

**CURR 210 | Public Purposes of Education: Democracy and Schooling (3 credits)**

College of Education & Human Services • Spring 2012 • <http://publicpurposes.blogspot.com>

Section 03 | Mondays 11:30-2:00pm • University Hall 1145 (ADP Center)

Section 07 | Fridays 11:30-2:00pm • University Hall 1142 (ADP Center)

Vanessa Domine, Ph.D. • Associate Professor • [dominev@mail.montclair.edu](mailto:dominev@mail.montclair.edu)

Voicemail (973) 655-6850 • Office Hours: Mon 2:00-3:00pm & Fri 2:00-3:00pm & Skype (TBA by appointment)

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the public purposes of education in our social and political democracy. Students inquire into the role of schools in fostering the development of democratic principles and practices and examine various curricular designs and pedagogical strategies. Students also explore the main issues stemming from efforts to teach democratically in public educational institutions. Fieldwork in an assigned urban school will add context to these explorations. *This course is pre-requisite for admission into the teacher education program. Crosslisted with EDFD 210.*

**COURSE CONTENT & SCOPE:**

**I. *The Public Purposes of Education*<sup>1</sup>**

The first part of the semester frames school as a social institution. We'll examine the various forces that shape the development of schools in the United States. Some of the questions to guide our inquiry include: How do politics play a role in education? Can the public schools produce good citizens? Should the curriculum be standardized for all? Particularly revealing are past, present and future demographics of United States school populations and what they reveal about current cultural, linguistic, and legal challenges facing public education. At a micro-level, the course will also review some of the relevant policies and practices of the teacher education program here at Montclair State University.

**II. *The Struggle between Bureaucracy and Democracy***

On one end of the reality spectrum are the bureaucratic structures of public schooling, beginning with federal, state, and local levels of governance. Other issues include school law and finance, the role of families, and how these structures impact students with special learning needs and teaching as a profession. Also on the forefront of educational debate are national and state standards, testing, methodologies and the evolution of instructional technologies. Can federal initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind* rescue failing schools?

On the other end of the spectrum is the democratic ideal of public schooling. We will explore the political, economic and social definitions of *democracy* and consider controversial educational practices, such as inclusion and bilingual classrooms. We'll challenge the bureaucratic structures associated with accountability and high-stakes testing to find out how they impact the learning environment. From a democratic perspective, we'll explore how we might most effectively teach the great diversity of students comprising school populations in the U.S. We'll consider tough questions, such as "What is worth teaching?" "What is worth learning?" and "What does it mean to be a good teacher?"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NJAC Standards 3,6,9,10 • MSU Standards 3c, 6, 12g, 12i, 12j

<sup>2</sup> MSU Portrait of a Teacher (<http://cehs.montclair.edu/academic/cop/about.shtml#portrait>)

### III. *In Search of Educational Renewal*<sup>3</sup>

We ultimately arrive at the question: “If/how should public schooling be redefined?” As a basis for inquiry, we rely on the dimensions of teaching for democracy established by the Agenda for Education in a Democracy as part of the National Network for Educational Renewal.<sup>4</sup> The Agenda will provide the lens for analyzing your field-based observations. As part of the conversation, we will distinguish between *reform* and *renewal*. Other questions include: Does the business world belong in education? What roles, if any, do digital technologies (including Web 2.0) play in redefining the processes and products of schooling? In the classroom, how can pedagogies such as inclusion and differentiated instruction provide everyone with access to knowledge?

#### METHODS OF ACHIEVING COURSE GOALS:

This course offers a progression of assignments and activities that build upon each other to lead to transformed understanding about the public purposes of schooling. To establish common intellectual grounding, you are asked to read, respond to, and **critically analyze literature** about pertinent educational issues. You will be quizzed weekly on the assigned readings and those assessments will serve the formative basis for our in-class discussions. These discussions will anchor your observations in your assigned school district. You will share your understandings and insights through **face-to-face class discussion**. It is essential that you prepare in advance to discuss the readings in class. The course blog provides you with weekly reminders, discussion summaries, announcements, fieldwork updates, and course-relevant web links. All of this will culminate in a final in-class written examination that asks you to integrate your understanding of educational issues from your field observations, course reading material, class discussion and your understanding of the *Portrait of a Teacher*. For a detailed breakdown of course requirements (and point values) see “**Course Goals and Outcomes**” outlined on the next page.

#### FIELD WORK REQUIREMENT:

This course requires roughly 30 hours of fieldwork that will prepare you to apply to the teacher education program at Montclair State University. The fieldwork generally consists of the following:

- 10 hours of an **initial orientation** (1/2 day) and a separate full day of **shadowing** a host teacher
- Attendance at **2 meetings** (i.e., school board, home-school association, staff meeting, etc.). *At least one of those meetings must be in Newark.*
- 10 hours of **community service** (i.e., assisting host teacher, working in the library media center, supervised tutoring of students, after-school programs, athletic events etc.)

The necessary guidelines and forms that require the signatures of your host teachers **are included in the required Course Reader**. Although I will do all I can to accommodate your needs, ultimately you are 100 percent responsible for meeting the fieldwork requirement. **You cannot successfully pass this course without fully participating in this field component. You are required to complete your fieldwork within your designated school site. There are no exceptions or exemptions to this requirement.**

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<sup>3</sup> NJAC Standards 3,6,9,10; MSU Standards 6, 12g, 12i, 12j

<sup>4</sup> Agenda for Education in a Democracy (<http://cehs.montclair.edu/academic/cop/agendaedu.shtml>)

COURSE GOALS & OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of the course, you will have accomplished the following:

Course Objectives	Performance Indicators	Products Evaluated
<p><b>Describe</b> the concept of education as a process affected by, and affecting, ethical, social, economic, and political factors.</p> <p><b>Evaluate</b> various roles of schools regarding democratic education.</p> <p><b>Fully participate</b> in a collegial community of inquiry and change. (MSU Standard 5).</p> <p><b>Identify</b> the dimensions of teaching for democracy established by the Agenda for Education in a Democracy of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER).</p> <p><b>Explain</b> the institution of public schooling as a fundamental organizational structure in the United States, including how the structure has affected students with special learning needs.</p> <p><b>Examine and analyze</b> examples of public and private school curricula and methodologies.</p> <p><b>Understand and engage in</b> the processes of critical thinking.</p> <p><b>Analyze</b> field-based observations in relation to the roles of schooling and democratic practice.</p>	<p>Completion of 3 types of field experiences (shadow, service, meeting attendance).</p> <p>Daily reading &amp; demonstrated comprehension of assigned texts</p> <p>Summarize, critique and critically reflect upon field-based observations, readings and class discussions.</p> <p>Full participation in in-class discussion activities.*  <i>*An accumulation of 3 absences earns you a failing grade in this course. Note that religious observance is not counted as an absence.</i></p> <p>Prepare for admissions application to the Teacher Education Program at MSU.</p>	<p><b>Field Observation Data (Evidence of Fieldwork)</b> (35 percent)</p> <p><b>In-Class Quizzes</b> (27 percent)</p> <p><b>Evidence of Initiating Substitute Licensure</b> (8 percent)</p> <p><b>Written Final Exam</b> (30 percent)</p>

**Total: 100 percent**

## COURSE MATERIALS:

- An **online course reader (PDF format)** will be provided at little or no cost to you. Access information will be provided to you in an introductory email sent to your MSU account prior to the first class session.
- **Reliable internet access is required to fully participate in this course.** MSU provides numerous computer labs to accommodate your time and tasks needs (<http://oit.montclair.edu>). A jammed printer, failure to save data or backup a file, or being “offline” is **not** a legitimate excuse for missing class, field work or an assignment deadline.
- **Check your email account and the course web site frequently.** An unread e-mail is not a valid excuse for being uninformed about course changes and/or updates. Checking up on this information every other day will ensure you do not miss important course-related information, particularly when it comes to fieldwork.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

- **Emergency Evacuation Plan**  
There is a laminated floor plan posted in our classroom that outlines the safest route to evacuating the building in the case of emergency. Pay particular attention to which (enclosed) stairwell to use in case of building evacuation.
- **Accommodating Students with Disabilities**  
Please note that Montclair State University accommodates students with disabilities. For more information, go to: <http://www.montclair.edu/wellness/SSD/Index.html>
- **Office of Information Technology Training & Technology Group** now offers training events for students. They have designed several workshops that are *specifically* geared for students to assist you in your coursework. To sign up, go to: <http://oit.montclair.edu/trainingandevents.html>

## COURSE POLICIES & PRACTICES:

- **Your grade will automatically default to “F” upon your third absence from class—no matter the reason for your absence.** Missing more than 1 hour of a class session is considered an absence. Dates as listed on the Provost’s official Religious Observance list (holy days) do **not** count as absences. Check with me beforehand if you are unsure about a specific date. You are 100 percent responsible for finding out what you missed during your absence. Consult the course calendar and plan your schedule accordingly.
- **Please follow the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” rule.** I will not ask you the reason for your absence; neither do I want to know the reason. I do this to refrain from making judgment or creating an unnecessary bias on my part. Please do **not** report (or email) absences to me; refrain also from submitting a doctor’s note. Neither of them will compensate for your lack of participation in class as a result of your absence. Your performance speaks for itself.
- **There are no repeat performances of class sessions.** If you happen to be absent, please do **not** ask me: “Did I miss anything important in class?” because I will always respond with, “Yes, you missed *the most important session of the semester.*” Instead, ask a classmate to share their notes with you (and likewise share freely). Forming collaborative partnerships with your classmates will dramatically increase your chances of successfully completing (and enjoying) this course.

- **Please refrain from texting or taking phone calls while class is in session.** Power-off (or set to silent mode) your cell phones upon entering the classroom. It is acceptable to bring laptops for use within the classroom, as long as it does not distract you or others from fully participating in group activities and discussion. Beware of the multi-tasking trap: Some users believe they are capable of texting *and* effectively listening and participating simultaneously when in reality that is not the case. Know yourself (your strengths as well as limitations). *Use of your cell phone will not be allowed within your school site placement.*
- **All written work should adhere to university standards for writing** (see specifics at <http://www.montclair.edu/studenthandbook/writing.html>). **All formal assignments must be word-processed or typed.** You will not get credit for handwritten submissions (with the exception of in-class quizzes).
- **There are no make-up quizzes.** If you know you will be missing a particular class session, then you also know that you will miss a 3-point quiz. Note that those points are also percentage points for your overall course grade.
- **I expect you to do your own work for this course, work independently, and give credit for all materials used in your research.** As an MSU student and a future teacher you are responsible for knowing and adhering to the university policies on academic honesty, including citation of all source materials. All students who engage in dishonest acts such as cheating and/or plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary action, which includes failure of the course and possible expulsion from the university. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic policies described in the student code of conduct as they relate to particular requirements for this course. (<http://www.montclair.edu/studenthandbook/>).
- **If you receive an assignment back and are confused or disagree with assigned grade, I encourage you to discuss it with me.** I do ask that you wait at least 24 hours after receiving your assignment before contacting me (a “cooling period”) so that our discussion can be the most fruitful.
- **In the event of a campus power outage or inclement weather, phone the Weather Hotline** prior to coming to class or campus: (973) 655-7810.

## GRADING STANDARDS:

The following evaluation criteria are applied to all oral, written, and digital assignments that comprise the course of study. Major assignments will be accompanied by more detailed rubrics for assessment.

**A—*Demonstration of superior work.*** Work demonstrates deep and detailed understanding of material and is logically developed. Creativity or special insights are evident, and work is free from spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors.

**B—*Very good work.*** Work demonstrates a clear understanding of the material and provides relevant details that ground theory in practice. Work displays coherent organization, addresses the purpose of the assignment, and is relatively free from spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors.

(continued)

C–**Satisfactory work.** Work, for the most part, demonstrates understanding of material and provides a few relevant details. Work displays a basic level of organization, mildly addresses the purpose of the assignment, and contains a few spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors.

D–**Unsatisfactory work.** Student work displays a severe lack of understanding of material and provides little or no relevant detail. The work is poorly organized, does not meet the purpose of the assignment, and contains numerous spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors

F–**Work is neither satisfactory nor complete.** Student work displays no understanding of material and provides no detail. The work lacks organization, does not meet the purpose of the assignment, and does not adhere to spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting guidelines.

94-100%=	A	84-86%=	B	74-76%=	C	64-66%=	D
90-93%=	A-	80-83%=	B-	70-73%=	C-	60-63%=	D-
87-89%=	B+	77-79%=	C+	67-69%=	D+	59% or below=	F

#### COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (FOR FURTHER READING):

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