrooms as texts using the lenses of power and difference.

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework of the FSEHD

As this course is intended to explore the social and cultural dimensions of schooling in a democratic society, it is ideally placed to express the various components of the FSEHD conceptual framework. Specifically, it works to promote *reflection* as participants examine the influence of cultural experiences on how they interact with students, families and colleagues in their own work settings. Also, through the course assignments, participants will gain practice in *planning* for cultural change in their work environments and will be encouraged to act on those plans. Participants in this class will gain *knowledge* related to the theoretical understandings of the role of schooling, explore issues related to the *diversity* of American public schooling and American society, enhance their capabilities as *professionals* to work inclusively with diverse populations, and practice *pedagogical* strategies aimed at increasing inclusive teaching practices.

Course Objectives:

Through the active engagement in course activities, students will:

- Build a cohort community for the ASTL program
- Engage many of the taken-for-granted assumptions that structure a mainstream “common sense” about race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age and status.
- Explore the social and cultural contexts that inform our dominant modes of understanding the American school
- Acquire an understanding of culture as foundational knowledge for planning, action and reflection in teaching and assessment necessary in order to provide equal educational opportunities for all students in your classroom and school.
- Gain proficiency with blogging as an educational tool for personal and professional use.

Texts

Rather than having you buy any books for this class, I have linked most of the readings here in this syllabus. Please make sure to bring them to class in hard copy or on a laptop each week. (NOTE: If you are reading online, please make sure to bring typed or written notes to class as well, or use PDF notetaking software in Adobe Acrobat or SKIM.)

Basic Expectations

As the first course in your ASTL program, this course is an introduction to the foundational ideas at the center of our program. It revolves around traditional texts (articles and chapters) that will help us explore *theory* as it relates to classroom *practice*. Therefore, reading carefully and preparing in advance to talk about these texts is central to building a successful seminar.

This course relies on your active participation both in and outside of class. I expect you to read all required texts before coming to class each week, and to be prepared to discuss them. While this is a process we often strive to teach our students (be they elementary, secondary or college students), I have found that it is one that we often take for granted as graduate students. Explicitly, it is a three step process:

Reading:

Take notes when you read — underline, highlight, write in the margins. Note the key concepts, unfamiliar vocabulary, points of confusion/frustration, “ah-ha” moments... strive to see the details and the big picture.

Preparing:

In addition to these active reading strategies, you must also prepare to discuss the texts in class. Your blogs will help you do this in an explicit way. I have structured a format for you, but as the semester progresses, you may alter that somewhat in order to find a strategy that works best for you. These blog entries are more for you than for me, but I will ask you to use them in class so please have access on a laptop, ipad or phone or bring a hard copy to class.

Engaging:

This class will cover what many would call “controversial” or “heated” issues. I hope and expect that we will have lively debate and discussion about how the texts we read represent and resist the efforts we all engage in our respective work with young people. You may not agree with every author we read, and my job is not to convert you to these social justice perspectives. But I do expect that you will come to class ready to engage with the texts and with each other. This means listening to each other, and taking risks to share your thoughts (even when you can only articulate your ambivalence or confusion).

Grading Criteria and Assignments

Attendance and Participation	20%
Choices in Context	15%
Blogging — Weekly Talking Points	20%
Seminar Facilitation and Reflection	15%
Final Project	15%
Pecha Kucha Presentation	15%

Choices in Context (Due Sept 6 and Oct 18)

As we move through the semester, I will be asking you to think about your own classroom/work space in relation to the texts we read. Therefore, this assignment is to explore some demographic data about your school and use it to contextualize the teaching and learning in your classroom.

- PART I: At the beginning of the semester, I will ask you to look up some **quantitative data** about the demographics of your school. (Rhode Island teachers can draw from [InfoWorks](#); anyone who works outside of a school should talk to me about how to find data on your site.) Explore the racial-ethnic composition, the socio-economic status, the languages represented, the special needs population, the demographics of the faculty/staff, and any other factors you think might be relevant. In a page or so, make a *bulleted list* of your school info. Think of this part of the assignment as a page of “notes” to paint a picture of your basic demographics.
- PART II: Offer some **analysis** about how your teaching/work in this space reflects these demographics. I want you to look at the choices you make as a teacher and reflect on how (if at all) your choices about teaching explicitly reflect the population you serve. [Windows and Mirrors](#). Do you see your population reflected in the space, climate, curriculum and practices in your school/classroom? (For example, if your school is 48% Latino, do notes go home in Spanish? Are there posters with non-white people on the walls? Any nods to cultural practices, holidays or events that specifically cater to a Spanish-speaking community? Or if your school is 98% white, how is that reflected as well?) Connect to our course texts wherever relevant and useful in your analysis.

You should write up your Part II analysis in narrative form, approximately 7-10 pages. I suggest that the paper have 5 sections:

1. Demographics (quantitative data from Part I with expanded narrative)
2. School/Classroom Space (physical space, furniture, technology, decorations)
3. Climate (tone, classroom community, color, sound)
4. Curriculum (texts, assessment tools, technology, manipulatives)
5. Practices (daily routines, discipline plans, “teachable moments”)

Please include PART I of this assignment when you turn in Part II.

An A-range paper will:

- Include school demographic information including racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic data
- Provide rich descriptions of your actual school, classroom and daily practices (this can read like stories or vignettes that you share about your teaching)
- Refer to course texts/themes to anchor your analysis
- Use an “I” voice of self-reflection to analyze how you do and do not address the cultural needs of your students
- Engage the reader (me) with strong writing conventions and sophisticated, creative flair
- Try not to exceed ten pages

ASSIGNMENTS (con’t →)

Talking Points: Blogging Your Way to Understanding (due each week)

On the first night of class (or at home the first week), you will create your own blog at a site called www.blogger.com. I have posted full instructions on how to do this on my blog that you can find at:

www.SED561Fall17.blogspot.com

Beginning in the 2nd week of class, you will prepare brief “Talking Points” on the reading assignments each week. You will post each assignment as a unique entry on your personal blog. This is not a busy work assignment; rather it has three goals in mind. First, it will help you become familiar with a form of technology that could be useful to you in your own classroom. Second, it is designed to structure how you prepare for class each week, so that our discussions in class are rigorous and rich. And third, our class blogs create a communal intellectual space where we can engage around the issues of this course outside of the meeting time. You should post the assignment before midnight on the Sunday night *before* class each week they are due (so that your peers will have 24 hrs to read your post before class). Each post should be about 250-500 words.

At the end of the semester, a complete blog will include *at least* the following components:

Each week, you must include the following four things:

1) Name of Author and Text

2) Several paragraphs of response to the text.

NOTE: As graduate students, I want to give you the freedom to engage with the text in a way that feels appropriate and useful to you. Stay close to the text, using direct quotations and references whenever you can. Don’t get distracted by personal stories (but don’t be afraid to connect the text to your life when relevant!) Your goal here is to use this blogging space to make sense of the article and explain what you understand and what you don’t understand about the text so that we can have a rich conversation in class. I offer you the following prompts to use to guide your writing each week, though these are not required.

- ARGUMENT: Describe the author’s argument in a short statement that begins, “This author (name) argues that....” Follow it with a paragraph explaining that argument in your own words. The argument is not a summary of ideas but a short explanation of the author’s most significant contribution or idea. What is his/her main point here?
- QUOTES: Choose 3 quotes from the text and explain what they mean and their relevance to the text.
- CONNECTIONS: Use the reading to make connections to two other readings we have done in class. Discuss the texts in relation to one another.
- HYPERLINKS: Discuss the issues the author raises in the text in relation to real world concerns by creating links to articles, videos, and other websites that illuminate the issues at hand. Discuss both the text and the hyperlink in detail to fully explain the connections.
- EXTENDED COMMENTS: Use someone else’s blog post as the center of your own. Discuss their points and engage in dialogue with that person and the text at hand. Feel free to agree or disagree with the points your peer raises. (Make sure to leave that person a comment so they know you wrote about them!)

3) Hypertextual components in each post.

A blog post is not a Microsoft word document. Use the technology that is available to you by linking your text to relevant resources – articles, youtube, educational resources, definitions, etc. You must include at least one hyperlink and one visual element (picture or video) in each post. I can show you how to do this in class if you are having trouble.

4) Comments for your peers.

In order to make the blogs interactive, please read and comment on your peers’ blogs each week. You can find all blogs listed on mine. Choose at least three to comment on each week -- about 3-4 sentences or more each week (and try to hit everyone at least once over the course of the term.)

Your complete blog will be assessed using the following criteria:

Grade	Engagement with Text	Connections	Personal Thoughts	Technology	Overall
A/A-	Exceptional thought and effort; Indicates careful reading practices and includes specific notes from the text. Shows consistent engagement over the whole semester and improvement over time.	Reflects your struggle to make sense of the readings <i>in relation to</i> the course themes and concepts, citing other course authors and texts as they relate.	Includes evidence of your own thought process, questions to consider, and personal wonderings.	Blog is visually appealing and easy to read. Works to use all aspects of the technology including posting of links and other resources. Uses at least 1 external link in each post.	All required blogs posted.
					At least 3 comments each week are posted.
					All posts are posted by the midnight deadline on the date due.
B/B+	Moderate thought and effort; Reflects general engagement with the text but lacks specific details that indicate careful reading. Little improvement over time.	Includes few if any connections to other texts.	Little evidence of your own thought process.	Blog is functional and covers the basic materials. Moderate attempts to take advantage of the blog technology. Uses at least 1 external link in most posts.	All but one required blogs posted.
					At least 3 comments are posted most weeks.
					Most posts are posted by the midnight deadline on the date due.
B- or lower	Very little thought or effort. General notes without any reflection or specific citations from the text.	Does not include connections to other course themes and texts that would indicate a consist understanding.	Notes seem disconnected from any personal thought process, and thus don't show how you personally make sense of the materials.	Difficult to read. Does not use any of the technology options available. Blog serves as a mere list of text assignments. Rarely uses external links in posts.	More than 2 missing or late postings or comments. General lack of attention to assignment goals and deadlines.

Seminar Facilitation (sign up for an assigned date in class)

Beginning Oct 18, every member of this class will lead the seminar discussion on one day, either alone or with a partner. On the week that you choose, you must come prepared to lead the class in *discussion of the text* at hand. Handouts, activities, multi-media and other aids are encouraged, but remember that your goal is to help us work through and understand the *text* as well as the relevant context. You should plan to talk with me in the weeks prior to organize the content, pace and activities. Use everything you know about good teaching — set clear objectives for the lesson, engage us as active learners, stay focused on the content and context, plan for some way to assess what we know. On that week, you do not need to post on your blog about the text prior to the discussion (unless posting helps you organize your thoughts, or guide our discussion;) however, after your facilitation day, please post a 250-500 word blog post reflection about your experience.

Final Project (due last night of class)

For your final project, I would like you to design an action plan to help you apply our discussions of privilege, power and difference to your own classroom/school. This can take many forms — large or small. You can write this up as a traditional paper, create a curriculum unit, develop a statement of pedagogy, plan for school-wide efforts, revise your parent communication strategies, design a professional development workshop... the possibilities are endless.

*You will present an overview of what you have learned in the class (as the context for your Final Project) on the last night of class using a [Pecha Kucha](#) format. More details to follow!

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rhode Island College is committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with disabilities. Students with any special needs should make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible.

*The Student Life Office (CL 127 — 456-8061) is also available to you as a resource.
I will make all appropriate accommodations to ensure that this is a valuable class for you.*

Course Schedule

Part I Situating Theory and Context

August 30

In Class:

Introduction to the course and each other

Set up personal blogs

September 6

In Class:

Readings Due:

Assignment:

Assignment:

FOOD:

Privilege, Power and Difference

Leslie Grinner's S.C.W.A.A.M.P.

[Johnson](#), from *Privilege, Power and Difference*

[Blog](#) post #1 on Johnson (due Monday by midnight)

Choices in Context demographic data (part I) due in class

Dr. Bogad

September 13

Readings Due:

In Class:

Assignment:

FOOD:

The Culture of Power

[Delpit](#), "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children"

[Two Chicken Dishes: Do the Spices Vary?](#)

[Blog](#) post #2 on Delpit (due Monday by midnight)

Jackie Perry

September 20

Readings Due:

In Class:

Assignment:

Who Are Youth?

[Oredola and YIA](#), "In a World Where Youth Hold the Power"

YOUTH-LED SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISM IN RHODE ISLAND

Lecture in GAIGE 200, 4:00-6:00pm

[Blog](#) post #3 on Oredola and YIA (due Monday by midnight)

September 27

Readings Due:

In Class:

Assignment:

FOOD:

Rethinking Colorblindness, Rethinking Black Lives Matter

[Armstrong and Wildman](#), "Colorblindness is the New Racism;" ["All Lives Matter;"](#)

[The Ferguson Syllabus](#) (skim)

[Talking and Listening Inventory](#); [Connections](#)

[Blog](#) post #3 on Armstrong & Wildman and All Lives Matter (due Monday by midnight)

Bianca

October 4

The Problem We All Live With

Readings Due: Listen to Part I (#562): This American Life -- The Problem We All Live With (1 hrs of listening time); Transcript, click [here](#); Optional but good: here is part II (#563) with transcript [here](#)

In Class: [TAL Discussion](#); [Carlos Doesn't Remember](#)

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #4 on The Problem We All Live With (due Monday by midnight)

FOOD: Skeff

October 11

In the Age of Charlottesville... **NOTE: CLASS ENDS @ 5:30**

Readings Due: First, this [SUMMARY](#); then, choose (at least) two of the following texts to help you put all the theory we have been reading into a live context and action.

- a. [7 Ways Teachers \(AND YOUTH WORKERS!\) Can Respond to the Evil of Charlottesville, Starting Now](#) by Xian Franzinger Barrett
- b. [The Dos and Dont's of Talking to Kids of Color About White Supremacy by Hilary Beard](#)
- c. [What Charlottesville means for our Black family by Lori Taliaferro Riddick](#)
- d. [So You Want To Fight White Supremacy by Ijeoma Oluo](#)
- e. [Resisting White Supremacy Can't Happen Without Self-Care by Ebonye Gussine Wilkins](#)
- f. [How Do I Talk to My Five Year Old About White Supremacy](#)
- g. AND VEGAS: [The White Privilege of the Lone Wolf Shooter](#)
- h. AND VEGAS: [Double Standard in Media Portrayal of White Shooters](#)

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #5 on Charlottesville/Vegas texts as they relate to the broad themes we have discussed thus far. What does resistance to white supremacy look like for youth and the adults who work with them? (due Monday by midnight)

FOOD: Carina

Part II:

Case Studies: Seeing with Different Lenses

October 18

Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum

Facilitator: Seth and Chuck

Readings Due: [Finn](#), from *Literacy with an Attitude: Educating Working-Class Children in Their Own Self-Interest* (read preface, 1 and 2; skim 13 and 14); Optional but good: [Check out this video](#) by Dr. Michelle Fine called Off Track about the detracking of a high school English Class.

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #6 on Finn (due Monday by midnight)

Assignment: Choices in Context II due (please attach Part I when you turn this in)

FOOD: BRING YOUR OWN SNACK

October 25

Digital Kids

Facilitator: Bianca and Carina

Readings Due: [Introduction](#) to Rethinking Popular Culture and Media; [Boyd](#), Chapter 7 from It's Complicated (split the class for reading or facilitator decides on text); check out [crowd-sourced document](#) created by SED561 in Fall 2016 on digital tools

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #7 on RS Intro or Boyd (due Monday by midnight)

FOOD: Chris

November 1 **Seeing Queerly**

Facilitator: Jackie and Skeff

Readings Due: [August](#), from *Safe Spaces*; Spend 30-60 minutes on www.GLSEN.org (facilitators will guide our focus here)

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #8 on August and GLSEN

FOOD: Chuck

NOTE: Promising Practices Event

Saturday, November 4

Register online at www.ric.edu/promisingpractices

November 8 **Pecha Kucha and other fun things...**

Readings Due: [My blog post](#) about Pecha Kucha resources

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #10: In a bulleted list, chicken scratch notes that you capture and post, or an informal paragraph, start to brainstorm your final project for this class. How will you bring all the theory we are learning into practice? How do you make this real in your school/classroom? (due Monday by midnight)

FOOD: Dr. Bogad

Notes on Pecha Kucha:

Things that work well	Things to avoid
Why do you do what you do? Technotraditionalist/technoconstructivist Best slides have least text Clear narrative arch (tell a story!) Use the slides to build the story Tell the story first Let the images be real (students, map) "Digital natives," according to Prensky... "As Wesch would concur..." "Reinforced susan patterson's notion that..." "As Wesch would describe..." "As pointed out by Dr. Patterson..."	Try not to read from a script Don't let the slides drive the story Try not to use canned images or quotes Watch your pace... Careful not to just read... Too busy on slides

November 15

Language and Power -- NO CLASS

Readings Due:

[Rodriguez](#), "Aria," [Collier](#), "Teaching Multilingual Children"

Assignment:

[Blog](#) post #9 on both texts (due Monday by midnight); because we are not meeting face to face, please plan to spend about an hour in "comment mode" responding to one another's blogs, asking questions, making connections to other texts, etc.

Meetings with Lesley in HBS 219:

Tuesday, 11/14	Wednesday, 11/15
2:30 3:00 3:45 Carina 4:15 Jackie 4:30	2:45 Skeff 3:15 Bianca 5:00 Chuck 5:30 Chris 6:00 Seth 6:30

November 22

NO CLASS — *Thanksgiving*

November 29

Teachers and Testing Culture

Facilitator: _____ Chris

Readings Due: [Johnson and Richer](#), on PARCC

In Class: Make sure to leave 15 minutes for Skeff's PK

Assignment: [Blog](#) post #11 on Johnson and Richer (due Monday by midnight)

FOOD: Seth

December 6

Pecha Kucha Presentations

Assignment: Final projects due in class

FOOD: Skeff