

FS102 W4&W5: **Academic Discourse II**  
S. Slote  
Spring 2012

Office Hours: MWF 2:30-3:30  
TTh 9-10:30 & by appt  
Odd Fellows 229; x4327

## *Provision for the Journey?: Education in Contemporary America*

The first part of our course title comes from Aristotle's definition of education. It is an ideal view, one in which education gives us the nourishment and tools we need for life's long road ahead, with all its challenges and rewards. In contemporary America, however, there is a general consensus that our education system is in crisis—that however lofty our ideals or visionary our plans, our students are not being equipped with those very provisions that are essential both for the journey of adulthood and for a functioning democracy. Our goal for the semester is to explore this troubled terrain. First, we will map out a set of working ideals against which to measure current conditions, then turn to engage workers in the field—education experts, politicians, lawyers, teachers—who (while they may not agree) hope to articulate the problems and address them constructively. Ultimately, our course should allow you to reflect on your own educational journey to this point, to map out your own unique philosophy and goals, to investigate the educational culture American students currently face, and to engage in the debate about solutions to its problems. In addition, specific FS102 course goals include:

- Participating in a sustained conversation with other academic writers and speakers
- Generating a thesis that addresses a clearly defined problem
- Supporting a thesis with appropriate reasoning and evidence
- Communicating in progressively complex and nuanced ways.

**Please note:** because this is a “W” designated course, assignments are designed to allow you to focus on your individual skills as a writer. The assumption of the course is that *every* writer can benefit from close attention to writing skills and to the nuances of language, so ample time will be set aside for discussions about writing strategies and workshops about particular skills.

### **Expectations/Grading:**

Much important work in this course is done in the classroom itself. As a result, it is imperative that you both attend consistently and participate regularly in class discussions. In order to participate in a way that benefits you and your fellow classmates, you will need to prepare readings and assignments in an active, engaged manner. (Criteria for grading class participation can be found at the end of the syllabus.) Written and oral assignments will be weighted in the following manner:

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Oral Presentations (Informal; 1 OER)   | 10%      |
| Essay 1  | 10%      |
| Essay 2 & 3  | 15% each |
| Research Essay   | 15%      |
| Formal Speech  | 15%      |
| Mechanics of Writing Quiz  | 5%       |
| Class Participation (includes Forum responses, debate participation, contribution to discussion) | 15%      |

**Please note that all written and oral assignments must be completed in order to qualify to pass the course.**

### **Required Texts:**

*Education*, eds. Haugen and Musser (Greenhaven)  
Donna Foote, *Relentless Pursuit: A Year in the Trenches with Teach for America* (Knopf)  
Jonathan Kozol, *Letters to a Young Teacher* (Crown)

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*\*  
 Sprague and Stuart, *The Speaker's Compact Handbook*\*  
 Course Packet (assignments from the packet are marked "P" in the schedule below)  
 Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say* (Norton) [Optional]

(\*purchase only if you don't already own a copy)

**Late Policy:** The busy course schedule requires that all work be turned in on the assigned due dates. Failure to do so may affect others' work in the course as well. So except in dire extremity, no late work, please. Late penalties will be assessed as follows: one grade for each day late (a "B" paper turned in a day late becomes a B-, and so on).

**Plagiarism:** Obviously a bad idea. All your work must be your own, and outside sources must be properly cited according to MLA guidelines. If you have any questions about the proper use and acknowledgement of sources, please ask. I, like you, am bound by the Honor Code and will refer any plagiarism to the Honor Committee.

**Please Note:** Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at (814) 332-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons and is located in Pelletier Library. Please take this step as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

### Course Schedule

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|------|---|---|
| 1/18 | W | Introductions   |
| 1/20 | F | First Oral Assignment: <i>An Education Moment</i> ; Brodhead, "Learning by Choice and by Chance" (H)  |
| 1/23 | M | <i>A Moment</i> (continued); Engel, "Let Kids Rule the School" (H); view "The Independent Project" on youtube ( <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTmH1wS2NJY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTmH1wS2NJY</a> ) |

### *Mapping the Route: Some Philosophers on Education*

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|------|---|---|
| 1/25 | W | Locke, from "Some Thoughts Concerning Education" (P); Graff, ch 2&3; assign essay 1                         |
| 1/27 | F | Rousseau, from <i>Émile</i> (H); Hacker, A1c, R3c, MLA2b-c, MLA 3b  |
| 1/30 | M | Wollstonecraft, from <i>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> (P); <b>essay 1 workshop</b>                 |
| 2/1  | W | Dubois, from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (P); Brodhead, "Taking Democracy to School" (H)                 |
| 2/3  | F | Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed" (P), <b>essay 1 due</b>   |
| 2/6  | M | Freire, from <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> ; "Arizona, in the Classroom" (P); Hacker, A3, assign essay 2 |
| 2/8  | W | Tough, "What if the Secret to Success is Failure?" (P); Graff, ch 4-7                                       |

### *The Contemporary Terrain*

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|------|---|---|
| 2/10 | F | Brooks, "The Biggest Issue" (P); Kristof, "China's Winning Schools?" (P) introduce OERs |
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- 2/13 M **Writing Workshop (drafts due Sunday, 5 p.m.);** Hacker A2a-b  
 2/15 W DeWeese vs. Rose, *Education*, 19-40
- 2/17 F Bush vs. Rothstein, *Education*, 192-217; **essay 2 due**
- 2/20 M Kozol, chapters 1-3, 6; Kristof, "The Value of Teachers" (P)  
 2/22 W Kozol, chapters 7, 8, 10  
 2/24 F OER Day; Hacker S1, S3, W3
- 2/27 M Solley v. Crocker, *Education*, 54-65; Engel, "Scientifically Tested Tests" (P)  
 2/29 W Kozol, chapters 11-14; Brooks, "Smells Like School Spirit" (H)  
 3/2 F Shaw & Bollinger v. Williams, *Education*, 66-77; Fossey v. Egan, *Education*, 101-119
- 3/5 M **No morning class; screening of "Waiting for Superman" 7 p.m. Quigley Auditorium**  
 3/7 W Collins, "Waiting for Somebody;" Staples, "Waiting for Superman' and the Education Debate" (P)  
 3/9 F OER Day; Hacker, P1, P5
- 3/12 M Spellings v. Snell, *Education*, 237-258;  
**Screening of "Race to Nowhere" and discussion; 7 p.m. Quigley Auditorium**  
 3/14 W Writing Workshop; Hacker, P3, P4  
 3/16 F OER Day; **essay 3 due**
- 3/17-3/25 **Spring Break**
- 3/26 M **Mechanics of Writing Quiz;** introduce speeches & research projects  
 3/28 W **Library Research seminar; meet in Pelletier**  
 3/30 F OER Day; Hacker, MLA4; Sprague & Stuart, 119-138
- 4/2 M Edmundson, "Dwelling in Possibilities" (P)  
 4/4 W Deresiewicz, "The Disadvantages of an Elite Education" (P)  
 4/6 F OER Day

### *Finding the Right Paths*

- 4/9 M Foote, *Relentless Pursuit: A Year in the Trenches with Teach for America;*  
**Forum assignments begin**
- 4/11 W Foote  
 4/13 F Foote
- 4/16 M Foote  
 4/18 W Foote  
 4/20 F Speeches
- 4/23 M Speeches  
 4/25 W Speeches  
 4/27 F Speeches
- 4/30 M Speeches

**Final Essays are due Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at noon in my office.**

**Criteria for grading class participation:**

While it is difficult to quantify the success of a student's contributions to class discussion (at our best we all contribute differently), here are the general standards I will use to grade participation:

**A range:** Participation at this level is marked by its active nature, its consistency, and its quality. When A participants read an assignment, they prepare to participate in a class discussion; they read the assignments fully, carefully and critically enough to be ready not just to respond to my questions but also to initiate discussion with comments and questions of their own. Such participants will also come to class ready to make and argue assertions about the reading and to think out loud about a text's relation to its contexts; they will attend to the comments of others in class, agree, elaborate or civilly disagree with them, bring our attention to passages from the reading to make their point and at times connect such thinking with earlier readings or previous class discussion. In short, students who by their engagement in class discussion throughout the semester show themselves to be true students of the course material—persistently conscientious and inquiring—will get an A for their efforts. They will also make the course a lot better. (By the way, substituting quantity of participation for quality will not work.)

**B range:** Students who come to every class, have almost always done all the reading, and consistently respond to the questions of others in a way that demonstrates their command of the reading will earn a B participation grade. What separates this effort from an A one is not so much quantity (teachers are remarkably good at detecting bs) as the level of preparation—one's reading and thinking—that has gone on before one gets to class, especially the kind that enables students to *initiate* discussion. But you can't get a B participation grade by just showing up, either, or by talking every once in a while.

**C range:** A C participant comes to almost all the classes (no more than four unexcused absences), usually has done most of the reading most of the time, but not with the energy necessary to demonstrate through participation their ongoing engagement with the material. Such a discussant contributes infrequently, maybe one time every other class.

**D range:** Automatic pilot mode. You were physically there most of the time, spoke a few times maybe, but that was it.

**F:** Not coming to class is the traditional route.