

232 Urban Education  
Summer in London 2009  
3 Credit Hours

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Course Catalog Description

Strategies for educating urban students.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, the participants will

- **Visit urban schools in Chicago, IL and London, England**
- Understand how children learn and develop and be able to provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development (INTASC #2)
- Understand how children differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners (INTASC #3)
- Understand the importance of being a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions of others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally
- Demonstrate sensitivity toward the varieties of individual and cultural diversity (Moral Virtue #1)
- Demonstrate a respect for learners of all ages and a special regard for children and adolescents (Moral Virtue #4)
- Demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of the diversity among learners (Intellectual Virtue #2)
- Demonstrate an understanding of what affects learning and of appropriate teaching strategies (Intellectual Virtue #3)

List of Rather Big Issues that we will Explore

What do we mean when we say urban education?

Urban schools are . . .

Teaching in urban schools

Reforms in urban education

Course Policies

**Attendance:** I don't know why anyone would deliberately want to miss this class, given its potential for offering life-changing experiences. However, emergencies do arise and as long as you communicate with me I don't see how attendance will be an issue in this course.

**Late Work:** If you need an extension for any contact me at least two days in advance of the due date. Do not wait to ask for an extension the day that the assignment is due as this will result in a full grade deduction - unless the assignment is the best I've ever seen. Generally speaking, I won't even ask why you need the extension, but if you don't ask, it will cost you one full grade for every late assignment. **You may re-do any of the assignments one time, if you are dissatisfied with your grade, but they must be**

**turned in no later than one week after I returned the original assignment to you.**  
*You are required to turn in the copy of the original assignment along with the revised piece, again to protect yourself.*

***Professionalism:*** This is an especially difficult quality to measure, but it includes such traits as being on time, treating everyone with respect, being responsible, joining professional education organizations, and contributing to your own and others' educational experiences through active participation. Given the nature of this course, **BEING ON TIME WILL BE ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL** as we will be on schedules that will run a bit tight. Do not make us late for any kind of event, it's really that simple. Also, pretend that you are a professional teacher whenever you enter a school. Finally, the instructor of this course expects a strict policy of academic honesty. This policy will be enforced. Plagiarism or knowingly providing false information to the university violates academic honesty and will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the course. (Please see the code in the student handbook for a more detailed description of academic honesty.) (Section total: 20 pts)

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

#### Required Texts

Weiner, L. (2006) *Urban Teaching: The Essentials*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ayers, W., Ladson-Billings, G., Michie, G., and Noguera, P. (2008). *City kids, city schools: More reports from the front row*. New York: The New Press.

#### Course Assignments

1. *Log Book/Blog/Journal/Audio Tape*– Feel free to choose your own way to record your personal/professional observations and questions that will remind of you events you witness in the schools in both Chicago and London. On the way home from London I want to read your written notes (or listen to your audio recorded observations). (100 points)

2. *Field-Based Experience* – What we discuss in class means little unless it is somehow connected to the realities faced by those who live in urban schools. The goal of this assignment is to make connections to urban schools and those who attend them. As of now, there are four choices (100 points):

1. **Interview of an urban educator** - Complete a biographical interview of an urban educator and write up a summary of what you learned. The *biographical* portion means providing a description of the educator before addressing the issues you want to learn about. You will be responsible for creating interview questions and getting them approved BEFORE you do the interview. Think of a few (I'd suggest no more than three) areas that you are especially interested in and focus your questions around those themes. For example, potential themes could include: reaching students; school funding; the stress/rewards of urban settings; reasons for/against teaching in urban schools; special challenges; understanding cultural, social, economic diversity.
2. **On one of our full day visits to an urban school** – Spend at least 2 hours shadowing a teacher or student, taking detailed notes regarding their day (personal interactions, events, - attempting to get into their shoes) and writing

a summary of what you learned about the school and the way the person you shadowed interacts within the settings you observed. You may include a brief interview as part of your write up. The goal is to put me inside the school with your subject like teacher stories do.

3. **Tutorial experience** – Spend a week or two tutoring a student who attends an urban school. In your write up, explain what you did as a tutor, how you did it, and both what you learned about yourself and what you learned about the student and her/his school, from participating in this experience.
4. **Arrange to teach a lesson in an urban school** – Plan, implement and assess a lesson that you teach in an urban setting. Your assessment should focus on reflection – how you planned the lesson and why you chose to plan it this way; what went well; what didn't go well; how would you change the lesson to make it better; and what you learned about urban schools and yourself from this experience.

3. *Chose one of the following final assignments* (80 points)

*The Culturally Relevant Classroom* – You have just accepted a job to teach in an urban community. First, select and briefly describe the urban community you selected and the grade(s) that you will teach. Then describe what you would do during the first 3 weeks of school to make all of your students feel comfortable in your classroom. In this paper make sure to include a description of:

- the physical aspects of your classroom – seating arrangements, bulletin boards, wall hangings, classroom materials, and other components that you believe relate to a physical description
- early assignments that you would ask the students to complete
- how you would introduce yourself to your students, school and community
- classroom routines – how will you and your students deal with procedures for answering questions, getting materials, sharpening pencils, going to the: bathroom, office, nurse, counselor, locker, eating in class, gum – the kinds of things that learning how to write lesson plans don't really prepare you for?
- Classroom rules – certainly related to routines but this also addresses the kinds of behaviors that you will and will not tolerate.

Once you have created your plan, critically examine it taking into consideration the kinds of values, attitudes, and beliefs that are implied by your suggested practices. In other words, what kind of hidden curriculum does your plan invoke? Explain how you believe your plan is *culturally relevant* (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

*Comparative Project* –In this project I would like you to explain in detail, one difference or similarity between the urban schools that we visited in London and the urban schools that you more familiar with here in the United States. Potential differences and similarities are almost limitless, so I expect you to focus on a difference/similarity that directly relates to some of the characteristics of urban schooling that we discussed in class (i.e. – no papers should be about “the bricks in the building seemed a lot alike to me, man.”) Weiner's book should be especially helpful for this assignment.

*Critical Media Analysis* – This project may be completed with a partner using media forms of your choice. Society has been bombarded with images and messages regarding

the teaching of urban students. Most of those messages have been negative. Drawing from three sources (films, TV shows, music, mainstream magazines, newspapers, documentaries) explain how these sources suggest that urban students need to be taught. One of your resources must relate to education in London. Based on what you've learned this semester, explain to what degree these messages are accurate. Describe how you would create a form of popular media that would more accurately portray to the general population what good teaching in an urban school should (and often does) entail.

One last thing: all assignments are negotiable meaning that if you believe that you have come up with an ultimate project for this course, share it with me, and if I agree you can substitute it for one or more of the required assignments.

Grading Scale

279-300 A	255-278 B
210-254 C	180-209 D