

**Rhode Island College
Feinstein School of Education and Human Development
Department of Educational Studies**

SED 552: Social and Cultural Contexts of Schooling

Course Information

Prerequisites: SED 551

Catalog Description: In this course, students examine the social and cultural construction of schooling, and the implications of multiculturalism, school structure and educational policy.

Relationship to

Professional Program: As this course is intended to explore the social and cultural dimensions of schooling in a democratic society, it is ideally placed to express the various components of the FSEHD conceptual framework. Specifically, it works to promote *reflection* as participants examine the influence of cultural experiences on how they interact with students, families and colleagues in their own work settings. Also, through the course assignments, participants will gain practice in *planning* for cultural change in their work environments and will be encouraged to act on those plans. Participants in this class will gain *knowledge* related to the theoretical understandings of the role of schooling, explore issues related to the *diversity* of American public schooling and American society, enhance their capabilities as *professionals* to work inclusively with diverse populations, and practice *pedagogical* strategies aimed at increasing inclusive teaching practices.

Course Texts and Materials

Required:

- Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children* (2006)
- Selected articles from academic journals and anthologies

Course Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

		CF: Advanced Competencies	NBPTS	RIPTS
1	Articulate taken-for-granted assumptions that structure mainstream “common sense” about race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age and status.	K 1, 3, 4	1, 4	1, 4
2	Identify inequities in the historic development of the American school and in current educational policy and practice	K 1, 3; P 1, 3	1, 4	1, 4, 5, 6
3	Reflect upon the social and cultural context of his/her own school community as a foundational element in developing best practices in teaching and learning	K 3, 4; P 1, 3, 4.	1, 3, 4	4, 5, 6, 11
4	Engage in dialogue with peers about his/her personal investments in diversity and equity	P 1, 2, 4	4, 5	7, 8

Course Requirements

- **School and Classroom Profile**

As we move through the semester, I will be asking you to explore your own classroom in relation to the texts we read. Therefore, your first assignment is to write a profile of your school and your classroom (pick one of your classes to focus on) that will serve as a general context for this work. The paper should explain the demographics of your school. Look up the quantitative data online (Rhode Island teachers can draw from InfoWorks at www.ridoe.net) and explain the racial-ethnic composition, the socio-economic status, the languages represented, the special needs population and any other factors you think might be relevant. Once you have a clear understanding of the numbers, I want you to describe in as much detail as you can how (if at all) these demographics are represented in the space, structure, climate, curriculum and practices at the school and in your own classroom. Peterson (2004) claims that “how you organize your classroom is a reflection on what you think about your students and how you view teaching” (26). All of the choices we make as teachers — from the curriculum we use, to the way we organize the desks, to the decorations on the walls, to the way we talk to kids — reflect our assumptions about teaching and learning. These choices, intentional or otherwise, send strong messages to our students about what is valued (and what is not). Take a hard look at your own space. What sort of demographics do you serve in your specific classroom? How do they differ from the larger demographics of the school (if at all) and why? Talk briefly about your space, how you structure activities, the climate you seek to create, the curriculum you use and your pedagogical practices. (You might even organize this part of the paper in short subsections with these headings). Describe these in specifics, and reflect on the messages that you hope to convey through these choices.

- **Seminar Facilitation**

Every member of this class will work alone or with a partner to lead the seminar discussion on one day. On the week that you choose, you must come prepared to lead the class in discussion of the text at hand. Handouts, activities, multi-media and other aids are encouraged, but remember that your goal is to help us work through and understand the *text* as well as the relevant context. You should plan to meet well in advance with your partner(s) to organize the content, pace and

activities, and one person in the group must talk with me during the week prior to your presentation to discuss your group's plans.

- **Analytical Memos: Naming a View from Somewhere**

Over the course of the semester, you will be writing two 5-10 page analytical memos in which you “read” your current classroom through the lenses we are honing this semester. This will require that you write up some data from your classroom — a narrative about a specific teaching challenge, classroom — or draw on data you collected previously. We will do some of the analytical work with your data in class, and you will write about it on your own. In these papers you will look at your classroom space with a new lens as you write about *really seeing* issues of power and difference. The texts we read will help model this work. How do issues of power inflect the teaching and learning in your classroom? How does gender happen in your classroom? Do you see evidence of social class norms and expectation present in your students' behaviors and performance? Is heterosexuality the dominant framework in your room? Do issues of race inflect the teacher/student relationships in ways you hadn't thought of before?

- **Final Reflection: What's Working Here? What's Not Working Here?**

At the end of the semester, you will look back over the two analytical memos you have written and write a final (10-15 page) reflection paper drawing from the memos as well as the course readings and themes.

Performance Assessments

	Outcomes	CF: Advanced Competencies	NBPTS	RIBTS
School and Classroom Profile	1,3	K 1, 3; P 1, 3, 4	1,3,4	5, 6, 11
Seminar Facilitation	1,2,4	K 1, 2, 3, 4; P 1, 2, 3, 4.	2,5	5, 6, 11
Analytical Memos	1,2,3	K 3, 4; P 1, 3.	1,3,4	5, 6
Final Reflection Paper	1,2,3,4	K 1, 3, 4; P 1, 3, 4.	1,2,3,4,5	1, 4

Course Evaluation

School Profile	15%
Seminar Facilitation	15%
Analytical Memo #1	15%
Analytical Memo #2	15%
Final Reflection Paper	15%
Attendance and Participation	25%

Course Grading

The grading scale for this course follows the standards set in the Rhode Island College catalog.

NAME: _____

Semester: _____

SED 552: Social and Cultural Contexts of Schooling

Final Project Rubric

	Exceptional 5	Strong 4	Adequate 3	Needs Improv. 2	Absent 1	NOTES
INTRODUCTION: Offers an inviting introduction to the final reflection						
DATA Includes evidence in the form of data collected about the teaching and learning in your classroom						
LITERATURE Includes specific connections to the texts we have discussed in class						
REFLECTION Includes thoughtful reflection in a personal voice about the plan, act, reflect processes you have used as a practitioner						
ANALYSIS Discusses implications of the classroom events you have discussed — who benefits and who suffers?						
CONCLUSION Summarizes discussion and offers suggestions for future						
WRITING Organization and style						
WRITING Grammar, structure and conventions						
OVERALL Project offers evidence of reflective practice						