Brandeis University
Education Studies
ED 170a: Critical Perspectives in Urban Education
Spring 2018
Mondays, 9:00 am – 11:50 pm
Abraham Shapiro Academic Complex (ASAC) room 204

Instructor: Shaneé Wangia
Phone: (240) 393-2824
Office: ASAC room 328
Email: swangia@brandeis.edu
or wangias@bc.edu
Skype: Shaneewangia@gmail.com
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This survey course examines the purposes, politics, and possibilities of education in urban contexts in the United States. It unpacks myths about urban schools and students, and offers more nuanced perspectives on urban education as a critical field of inquiry. The readings, assignments, and activities are designed to explore the significance of inequality in urban cities and the public schools within them. Special attention is devoted to longstanding social, economic, and political inequalities and how they are reproduced through schooling. Students are encouraged to make connections between urban schools and the global economy, concentrations of poverty and state politics, residential segregation, and social class. Ultimately, students develop a complex understanding of the major issues in urban education including: economic inequality; the social ecology of urban cities; school segregation; racial, ethnic, and class minorities; opportunity gaps; education reform, and more.

There are four core dimensions of the course:

I. Firstly, the course opens with a macro/level, historical overview of demographic and economic changes that have shaped urban growth and decline. The course considers the continued significance of Brown vs. Board of Education, and subsequent effects of long-time segregation and institutionalized and structural racism on urban communities.

II. Secondly, the course offers a sociological analysis of contemporary educational inequalities. Drawing on classical theories in the sociology of education, the course explores how schools both reflect and reproduce the racial and economic inequalities of their surrounding communities. This part of the course includes an examination of factors such as the impact of de facto segregation, the roles of discriminatory policies and practices, and disparities in resources available to schools.

III. Thirdly, the course requires careful reflexive analysis on home-school connections, and their implications for self, schools, and society. Students are encouraged to consider the dynamics of privilege and disadvantage both at home and at school, and how they structure their educational trajectories and experiences. This section considers the ways in which racial, cultural, and class differences between the home and school can potentially foment a mismatch between students and teachers. In particular, the course will examine the experiences of racially, ethnically, and economically minoritized students as they seek academic achievement in the school environment.
IV. Finally, the course explores policy and programmatic initiatives that seek to improve urban education. We will consider how schools overcome obstacles to meet the varied needs of students within urban environments, through reality and culturally sustaining pedagogies, family-school-community partnerships, better teacher preparation, charter schools, etc. Readings will highlight models of school reform in which educators utilize principles of parent engagement, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies, and charter schools in order to create more responsive instruction, build community within schools, and narrow the achievement gap.

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

- Explain how socioeconomic contexts affect urban schooling and urban communities, principally in relation to issues of race, class, and the distribution of opportunity;
- Distinguish between various perspectives on controversial issues in urban education, including historical access to resources, social and racial divisions, and efforts to reform schools;
- Understand how issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, and culture are interwoven with relationships in urban schools, especially in terms of teacher-student interactions and issues of curriculum and instruction;
- Identify and critique roles they can take in addressing positive educational change;

KEY TEXTS:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Class Preparedness and Participation:

This class will be conducted as a survey seminar, which will place strong emphasis on active engagement on the part of participants. During the sessions when we meet together, it is essential that all students thoroughly read the assigned readings, and come to class prepared to discuss the ideas and positions raised therein. In addition, all members of the class are expected to engage fully in discussions and exercises, both as willing participants and, when others are speaking, as engaged listeners. The aim is to create an academic environment that provides a BRAVE and challenging SPACE that motivates students to take intellectual risks and to feel comfortable enough to take them willingly. Respect, cultural awareness, reflectivity, acceptance, and commitment are all necessary ingredients to building this type of classroom setting, as are intellectual rigor, analytical thinking, and careful preparation.

2. Attendance:

Class attendance is mandatory. It is important that you attend all class sessions in order for all of us to discuss and decipher the course materials and lectures as a collegial community of learners. Attendance will be taken during each class period and students will be required to attend the entire class session to receive full credit. In case of illness or other legitimate reasons for absence, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance. Every absence after two instructor-excused absences will result in the reduction of your overall grade by a third of a letter grade (e.g. an A becomes an A-, a B+ becomes a B, etc.). If you are absent, you should arrange to make up missed work and get notes from a student peer. Once you get notes from a peer, then you are welcome to ask me any questions for clarification or further discussion.

To earn full attendance credit, you must come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that session and with the necessary materials, required books, articles, paper, and notes.

3. Responsibility and Requirements for Assignment and Communication

All assignments should be professional in appearance and submitted in LATTE on time. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If needed, please request the extension in writing prior to the due date/time. When possible, I will grant the extension, but there may be occasions when this is not practical, particularly if it relates to work that we plan to present for collaborative review or discussion in class. Assignments not turned in by the due date and time listed on the course schedule will be considered late; students will be penalized for this. Assignments submitted after the outlined deadline will drop by a full letter grade each day that it is late (this does not apply to those who have requested and been approved for an extension). Assignments submitted after two days will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the student to turn in assignments on time and to communicate if an extension is needed or if the assignment will be submitted late.
GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

- Class Participation – 15%
- Five Posts – 20%
- Small Group Discussion Anchor – 10%
- Book Talks – 20%
- Group Presentations – 20%
- Reflexive Analysis – 15%

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Preparation and Participation: 15%

   **Participation:** This course depends on the active engagement of all students. *Students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate thoughtfully in all whole class and small group discussions*, both as a willing participant and an engaged listener. Active participation includes voicing critical questions about course materials, engaging in class discussions, and working with peers in small-group discussions.

   **Readings:** Please read prior to the appropriate class sessions and *come prepared to interrogate texts, raise questions and connect readings* to the issues that are salient to the session topic and your current and/or future site of practice. Please bring the day’s readings with you to class (hard or electronic copy).

   **Respect:** *Preparation and participation are part of your grade* because the aim is to create a brave and challenging academic environment where students feel challenged to take intellectual risks and feel comfortable enough to take them willingly. Respect, cultural awareness, reflexivity, acceptance, and commitment are all necessary ingredients to building this type of classroom setting, as are intellectual rigor, analytical thinking, and careful preparation. *We will operate from the premise that learning is rarely a comfortable endeavor. It is transformative and often filled with tension.* As such, *your participation not only as an emerging scholar but also as an engaged member of this learning community is crucial to individual and collective growth.*

   *In regards to electronic devices, please respect the learning environment that we are developing together.* Please do not use your cell phone during class except for an emergency, in which case please notify me at the start of class. *Please reframe from texting, emailing, viewing and commenting on online media platforms.* Doing so will impact your participation grade.

2. Five Posts: 20%

   Over the course of the semester, you will submit five reflections documenting your learnings, thoughts, critiques, and questions about weekly readings. The posts are intended to promote active engagement with course readings, and it should be evident from your post that you closely and thoughtfully read the required readings. The word limit for each post is **350 to 500 words** and should include the following: (1) at least three big takeaways/learnings from the readings (major themes discussed in the articles); (2) your
critique of the readings (what you agreed and/or disagreed with and why); (3) what bothered or frustrated you about the readings and why; (4) how do the reading confirm, contradict, and/or challenge what you have previously learned or know based on personal experience; and (5) critical, open-ended, question(s) about or inspired by the readings. Please take the time to thoughtfully answer all five questions when applicable. Each post must include responses to at least four of the questions. Your post must be written in complete and coherent sentences (PLEASE PROOF READ) and can be in paragraph and/or bulleted format. During the designated sessions, several students will be responsible for reading through all the posts, summarizing/synthesizing and critiquing what has been shared, and determining a question (either directly from one of the posts or self-created and inspired by the collection of posts) that will be used to lead/facilitate small group discussions about the readings. All posts are due SUNDAY by NOON and required for sessions 3, 4, 5, 8, 9.

3. **Small Group Discussion Anchor: 10%**

To provide more close-up spaces of meaning making, we will have small group reading discussions during most sessions. You will sign up for and act as the discussion anchor for one of the following sessions: 3, 4, 5, 8, or 9. As a discussion anchor, you will be responsible for reading through all the posts (during the week you signed up for), summarizing and/or synthesizing what has been shared (in a paragraph or bulleted list), critiquing and/or responding to what has been shared, and determining a question or prompt (directly from one of the posts, self-created and inspired by the collection of posts, or based on your own reflection). Your summary/synthesis of the posts must be typed and include a critique of or your response to what you have read/heard from others in the class. You may agree with some responses and disagree with others. I want you to be in conversation with your classmates’ posts and share your thinking and response to what you are reading. The word limit for your reflection is 350-500 words.

During class, you will only share your summary/synthesis of the week’s posts, and your critical, open-ended question or prompt with the entire class (I will be the only person who reads your critique). You will then lead or facilitated a 15-20 minute small group discussion based on your question or prompt that requires students to draw from the session readings. The question or prompt need not address all the readings, but should address at least one robust concept from the reading(s) and connect to the session topic.

In addition to reading through, summarizing/synthesizing the posts, critiquing and/or responding to what has been shared, and composing a question for small group discussion, you are expected to communicate with the other discussion anchors for the session (during the week prior to the session you will all be leading) and together create a brief exercise (i.e. a debate, game, making art, dramatic performance, etc.) that will follow the small group (anchor led) discussion and serve to engage your classmates in further understanding and meaning making of the session readings.

4. **Book Talks: 20%**

Each student will choose one of the supplemental books in the course to read and report on in class. This assignment involves preparing an Ignite presentation for the rest of the class on the main ideas covered in the book. Ignite presentations are 5 minutes long, typically
involving 20 slides put on 15 second timer (For more information, see: http://www.speakingaboutpresenting.com/content/fast-ignite-presentation/). Each presentation should also include a handout (1 - 2 pages) for the class that illustrates the major ideas in the book and how it might be applied to urban education. **Book talks will be presented in small group roundtables and will include the sharing of your Ignite presentation, an explanation of your handout, and time to answer any questions participants might have.** The book talk will count as your midterm exam.

5. **Group Presentation: 20%**

The class will be divided into groups of three or four. Each group will be responsible for reading, analyzing, and presenting the book that you signed up for. Group members are expected to work together to produce a PowerPoint (or other preferred media) presentation and submit a 5-8-page summary analysis of the book. Copies of the book summary/analysis should be made available to all members of the class prior to or immediately following class (electronic or hardcopy). Group members will be responsible for generating 3 substantive discussion questions from which they will lead a class discussion following the presentation. Presentations should last 15 minutes followed by a 10 minute group-facilitated class discussion.

6. **Reflexive Analysis: 15%**

This final assignment requires you to reflect on your k-12 schooling experience and to consider the ways in which a school you attended reflected and/or was impacted by the surrounding community. This assignment requires research the school you attended (demographical information, school policies and practices, teacher quality, etc.), the local context (neighborhood) and politics surrounding them, and the impact of both on your and other students’ educational trajectories. Select a school level to focus your attention on (elementary, middle, or high school). What was schooling like for a “typical” student? What was schooling like for you? What about marginalized and minoritized students (you may have been one of them)? How did school and neighborhood/community politics, policies, structures, and/or practices impact your and other students’ experiences in the school? Also consider the school’s history and changes in the surrounding community (either before you attended or after you left) and the ways in which the experiences of students have varied or changed over time. High quality reflexive analyses require you to be attentive to the significance of race, class, gender, dis/ability, and sexuality in shaping students’ educational experiences, achievement, and outcomes. Lastly, consider the many things that you have learned in this course from class discussions and course readings and propose interventions, structures, or strategies that would have improved your and/or other students’ experiences at this school.

This analysis can be presented in the format of an essay; video commentary; report that includes pictures, tables, and audio commentary; or another format. Please consider and let me know your preferred format for presenting this reflexive analysis. The page and word limit will vary depending on the format but should be no less than five pages.
COURSE GRADING:

All assignments will be evaluated on the basis of: depth of analysis, clarity in the presentation of ideas, and grammar/punctuation/spelling.

When all assignments are averaged, a course grade will be assigned:

- A+= 100
- B+= 87-89
- C+= 77-79
- A= 95
- B 83-86
- C= 75-76
- A- 90-94
- B- 80-82
- F= Less than 75

PAPER FORMATS:

All written assignments should use the following formatting guidelines:

- Name, assignment, and date in the top left-hand corner
- Page numbers on every page
- Double spaced
- One inch margins on all sides
- Times New Roman or Times, 12pt

RELATED UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

4. Academic Accommodations
   If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, you should contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations you should contact Director of Disabilities Services and Support - Beth Rodgers-Kay (brodgers@brandeis.edu), Assistant Director Disabilities Services and Support - Kerry Patenaude (kpatenaude@brandeis.edu), or Disabilities Specialist - Rage Hezekiah (rhez@brandeis.edu). Letters of accommodations should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

5. Academic Integrity
   Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort, and students must also secure explicit permission from professors to submit the same work for two different courses. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgment of the source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or ideas in published volumes, on the Internet, or created by another student. Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course or about how to draw on the work of others in making arguments and assertions in any written or oral presentations, please ask for clarification. Please also see the following website for more information: http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html
### Course Schedule and Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session #</th>
<th>Session Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
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| 1/18/18  | 1         | Course Overview & Introduction to Urban Education                              | **Required**  
| 1/22/18  | 2         | The Social Ecology of Schooling in America and the Persistence of Inequality   | **Required**  
|          |           |                                                                                | • 24/7 Wall St. (2016), America’s Most Segregated Cities  
|          |           |                                                                                | https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/americas-most-segregated-cities_us_57d2c19ae4b0f831f7071b3d |
|          |           |                                                                                | **Recommended**  
|          |           |                                                                                | • Tate, W. (2008). “Geography of Opportunity”: Poverty, Place, and Educational Outcomes,”  
| 1/29/18  | 3         | Brown vs Board and Interest Divergence                                        | **Required**  
|          |           |                                                                                | **Recommended**  
|          |           |                                                                                | • Orfield, G. et al. (2014) “Brown at 60: Great Progress, a Long Retreat and an Uncertain Future”  
|          |           |                                                                                | The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, pp.1-40.                                     
|          |           |                                                                                | • The 16 Most Segregated Cities in America -  
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Reading Requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/19/18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presidents’ Day Holiday</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/26/18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Book Talks</td>
<td>Required - Read One</td>
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| 3/5/18   | 7    | The Experience of Marginalized and Minoritized Youth in Urban Schools | Required - Read One Set  
African American Girls  
American Indian Youth  
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<tr>
<th>3/12/18</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Oppositional Culture</th>
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**LGBTQ Youth**

**Model Minority**
- Pass or Fail In Cambodia Town | America by the Numbers: Episode 6 [https://mass.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/86a77285-7b6c-4748-9db8-54c136054e02/pass-or-fail-in-cambodia-town-america-by-the-numbers-episode-6/#.WkgI6FQ-fOQ](https://mass.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/86a77285-7b6c-4748-9db8-54c136054e02/pass-or-fail-in-cambodia-town-america-by-the-numbers-episode-6/#.WkgI6FQ-fOQ)

**Recommended**

**Required**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Books</th>
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<tr>
<td>3/19/18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teaching Racially, Ethically, and Economically Minoritized Students: Youth Culture as Pedagogical Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/26/18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>NO CLASS – MEET WITH GROUP GROUP assignment (Prep for group presentation)</td>
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<td>4/2/18</td>
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<td>Passover and Spring Recess NO CLASS</td>
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| 4/16/18 | 12 | Preparing Teachers for and Retaining Teachers in Urban school | **Required** – Read one Set  
Addressing the Shortage of Teachers of Color  
Teacher Complicity in Institutional Racism  
Preparing White Teachers and Teachers of Color  
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<th>13</th>
<th>Parent Activism &amp; Community Organizing for Public Schools</th>
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Urban Teaching in an Era of Standards and High Stakes Testing

Recommended

4/30/18 Final Reflexive Analysis Assignment Due