

Black People and Education in the U.S. BST 416/516
COURSE DESCRIPTION AND SYLLABUS

<i>Instructor</i>	<i>Class Meeting/Times</i>
Ethan Johnson Office Hours Thursday 1-2 321 NH and by appointment 503-725-5713 (office) ejohns@pdx.edu	

Overview & Learning Objectives

Education is often considered the most concrete and effective means to upward social mobility in American society. However, equal access to public education has not always been available to all segments of society. Black people, and other groups based on race, gender, class and religion have been at various times denied access to education. As a result, education has been a contested site and played a key role in the struggle for racial equality in the United States.

Despite the gains made by Black people in terms of access to education, pervasive inequality in regards to the quality of education and levels of academic achievement continue. Although there have been concerted efforts to improve the opportunities for and quality of education, the educational experiences of Black people and other racial and ethnic groups continue to be unequal.

This courses' objective is to provide students with a foundation for an understanding of the educational experiences of Black people in the United States. To set a context for analyzing these experiences, we will look at the structures inside and outside of schools that contribute to the reproduction of racial inequality. We will examine how scholars of education make sense of the "achievement gap" and analyze key debates in education. Finally, we will examine efforts to improve the educational opportunities of Black people and other racial and cultural groups.

Foundations of the Course

1. Attendance, Participation and Engagement (50 points): This course is based on individual as well as group commitment and engagement throughout the term. The learning in the class will largely take place through dialogue about reading materials, group projects, and class generated themes and experience. It is expected that each participant come prepared to every section and class meeting, listen actively and respectfully to the thoughts and opinions of class members, and enrich the class by contributing ideas and insights. This

class is a dynamic and collective creation. Input in discussion and dialogue is critical to its success. You are allowed one absence. **After that for every class you miss 3 points will be subtracted from your attendance participation points.** Excused absences due to sports/medical reasons are accepted, however, I must see a note from the doctor and/or schedule of games. **In addition, it is required that every student come to my office for a minimum of 15 minutes during the term, which counts for 5 points of your participation grade.** *Participation, attendance and creating a mutually respectful environment are shared and mandatory responsibilities.*

2. Course Readings and Responses (50 points): Each week we will relate our discussion of a central issue related to the educational experiences of Black people to a critical analysis of a specified set of readings. The readings enhance our understanding of the issue and provide a common reference point for dialogue. In order to make these discussions successful, everyone needs to both read the assigned material and write a 1 page single-spaced critical analysis for the readings of the week; these are due every Tuesday at the end of class. I will provide the class with 2 to 3 questions each Thursday, which are to be used as a guide in writing the Reading Responses. You are allowed one missed reading response assignment for the term. **Any more will result in the lowering of your grade by five points in this area and potentially impact your overall grade for the course.** I will accept one late Reading Responses (RR). When RRs are late a classmate must read it, make comments and write their signature on the paper before the assignment is turned in. I will not accept it otherwise. Late reading responses will only be accepted until the following Wednesday at the beginning of class.

3. Personal Accounts (30 points): We will begin the class with a "Personal Accounts" writing assignment, designed to help you analyze your own education and generate themes for class discussion. In a 1200 to 1500 word typed essay, critically reflect on your educational experiences (both formal and non-formal). Don't just describe your experiences, but critically interpret and analyze them as well. For this writing assignment, we ask that you discuss your *most empowering educational experience* and your *most disempowering educational experience*. These experiences can be school-related or they can draw upon other learning circumstances in your life. In addition, they may be separate events, connected events, or different sides of the same situation. More information about the format and content of this assignment will be given in class.

4. Mid Term Exam (30 points): there will be an in class exam of the material we have covered until that date. The exam will consist of key terms and concepts, short essay questions and one question that asks you to apply your knowledge to a particular situation in education.

5. Final Exam (40 points): on our scheduled exam day there will be a final examination of the material we have covered in readings and class discussions until that date.

6. Team Teaching (30 points): In groups of 2-3, students will be responsible for teaching during a class meeting. During this presentation, you should feel free to be as creative and inventive as you like. However, your group must do the following:

- ❖ Meet with Prof. Johnson at least one day before your team teaching event. All members of your team teaching group must be at this meeting. The meeting will last approximately an hour. The day of the presentation a detailed lesson plan must be turned in.
- ❖ Discuss the major arguments and issues in the readings due that week.

- ❖ Lead a discussion that allows students to input their opinions (We will hand out suggested activities to spark discussion that you are welcome to use, change or disregard). Last semester's students found that planning for discussion and activities takes at least 5 hours of out of class preparation.
- ❖ Relate the issues to current educational events (why is this issue important?)

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

WEEK 1: Introduction to the Course, Pragmatic Optimism

Overview of course.

Talking about race in the classroom and reading response due.

Read City Schools and the American Dream by Pedro Noguera, Chapter 1.

WEEK 2: Race, Space and Schooling

Read City Schools and the American Dream by Pedro Noguera, Chapters 2 and Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940–2000 by Karen Gibson.

Thursday April 10th: Personal Accounts paper due.

WEEK 3: Theorizing the Achievement Gap and Effective Teaching

Read City Schools and The American Dream by Pedro Noguera chapters 3 and Race and the Schooling of Black Americans by Claude Steele.

Thursday: Movie, Eyes on the Prize: Desegregation comes to Arkansas

WEEK 4: Effective Teaching and School Structures

Read Gangstas, Wankstas, and Ridas: defining, developing, and supporting effective teachers in urban schools by Jeff Duncan-Andrade and City Schools and The American Dream by Pedro Noguera chapter 4.

WEEK 5: The Politics of Education and Understanding Violence in Schools

Read City Schools and The American Dream by Pedro Noguera chapter 5 and 6.

Thursday: Mid term examination review

WEEK 6: Mid Term and High Achieving Minority Youth

Tuesday May 6th: Mid Term Examination

Thursday Read Introduction and Chapter 1 in The Color of Success by Gilberto Conchas. The Reading

Response for this week is due on Thursday May 10th.

WEEK 7: Schools Within Schools and Academic Success of Black Students

Read Chapters 2 and 3 in *The Color of Success* by Gilberto.

WEEK 8: Academic Success of Latino and Vietnamese Students

Read Chapters 4 and 5 in *The Color of Success* by Gilberto Conchas.

WEEK 9: Towards and African American Philosophy of Education

Read *Young Gifted and Black* by Claude Steele, Theresa Perry, and Asa Hilliard III, pp. 1-51.

WEEK 10: Closing the Achievement Gap

Read *Young, Gifted and Black* by Claude Steele, Theresa Perry, and Asa Hilliard III, pp. 132-165.

Thursday: Final Examination Review

Format for Reading Responses: *All assignments must be typed using a font size 12, Times New Roman (unless otherwise noted), in black ink, with the student's name, Professor's name, course name, the composition title, the name of the assignment, and the date the assignment is due on the top of the first page.*

For example:

Juana López
Black Studies 416/ 516
February 20th, 2005

Professor Johnson
Reading Response #

“City Schools and The American Dream”

Grading: All work will be turned in during class periods. I will not provide grades over the phone or the internet. It is your responsibility to be aware of your grade during the academic term and to make an

appointment with the professor if you have any questions. I WILL NOT GIVE APPROXIMATIONS OF YOUR GRADES DURING CLASS TIME. If there are questions about the grade for this class, the student should make an appointment with the professor.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit.

Cell Phones

Cell phones should be turned off and not used during class time. If cell phone use becomes disruptive you can be dismissed from the class according to the rules as stated in the Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility.

University Laws

**Portland State University supports equal educational opportunity for all regardless of sex, race, national origin, age, marital status, handicap, religion or sexual orientation¹.*

**The following constitutes conduct as proscribed by Portland State University for which a student or student organization or group is subject to disciplinary action: All forms of academic dishonesty, cheating, and fraud, including but not limited to: (a) plagiarism, (b) the buying and selling of course assignments and research papers, (c) performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons, (d) unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information and (e) falsification of research data².*

**Students with disabilities need to contact the instructor as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the following PSU offices for a referral indicating how we can best help you. It is important to obtain a referral in order to best accommodate your needs:*

--Learning disability screening and assessment at Counseling and Psychological Services;

--Disability Resource Center. Academic accommodations in classroom (note-taking, interpreting). Other accommodations as indicated through testing results. Disability Resource Center, SMSU 435, 503-725-4150.

--Call or stop by Counseling & Psychological Services for more information, M343 SMC, 503-725-4423³

¹ For more information read the “Policy Statement on Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities of Students,” <http://www.ess.pdx.edu/osa/osa_a.htm>.

² In “Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility,” <http://www.ess.pdx.edu/osa/osa_b.htm>.

³ For more information please contact the *Disability Office Center*, <http://caps.pdx.edu/learning_disabilities.htm#Services>.