

## IDS 250: Poverty, Education, and the American Dream in Contemporary Rural America



### Course Syllabus

Instructor: C. Fee

Meeting Time: MWF 11:00-11:50 AM

Meeting Place: Weidensall Hall 401

Office: Breidenbaugh 406

Office Hours: MWF 2:00 PM-2:50 PM, and by appointment

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Home Phone: 717.528.4799 (Call before 10:00 PM)

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Class Text-Blog (Weekly Service Journal:) <http://povertyeducation.blogdrive.com/>

Midterm and Final Video-blogs: <http://povertyeducation.posterous.com/>

### Required Texts:

Gouwens, Judith A. *Migrant Education: A Reference Handbook*. Contemporary education issues. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001.

Kozol, Jonathan. *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2005.

Lang, Kevin. *Poverty and Discrimination*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007.

McCourt, Frank. *Teacher Man: A Memoir*. New York: Scribner, 2005.

Ornstein, Allan C. *Class Counts: Education, Inequality, and the Shrinking Middle Class*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Group, Inc, 2007.

Reimers, Fernando. *Unequal Schools, Unequal Chances: The Challenges to Equal Opportunity in the Americas*. The David Rockefeller Center series on Latin American studies, Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University. David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2000.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Selected videos, including: *Blackboard Jungle*; *Bread and Roses*; *The First Year*; *Grapes of Wrath*; *Harvest of Shame*; *Mi Familia*; *Of Mice and Men*; *Stand and Deliver*; *To Sir, With Love*.

### **Course Description:**

This wide-ranging course explores the relationship between economic and social stability and educational success in contemporary rural America. Through fiction, non-fiction, films, and documentaries, this course tracks educational opportunities for children in poverty, with special attention to immigration history, reality, law, and issues of assimilation. Developed in consultation with a local rural school district and the Center for Public Service, this course complements academic work with service-learning experience, including training for tutoring and a regular tutoring assignment.

The course focuses on how socioeconomic and ethnic diversity within rural American schools may be correlated directly with educational opportunity and achievement, and thus with long-term individual, family, and demographic group economic stability and advancement. In addition, since farm labor in the United States is often migratory and involves many workers from Central America, examination of migrant and Latino cultures will provide areas of particular emphasis of the course.

Topics covered in this class will include: Literacy issues and practices, with some special emphasis on English as a Second Language; educational policies, including No Child Left Behind, disparities in US school-funding and testing institutions, the problems and potential benefits associated with bilingual education, etc.; immigration history, reality, and law, as well as issues of assimilation concerning non-English speaking immigrants; economic opportunity, the decline of agriculture and industry as avenues for individual financial success, and issues of Middle-class assimilation concerning the Anglo rural underclass, etc.; labor law and practices; other topics as they come to light. The readings will be a blend of pertinent policies and critical examinations thereof, non-fiction memoirs and case studies, as well as relevant fiction & film.

### **Course Objectives and General Structure:**

A main goal of the class is for students to recognize the great diversity of socioeconomic and cultural realities which populate the landscape of rural America, and thus to perceive social and economic barriers to educational opportunity that many students may not have realized were prevalent. The readings, assignments, movies, and class discussions will provide the scholarly context for such discoveries, while critical reflection upon the service-learning component may force students to examine assumptions that they might not otherwise even have realized foregrounded their understandings of educational and economic opportunity in the United States.

In addition to the academic coursework, the experiences of the students in the service placements in this course will give them in-depth and hands-on knowledge of some of key components of peace

studies, including how various cultures, constituencies, and communities attempt to negotiate harmonious confluence in a context of limited resources and sometimes wildly divergent needs, expectations, and world views. The justice issues inherent in any study of the disparity of quality and opportunity in the educational system of the United States are manifested in how our schools are funded, how resources are allocated, and how readily factors such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity can be correlated to educational success.

### **Course Service-Learning Component:**

This course is structured around a required regular Service-Learning experience in a local rural school; for most students this will mean a one-hour weekly Tuesday or Thursday afternoon commitment; for those students with irresolvable conflicts, however, alternative arrangements will be pursued. The Service-Learning experience is a crucial component of this class because this course is designed to require students to gather, process, and evaluate information from a variety of sources while also encouraging them to see themselves as active citizens with a responsibility to put the theoretical knowledge that they gather to practical uses; furthermore, the reflective and iterative nature of the course is designed to be cyclical in a sense, in that the students are required to reexamine continually their intellectual and emotive responses to these practical experiences. Thus research complemented by experience interrogated through critical reflection invigorates and enlivens all the components of the course.

The classroom discussion, out-of-class reading and critical thinking assignments, and service-learning components of the course are structured to help students to improve their abilities to process information from a wide variety of sources, including scholarly research, creative modes of expression, and personal interaction with people from diverse backgrounds. The reflective components, moreover, are meant to encourage students to interrogate and ultimately to integrate these diverse resources in vibrant and rigorous ways.

Thus the Service-Learning component provides an opportunity to put to the test some of the theory developed through the academic component; in addition, students concomitantly have the chance to form relationships with people who may have significantly different views of what America is and what it has to offer. In addition, we will strive to examine such experiences in the context of thought-provoking exercises as interactive, electronic journal entries and open-ended class discussions; the reflective assessment of such service-learning activities encourages students to recognize the importance of attempting to transcend the bubble of the dominant culture which so often constrains an elite educational experience at a liberal arts college.

### **Course Evaluation:**

Daily Preparation & Participation:	10%
Weekly Reading Quizzes/In-Class Writing Exercises:	10%
Local Service Activities & Related Weekly Blog Entries:	15%
Three Written Movie Reviews:	15%
Midterm Video-blog Project:	10%
Individual Interview:	10%
Final Video-Blog:	15%
Final Research Project & Research Presentation:	<u>15%</u>
	100%

**\*ALL ASPECTS of this course must be completed in order to pass the course, regardless of the overall percentage earned.\***

**Specific Course Requirements:**

- 1) Weekly blog entries **posted on the class site by each Sunday night at 11:59 PM**. These blog entries should be **250-500 words each**, and should illustrate the student's thoughtful reflection upon her/his tutoring activities the previous week, contextualizing such activities within specific class discussions and readings. These entries are meant to be insightful and articulate, as well as to draw explicitly upon specific aspects of class discussions and readings; moreover, students are reminded that simple spelling and grammar checks are less painful than the humiliation of egregious errors in a public forum.
- 2) Weekly Reading Quizzes and In-Class writing Assignments will be used to ensure comprehension of the material and to generate class discussion.
- 3) Three Movie Reviews: We will arrange screenings of films related to course content every other week; students may make alternative arrangements for viewing the videos on reserve if they cannot make a given viewing. Allowing for the realities of substantial conflicts such as night labs, students are expected to make a particular effort to attend the group screenings of *The First Year* and *Harvest of Shame*, which are the two required Movie Reviews. The third Movie Review may be written about any of the other films on the list, whether or not the student watched that film with the group. These Movie Reviews are to be **1250 words each**, and are to discuss portrayals of and insights to issues related to educational and economic opportunity in the United States. No more than one third of each review may comprise salient plot summary; at least a third should be devoted to a critical analysis of the film's appropriation of the issues involved, and roughly the same proportion should be devoted to contextualizing the film within the milieu of the course readings and service experiences.
- 4) Weekly involvement (20 or more total hours spread over the course of the term) in an instructor-approved program of local tutoring service; for most students this will be a one-hour weekly Tuesday or Thursday afternoon placement at Biglerville Elementary School. Accommodations will be sought for students who have substantial academic conflicts with this primary placement.
- 5) Daily class participation and attendance; completion of all in-class exercises; preparation and active participation during Class Visits by School Administrators, Teachers, and Board Members; regular attendance at evening film screenings (2 or more out of the total of 6, unless the screenings are in conflict with substantial academic obligations.)
- 6) A Midterm Video-blog Project which provides a wider context for the tutoring placement by looking at the placement experience over the course of several weeks and by more formally placing the tutoring experiences in the context of the course reading and discussions. The text of the Midterm Video-blog should be in the form of a short **(1000 words)** research-paper-style write-up of salient academic points in conjunction with the **1-2 minute video component**, which should provide a complementary summary of the student's emotive reaction to the relevant experiences.
- 7) An Individual Interview with a School Administrator, Teacher, or Board Member; the Class Visits might facilitate the choice of whom to interview, and on what topic. One outgrowth of the interview interaction will be a Final Video-blog Project.
- 8) A Final Video-blog Project which contextualizes the Individual Interview by means of a longer **(1500 words)** research paper-style write-up of salient academic points in tandem with a **1-2 minute video summary** of the student's emotive reaction to the focused interview.

- 9) A Final Research Project **(4000 words)** on some issue related to the course, including the process of (a) selecting the topic, (b) sharing an oral presentation **(5 minutes)**, (c) demonstrating research ability in the creation of an annotated bibliography, (d) presentation of an outline with an introductory page. The research which produces the final document will also be foundational to the Educator Interview and the related Final Video-blog. The Final Research Project will be based on the background research for the interview: Each student will identify a significant issue from the reading which that student would like to explore as the subject of the final research project; each interview with a school official will explore the facets of that larger issue which touch upon the specific needs, students, and facilities of the local school district. It is not to be supposed that the student will uncover a totally unsuspected problem and offer a perfect answer, but rather that a student may be able to frame the issue in a helpful way and to offer fruitful avenues for further examination. This is meant to be a collaborative exercise in which the student gains from the expertise of the professional educator involved, and the district gains from the student's close analysis of a particular issue or set of issues which have some bearing upon the district's needs.
- 10) All aspects of this course must be completed in order to pass the course.

**Preparation & Participation:**

Each student is expected to be present, prepared, and ready to participate in each and every class period.

**This course has been approved to fulfill the Domestic/Conceptual Diversity Requirement and counts towards the Peace and Justice Minor.**

**Syllabus and Schedule Subject to Change**

## IDS 250: Poverty, Education, and the American Dream in Contemporary Rural America



### Course Schedule

#### I. So You Think You Can Teach? The Challenges of Contemporary Classrooms

[Weeks 1-2: January 15-28, 2010]

##### Reading:

- McCourt, Frank. *Teacher Man: A Memoir*. New York: Scribner, 2005.

##### Film:

- MOVIE ONE: *The First Year* (WEEK 2)

#### II. Who has Access to the American Dream? Confronting Contemporary Educational Inequities

[Weeks 3-7: January 29-March 5, 2010]

##### Reading:

- Kozol, Jonathan. *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2005. (WEEK 3)
- Lang, Kevin. *Poverty and Discrimination*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007. (WEEKS 4-5)
- Ornstein, Allan C. *Class Counts: Education, Inequality, and the Shrinking Middle Class*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Group, Inc, 2007. (WEEKS 6-7)

##### Films:

- MOVIE TWO: *To Sir, With Love* (WEEK 4) \*Possible Alternate Film: *The Blackboard Jungle*\*

- MOVIE THREE: *Stand and Deliver* (WEEK 6)

**Assignments:**

- MOVIE REVIEW DUE: *The First Year* (Friday of WEEK 4)
- FINAL RESEARCH TOPIC CHOSEN (Friday of WEEK 7)

**Special Note:**

- March 6-14, 2010: SPRING BREAK

**III. Why Come to the Land of Plenty? Migrant Experiences and Educational Opportunity**

**[Weeks 8-11: March 15-April 9, 2010]**

**Reading:**

- Gouwens, Judith A. *Migrant Education: A Reference Handbook*. Contemporary education issues. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001. (WEEKS 8-9)
- Reimers, Fernando. *Unequal Schools, Unequal Chances: The Challenges to Equal Opportunity in the Americas*. The David Rockefeller Center series on Latin American studies, Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University. David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2000. (WEEKS 10-11)

**Films:**

- MOVIE FOUR: *Harvest of Shame* (WEEK 8)
- MOVIE FIVE: *Mi Familia* (WEEK 10) \*Possible Alternate Film: *Bread and Roses*\*

**Assignments:**

- INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULED (Friday of WEEK 8)
- MIDTERM VIDEO-BLOG DUE (Friday of WEEK 9)
- MOVIE REVIEW DUE: *Harvest of Shame* (Friday of WEEK 10)
- FINAL RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY COMPILED & INITIAL OUTLINE COMPLETED (Friday of WEEK 11)

**Special Notes:**

- April 2-5, 2010: EASTER BREAK
- April 8, 2010: THURSDAY FOLLOWS MONDAY SCHEDULE

**IV. Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Migrant Labor and the American Literary Consciousness**

**[Weeks 12-13: April 10-23, 2010]**

**Reading:**

- Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

**Film:**

- MOVIE SIX: *Of Mice and Men* (WEEK 12) \*Possible Alternate Film: *The Grapes of Wrath*\*

**Assignments:**

- INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW COMPLETED (Friday of WEEK 12)
- FINAL VIDEO-BLOG DUE (Friday of WEEK 13)

**V. FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS**

[Week 14: April 24-30, 2010]

**Assignments:**

- FIVE-MINUTE ORAL PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS
- DISTRIBUTE NEAT, PROFESSIONAL-QUALITY HANDOUTS WHICH INCLUDE AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, A DETAILED OUTLINE, AND THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF YOUR ESSAY
- MOVIE REVIEW DUE: *Student's Choice of Film* (Friday of WEEK 14)

**Special Notes:**

- April 30, 2010: LAST DAY OF CLASSES
- FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT DUE DURING FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Friday, May 7, 1:30 - 4:30 PM

**Schedule and Assignments Subject to Change**