



I. **Course No. & Title:** Curriculum Theory

II. **Semester:** Summer 2011

NOTE: This course involves 5 three-hour classes (June 15, 16, 20, 22, and 27) from 5:30 to 8:30pm, plus work electronically as outlined below.

III. **Credits:** 3

IV. **Instructor:** Dr. Paul R. Carr
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NOTE: All assignments will be submitted electronically, and online discussions will take place through email, which will be explained during the first class.

V. **Level:** Graduate

VII. **Course Description:**

51-737 Curriculum Theory (3 credit hours)

Curriculum Theory examines social and philosophical foundations of curriculum. It takes the position that curriculum as what students learn and the decisions made to determine it are never neutral, and, thus, must be considered from the values and beliefs that make curricular programs rational. This course assumes a strong knowledge of the historical aspects of curriculum, and seeks to understand the function of curriculum theoretically.

VIII. Course Content:

- The postmodern condition and reconceptualization of curriculum studies;
- Curriculum theory and its power to examine the dynamics of contemporary schooling;
- Several contemporary texts of curriculum studies---historical, gender, political, theological, racial, aesthetic, and autobiographical;
- Curriculum and its role in promoting social transformation;
- Curriculum and its connection to power and neoliberalism.

IX. Course Objectives:

1. Recognize the social, political, and economic forces impacting the development of curriculum at today's historical juncture;
2. Define curriculum theory;
3. Trace the historical development of the field of curriculum studies;
4. Define formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, null curriculum, and informal curriculum;
5. Determine whether anti-racist and anti-sexist curricula as well as other social justice-based curricula have the potency to promote social justice and equity in schools;
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of using "complicated conversations" to promote equity and social justice in schools and in the wider society;
7. Students will develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field closely related to this course.
9. Students will learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view in relation to curriculum debates;
10. Students will acquire skills working with others as a member of a team.

IX. Required readings:

Carr, P. R. (2010). *Does your vote count? Critical pedagogy and democracy*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pinar, W. (2003). *What is curriculum theory?* New York: Routledge.

Students should read these books, preferably before the class starts or as soon as possible after the class starts, given the intense nature of this course. We will cover the content of the two books in class, and they both will be instructive in assisting students to complete their assignments.

X. Course Requirements:

Class 1 – Introduction, overview of course, review of curriculum theory, discussion of educational contexts,

Class 2 – Curriculum approaches and perspectives; democracy and media re: curriculum

→Gmail posting – a reflection on what we’re talking about in the first two classes + engagement with others in relation to their comments

Class 3 – Curriculum concerns in education (formal and informal); student presentations re: the curriculum and democracy

Class 4 – Student presentations re: the curriculum and the media

→Gmail posting – a reflection on what we’re talking about in the third and fourth classes + engagement with others in relation to their comments

→(Reflection essays) Democracy and Media papers due

Class 5 – Curriculum and the hope for transformation; student presentations on their final papers

→Gmail posting – a reflection on what we’re talking about in the last class + engagement with others in relation to their comments

→Final paper due 10 days after last class

XI. **GRADING**

A. **Participation, Presence, and Preparation (20%)**

Since the pedagogy of the course is rooted in generating critical discourse within and outside of the classroom, students will be expected to attend class meetings prepared to engage in meaningful discussion on the assigned readings and other course materials with their peers and their instructor. Engagement with the activities, materials and themes presented in class will form the basis of this grade.

B. **Final paper and presentation: Understanding the Present and Creating a New Future through Curriculum Theory and Autobiography (roughly 2500 words) (40%)**

The field of curriculum studies has been continually reconceptualized over the past forty years. Unlike many traditional curricularists who held technical, depolitized views in relation to what educators ought to teach students and how students learn, postmodern scholars such as William Pinar, Joe Kincheloe, Shirley Steinberg and Patrick Slattery have called upon teacher-educators, scholars, and educational leaders to broadly consider the relationship between knowledge and power, to examine historic, social, political, and economic forces impacting educators, students, and classroom dynamics structuring life inside classrooms, and to determine the needs of various social actors who play significant roles in educational settings, when examining the aforementioned questions (Willis, 2008). The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: 1)

in groups of 2 (or individually if that doesn't work), colleagues will provide a review of recent scholarship (at least 10 peer-reviewed articles or book chapters), which highlights some key factors behind the academic field of education being under attack by politicians and social actors as well as how this attack has ignited a "school hell" in most K-12 classrooms and in schools of education (Kincheloe, 2006); and 2) document how educators can use autobiographic studies to not only understand what is causing schools to resemble "shopping malls," "military breeding grounds," and "prisons," but also to position educators and "Others" to "awaken from the nightmare" of schooling we face at today's historical juncture (Pinar, 2004); and 3) discuss key opportunities for hope, resistance and transformation. This paper could be divided into three sections, and should also build on some of the techniques, issues, concerns and concepts presented in relation to curriculum theory and autobiography. Students will present their collaborative work in class. The paper is worth 30%, and the oral presentation 10%, for a total of 40%.

C. Reflection Essays and Presentations (40%)

Students will write two reflection-essays, which will be presented in class. Building on course content, discussions, and research on curriculum theory, students will write two 1500-word papers on the following:

- 1) Curriculum and democracy;
- 2) Curriculum and media literacy.

Each paper will have a value of 12%, with each presentation being worth 8%, for a total of 40%.