FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION
FDN 3800-101, 102  Spring 2007

Dr. Gayle M. Turner
Office: 316D Edwin Duncan Hall
Telephone: 262-3103 (However, e-mail contact is quickest and best.)
Office Hours: TBA
Classrooms: EDH 315 TTH 2-4:45 and W 5-9 PM at the Hickory Metropolitan Higher Education Center (HMHEC):
E-mail: gayle@gayleturner.net
Web Site: http://gayleturner.net

“If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Services, 222 D.D. Dougherty, 262-3053/262-3056 (TTY) as early as possible in the term.”

Text and additional required reading:

Suskind, Ron. A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League.

(Selected additional articles will be provided for download or reading on line from the class web site at http://gayleturner.net. The online readings are also required.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will explore the idea that education reflects the wider society in which we live. We will look at schools and classrooms and try to understand how what goes on in schools is related to the values, beliefs and structures of the world outside school walls. During the course we will consider why students succeed or fail at school; the process of tracking and labeling children; what it is that we learn in school—both explicitly and covertly; how factors such as gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation affect our educational experiences. We will also explore what functions are performed by schooling in American society, and how other forms of ‘education’ such as television and advertising influence us.

In looking at these issues, FDN 3800 will draw upon the findings and methods of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, economics, psychology and political science. The form and content of the class is intended to provide a basis for critical analysis of schools within the framework of a commitment to humanistic values. Since all of us are intimately familiar with the process of education and schooling, it is intended that the classes will move frequently between the theoretical and the personal. For this reason, students’ input in the form of questions, comments, and discussion is a vital part of the course. It is hoped that the experience will offer individuals an opportunity to stand back and take a broader look at a part of our world in which we invest so much time and energy.
The course will include lectures, class, and small group discussion. There will be ample room for discussion of readings and lecture materials. In addition, several videos may be shown.

**CENTRAL QUESTIONS**

*(Please see your syllabus for additional topical questions)*

1. What is the purpose of schooling in a democratic society? Is the purpose of teaching the same or different than the purpose of schooling?

2. What characterizes a just society, and what role, if any, must schools play in the pursuit of justice?

3. Why do we ask students to study only certain areas of knowledge, and not others?

4. What were the high and low points of your own schooling? Why did you respond this way? Would you respond differently now?

5. What characterizes a caring relationship? Should teachers be “caring people” vis-à-vis their students, and should schools try to encourage students to develop into caring people?

**COURSE OUTLINE**

*(Note: Weather or other matters may necessitate changes in class meeting dates. Please keep all Tuesday’s and Thursday’s from 2-3:15 PM or 3:30-4:45 PM available for FDN 3800. Though you have this hard copy of the syllabus, you are required to stay up-to-date with your assignments and class meeting dates via the class syllabus at http://gayleturner.net.)*

**A. The Educational Process: Theory and History**

**Jan. 9**

Introduction.

**Jan. 11**

**Key questions:** Why do we have public schools? What kind of power do teachers have in public schools? Where does curriculum come from? What is the difference between the hidden and the overt curriculum?

John Taylor Gatto, “Bitter Lessons: What’s Wrong with American Teachers,” p. 3, or see online documents.
Philip Jackson, “The Daily Grind,” p. 9, or see online documents.
Negative and positive freedom; Bloom's Taxonomy. (See online documents.)

**Jan. 16**

Video: *Remember Mai Lai*

**Jan. 18**

January 16, continued.


B. Education, Social Class, and Equality

Jan. 30  Key questions: How does social class impact educational outcomes? Can negative impacts be avoided? How?

       Video: People Like Us: Social Class in America. See also, online documents.

Feb. 1  Video: People Like Us: Social Class in America, con’t.

       Video: People Like Us: Social Class in America, continued.

       "Growing Good Principals,” from The Charlotte Observer. (See online documents.)

Feb. 13  Adam Gamoran, "Is Ability Grouping Equitable?"(See online documents.)
       North Carolina Middle School Association Research Bulletin on tracking and ability grouping. (See online documents.)
       North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction, "Grouping Practices Research Brief." (See online documents.)
       Video: Inner City Debate Team.

       An interview with history teacher Bill Bigelow. See online documents.

Feb. 20  Stephan Jay Gould on IQ. (See online documents.)

Feb. 22  Video: The American Dream at Groton.

Lisa Delpit, Ebonics and Culturally Responsive Instruction. See online document.

C. Education and Race

March 1  **Key questions:** How does race impact educational outcomes? Can negative impacts be avoided? What connections are there between race and social class?

Additional information from Human Rights Watch. (See online documents.)
Video: *Eyes on the Prize* [VC6675].

Indian Boarding Schools: "I felt as if I were dead and traveling to the Spirit Land". A teacher resource from the Library of Congress. (See online documents.)
Indian Boarding Schools: "The Challenges and Limitations of Assimilation." (See online documents.)
"Appropriate Methods For Teaching About Native American Peoples."(See online documents.)

March 8  Marc Elrich, “The Stereotype Within,” p. 413.

March 12  **No class. Week of ASU Spring Break.**

Video: *A Class Divided*.

D. Education and Sexual Identity

March 22  **Key questions:** What is "sexual identity"? How does schooling affect identity in general, and sexual identity in particular? Can one's sexual identification affect school performance? Why and how?

Angela Phillips, "In the Beginning There are Babies," p. 203.
Michael Kimmel, "What About the Boys?" p. 221.

March 27  Video: *Slim Hopes*.
Bring at least one advertisement to class. It will be used to help us discuss the social construction of gender.

April 12       Video: *The Transgender Revolution*.

E. The Educational Process: Theory and History, Revisited

April 17       Jonathan Kozol, “Great Men and Women,” p. 325. Helen Keller; Rosa Parks. (See online documents.)

April 19       Suskind, *A Hope in the Unseen*. Read the complete book. An interview with Cedric Jennings. (See online documents.)

April 22       **Final Exam due: 5 pm.** Please submit it to me as an email attachment. You can copy and paste it into an email, or attach it to your email as a Microsoft Word document (preferred).

April 30       Monday. FDN 3800-101 Exam Period. Hope Day Potluck, 3-5:30 PM. EDH 315.

April 31       Tuesday. FDN 3800-102 Exam Period. Hope Day Potluck, 3-5:30 PM. EDH 315.

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Reading:** Read each assignment before the date it is scheduled for class discussion.
2. **Class participation and attendance:** The success of the class depends on each student attending all classes, all the time, and on time. It is also critical that you read each assignment prior to class discussion.
3. **Exams:** There will be one exam designed to measure your comprehension of the readings and discussions. You will receive a study guide early in the semester to assist you with preparation for the exam.
4. **On-line discussion forum:** You are required to participate in the on-line discussion forum. “Participation” means that you will begin four threads, and that you will reply to a minimum of twenty. That is, you will have 24 posts at minimum. They must occur throughout the semester.

GRADING

1. **Class participation:** 30 percent. (If you are not in class it makes it very difficult to receive the full 30 percent.)
2. **Discussion forum participation:** 30 percent.
3. **Final (comprehension, with short analytic essays):** 40 percent.

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Special thanks to the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations at UNC-Greensboro for the use of the original description of our work in educational foundations. Revisions are my own.