LS 300 Introduction to Liberal Studies

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Office hours by appointment only.

LIB S 300. Introduction to Liberal Studies (3)
Prerequisites: Education 209 and preparation for the major completed or to be completed concurrently.

Introduction to ideas, structures, and values within and among the various disciplines in this interdisciplinary major. Exploration of issues of diversity in contemporary society through directed field experience and required readings. Individual qualitative evaluation process required by major included.

Purposes and Themes:

This course provides an introduction to the ideas, structures and values within and among the various disciplines in this interdisciplinary major. It will do so by examining the purposes, functions, and curriculum of American schools with a special focus on the ways in which schools have approached several key questions related to purpose and practice:

1. What are the main purposes of education in a democratic society? What is the function of education in our society?
2. What are the main competing overarching approaches to teaching and learning in schools and colleges? What are the main disciplines or areas of knowledge?
3. How have these approaches fared over the past century in K-12 schools, especially in the elementary school?
4. How should we think about the purposes, content, and pedagogy of American schools? What are my beliefs about education?

The course examines the nature, role, purposes, and curriculum of American schools, and seeks to foster a critical examination of issues in education. The course begins with a discussion of purposes and ways of thinking about education. It also explores some of the basic dividing lines in society—class, race, and gender—and how these relate to schooling. It analyzes not only how these forms of diversity influence what takes place in classrooms but also how education may mitigate or reinforce social inequalities.

The course also examines the historical development of education in the U.S., focusing on curricular reform movements, with special attention to the education of citizens. Like other institutions subject to cycles of reform and reaction, schools often embody unexamined traditions and unconscious rituals. Over time, schools gain an internal momentum which deflects naïve efforts for reform: history thus can offer perspective on stubborn issues of educational policy and practice. The course also includes examination and discussion of the current educational reform movement and prospects for the future.

As your teacher, my goal is to facilitate an examination of some of the perennial issues in education, to explore their current manifestations, and to help you begin to think through these issues for yourselves.

Course Structure and Format: The seminar is organized topically. Each student will be responsible for reading and preparing to discuss each topic. For each session you will be expected to read the required reading(s) and a minimum of one optional reading from the course materials.
Also, several students will serve as "experts" at each session on the topic we discuss. Each of you will serve as an expert two times during the course. Scheduling of "expert" roles will be negotiated at our first meeting. "Experts" will be expected to read extra selections from the course materials, and:

1. Prepare a typed, 3 ½ to 4 page essay on the assigned topic, focusing on one or more of the key issues raised by the readings. Prior to writing the essay, experts should read the required readings and a minimum of two optional readings on the topic. The essay is due at class on the day the topic is to be discussed. Like any good essay, it should be well organized around a central thesis, and should discuss evidence and counter evidence in a thoughtful manner. At the end of your essay list the sources you read (APA style; MLA; or Chicago Manual of Style). Please label the assignment Expert Essay # 1 or Expert Essay #2 after writing your name at the top.

2. Prepare in advance a typed list of at least five or six questions to help lead small group discussion of readings and issues for your assigned topic. Append the list of questions at the back of your essay. Serve as a facilitator for small group discussion of the topic.

3. Play a leadership role in our large group discussion of the topic.

4. Prepare for and participate in a seminar or panel discussion on the central issues posed by the topic. We will decide on the specific questions and topics in class, but you'll usually be able to anticipate what the questions and topics will be from what you've read. You should be prepared to serve in a leadership role during the discussion, and to be on center stage.

5. After the essay is completed, and shortly after the class discussion on the topic is held, submit your essay to the My Writing Lab tutor (optional).

Successful completion of expert essays, participation in class discussion, Habits of Mind Essay, and Early Field Experience are all required. If your work is not acceptable, it will be returned for revision at the next class meeting. You will then have one week to resubmit a revised paper.

Plagiarism Policy: All written material submitted must be the student's original work. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. San Diego State University regards plagiarism as academic dishonesty. Consequences of plagiarism may include failing an assignment, receiving a lower course grade, and even failing a course. Please read SDSU's Policy on Academic Dishonesty and the Student Code Of Conduct and see the Plagiarism Tutorial on the SDSU Library website. Student work may be reviewed as necessary for compliance with this policy.

Habits of Mind Essay: This assignment asks you to examine and think about the various subject disciplines that make up the liberal studies major and that serve as sources for subject matter and student lessons in K-8 schools. The essay will serve as a culminating activity for the seminar portion of the course. In this assignment you are asked to reflect upon and discuss the various disciplines and "habits of mind" that make up the Liberal Studies Major and the K-8 school curriculum. In it you will demonstrate that you, "appreciate the similarities and differences between academic disciplines" (literature, history/social studies, visual and performing arts, science, and mathematics) and that you have begun to formulate an overarching approach to teaching and
learning of those disciplines by writing a statement of your pedagogic creed. Within the assignment
you may choose to compare two specific disciplines, or you may choose to write a philosophical
reflection on competing approaches to teaching one or more disciplines and the implications for
teaching practice. The essay assignment will follow the general format for the seminar essays.
Presentations will be in panel discussion format, by creed group.

**Early Field Experience Project:** In addition to the reading seminar and Habits of Mind essay,
each person enrolled in the course will also complete an Early Field Experience Research Paper
and prepare and submit the early field experience packet. Completion of the 30 hours of field
experience and the Early Field Experience Research Paper is one of the main programmatic
requirements for this course and is required for admission to the credential program. Your field
experience will include 21 hours in one class (usually grades 1-5) and 9 hours in a middle level
class (subject area or SPED). The portion of the EFE requiring reflections will be expanded to an
essay similar in format to other required papers. It will take the form of a three to four page essay
describing and reflecting upon your field experience and connecting it to course readings and
discussions. It must include at least five references to course reading materials or relevant
alternatives and must include a reference list at the end.

**Format:** Though I may lecture some, my primary role will be that of facilitator, to guide the
seminar through discussion of the key issues and relevant readings. Typically, each session will
include a brief introductory overview (lecture), small group discussion of the readings, large
group discussion, and a seminar or panel discussion on a central issue.

**Participation Guidelines:** Because we will use a seminar/discussion format it will be very
important to keep in mind the following simple guidelines.
1) **An Open and Supportive Environment.** All members of the class should have the
freedom to participate in a supportive environment.
2) **Appropriate Focus.** We will follow common courtesy: one person will speak at a time;
when one person talks, everyone else listens. Please give your undivided attention to the
speaker. Please refrain from engaging in side conversations or whisper conversations. This
applies to all presentation and discussion formats including lecture, small group discussion,
large group discussion, panel/seminar discussion, etc.
3) **Food Policy.** Please do not eat during class. Please save food for breaks, or before or after
class. Beverages are permitted.
4) **Electronic Devices.** Please silence or turn off all cell phones. Also, please turn off all
laptops and other electronic devices during class (sleep mode is fine), except as needed to access
course materials. Please bring your course texts and print selected pages from Blackboard
readings, or bring electronic versions, as needed to prepare for class discussion.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need
accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services
at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should
contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not
retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have
presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your
cooperation is appreciated.
Texts:
2. Christensen, L. and Carp, S. *Rethinking School Reform: Views from the Classroom.*
4. Additional course readings are posted on Blackboard under “Course Documents.”

Readings: Every member of the seminar is expected to read the required readings and at least one optional reading for each topic and to come to class prepared for discussion. Experts will be asked to read and be prepared to discuss at least two optional readings on each topic. You can expect to be called on from time to time to discuss your reading or to lead small group discussion. We may also experiment with asking experts to collectively lead our discussion. Please note that readings listed in the syllabi are a selection. You are encouraged to explore additional materials via references in the readings, Google Scholar, ERIC, etc. Additional options are welcome and may be added.

*** Note: Prior to each class session prepare a written thesis statement on the central topic for that session and a brief reflection supporting or discussing your thesis. Also, prepare at least three or four written discussion questions. Please complete this prior to attending class. Weekly thesis papers will not be returned. Please keep a copy for your records.

Grades: Grades will be based on written work and participation. Completion of quality expert papers, active class participation, and successful completion of the Habits of Mind essay and Early Field Experience Research Project and class presentations are the main requirements. Grades will be based on the following formula: Essays on Readings, 40%; Participation in class, 10%; Habits of Mind Essay, 20%; Early Field Experience Research Paper, 20%; Presentation of Habits of Mind Essay and Early Field Experience Research Paper, 10%.

Attendance: Because this class is taught as a seminar meeting once or twice per week, attendance is crucial. I expect you to be present at each class meeting for the entire session. Be sure to allow enough time for your commute. I consider class time sacred. Be here on time. Attendance, tardies, and early exits will be a recorded part of your participation grade. More than one absence will affect the evaluation of your participation in the course. Excessive absences will mean that credit cannot be given. Should you have to miss a session, I ask that you let me know in advance if possible, and provide evidence of reading following your absence.

Course Schedule: Required readings are marked with an asterisk.* All readings listed after a number may be found in the assigned texts or on Blackboard.

Week One: Course Introduction
1. Introductions. Why are we here?
2. Expectations and Review of Syllabi
3. Problems and issues in education. What are schools about? Why is schooling compulsory? What purposes and functions do schools serve? What do you think?
Week Two: On the Intent and Function of Schooling

Why do we have compulsory schooling? Which of the alternative perspectives on schooling is most persuasive? What is education about? What is a just society?

**Issue:** Given the function and outcomes of schooling, should we support compulsory education laws?

  8. Sadker. “Gender and Educational Equality.”
  10. Schmidt. “Crossing the Tracks.”
  Castle. *Pillars of the Republic.*
  Elson. *Guardians of Tradition.*
  Katz. *Irony of Early School Reform.*
  Zimmerman. *Whose America: Culture Wars in the Public Schools.*

Week Three: Curricular Ferment: Traditional Curriculum vs. the Child

What were the main traditions in education by the turn of the 20th century? What was the traditional academic curriculum? In what ways did Dewey and progressives challenge these ideas? What influence did social efficiency have? What do you think?

**Issue:** Should we support a traditional “humanist” view of school curricula?

  5. AHA. *The Study of History in Schools: Report by the Committee of Seven.*
  6. DOE. *California Framework for History and Social Science.*
  Ravitch. *The Troubled Crusade.*
  Tyack. *The One Best System.*
  Callahan. *Education and the Cult of Efficiency.*

Week Four: The Progressive Impulse

What was Progressive education? What did the Progressives believe? What were the origins of the Progressive education movement? How did Progressivism effect
schools? What led to its decline?

**Issue:** Should we support a "progressive" agenda for schooling in the 21st century?

  7. Cuban. "Persistent Instruction"
  Cremin. *The Transformation of the School*.
  Dewey. *Democracy and Education*.
  Dewey. *How We Think*.
  Westbrook. *John Dewey and American Democracy*.
  Fallace. *Dewey and the Question of Race*.
  Semel and Sadovnik. *Schools of Tomorrow, Schools of Today*.
  Tyack. *Managers of Virtue*.
  Cuban. *How Teachers Taught*.
  Kliebard. *Struggle for the American Curriculum*.
  Evans. *The Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?*
  Evans. *This Happened in America: Harold Rugg and the Censure of Social Studies*.

**Week Five: Romance or Reality? Hanna and Child-Centered Education**

What was the expanding communities approach? What was child-centered education? What successes and dilemmas did these approaches encounter?

What do you think?

**Issue:** Should we support the expanding communities approach?

  7. Select one reading from next week’s list: 2, 4, 5, 6.

**Week Six: The 1960s Era of School Reform**

What were the major school reform movements of the 1960s? What were the origins and effects of the reforms of the 1960s? What can we learn from them?

**Issue:** Should we re-create open schools for the 21st century? Brunerian “inquiry” reforms?

Week Seven: Critical Teaching for a Diverse and Troubled Society

What approach do Freire, Giroux and other critical theorists take to education? What do they believe about schools? What does Giroux mean by teacher as "transformative intellectual"? What can we learn from critical theorists? What are the implications for teaching?

**Issue:** Should we endorse a "critical" agenda for the curriculum?

10. Counts. "Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order."

**Apple. Ideology and Curriculum.**
**Rethinking Schools. Rethinking Columbus.**
**Stanley. Curriculum for Utopia.**
**Shor. Critical Teaching and Everyday Life.**
**Ayers et. al. Teaching for Social Justice.**
**Rethinking Schools. The New Teacher Book.**
**Loewen. Lies My Teacher Told Me.**
**Fitzgerald. America Revised.**
**Evans. This Happened in America: Harold Rugg and the Censure of Social Studies.**
**Silberman. Crisis in the Classroom.**
**Gitlin. The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage.**
**Rudolph. Scientists in the Classroom.**
**Dow. Schoolhouse Politics.**
**Evans. The Hope for American School Reform.**
**Evans. The Tragedy of American School Reform.**

Week Eight: Educational Policy and Reform in the 21st Century

What are the central assumptions and recommendations of the current educational reform movement? To what extent is the current national agenda for education consistent with the
aims of education for social justice? Who's in charge? Who has power? Who or what is behind the current reform movement? What should be the aims of education?

**Issue:** What educational policies should we endorse?

* 2. Huleskamp. "Perspectives on Education in America." (Sandia Report)
* 6. Various authors. RSR, 170-324 (one unread selection, your choice).

Berliner & Biddle. *The Manufactured Crisis.*
Powell. “Attack on American Free Enterprise System.”
Berliner & Glass. *50 Myths and Lies that Threaten America’s Schools.*
National Commission. *A Nation at Risk.*
Stedman & Smith. "Weak Arguments, Poor Data..." In Gross, R. *The Great Debate.*
Ohanian. *One Size Fits Few.*
Emery and Ohanian. *Why is Corporate America Bashing Our Schools?*
Leming. *Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong?*
Ravitch. *Tot Sociology.*
Gagnon. *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education.*
Tyack. *Seeking Common Ground.*

**Week Nine:** Optional class meeting for consultation on Thursday only. Time to work on “Habits of Mind” essays. Submit Draft of “Habits of Mind” Essay to My Writing Lab tutor one week prior to due date. See relevant Blackboard readings.

**Week Ten:** Presentation/discussion of “Habits of Mind” essays [in creed panels].
Meet on Thursday only. See relevant Blackboard readings. Final draft due.

**Week Fifteen:** Presentation/discussion of Student Research Papers/IFE.
Meet on Thursday only. See relevant materials on Blackboard.