

**Anthropology 2010: Schooling and Culture (Peoples of the Contemporary World)**

**Tech 107 9:00-10:15 TTR**

Winter Semester 2010 Seminar led by:

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(2-4 PM M-F) Old Main 245D

## **Course Description**

This course is based on the premise that historically and cross-culturally schooling was rare to non-existent. We will look, briefly, therefore, at how children learn their culture when there are no classrooms or teachers. But for the majority of the semester, we will wrestle with this 800-pound gorilla in the world's living room called education. Schools are now found in virtually every corner of the globe and educating the masses is seen as a panacea to all the world's ills. But, as we will see, this isn't happening consistently. We will view village schools where children cannot understand the language used by the teacher or in the textbook. We will see classrooms that are poorly equipped and overcrowded. Across "developing societies," we will see evidence of both failure and success in terms of education transforming the economy and improving wellbeing. The evidence of success is not distributed evenly as we'll note in comparing education in East Asia and Africa.

Following our world tour, we will examine the enormous inter-cultural variation in the nature of education in developed societies. This survey will be preceded by an overview of the methods employed by anthropologists in studying children and schooling.

Even in countries that provide fine facilities, schooling may not be synonymous with education. It turns out that the child's experiences prior to the onset of schooling may be critical in governing or mediating their experience in school. In East Asia, for example, the mother may be as much on trial in the quest to survive "examination hell" as the child. We will examine socialization practices that facilitate and that impede academic success.

Ethnicity and social class are important sources for cultural factors that influence the nature of schooling. In this section, we will survey education

among Native American communities, and among various immigrant populations. We will then eavesdrop on teachers who are trying to cope with this incredible diversity.

Throughout much of the semester, we have operated on the premise that getting an education is a good thing but that view is not universal. The Taliban government in Afghanistan, for example, executed school principals who permitted girls to enroll. Indeed, religious opposition to education and in favor of censorship is found throughout the US—as we will examine in this section.

Secondary schooling often looks quite different from schooling at lower (and higher) levels because of the enormous influence of adolescent culture. We will observe this culture in action through readings and film.

## **Blackboard**

The course website can be found on Blackboard (Bb). Students are encouraged to utilize the information and tools that are contained on the site, which includes instructions and resources for the writing assignments, quizzes, student grades and other resources.

To access the USU Blackboard system, go to <http://bb.usu.edu> and enter your UserID and your password. Your UserID is your Banner ID Number. Your password will default as your Banner PIN. If you wish to change your password, you must do so via <http://password.usu.edu/>. This website manages your password for Aggiemail, Blackboard and Banner. Do not try to change your password in Bb.

Once you log in, you will be taken to “My Blackboard,” a page listing all Bb courses you are enrolled in. Our course is listed as ANTH 2010: Peoples of the Contemporary World.

## **Course Components**

Aside from the introductory lecture, this class depends on reading, viewing, discussing and testing as the prime methods for learning the material. The reading material has been meticulously selected to reflect good anthropology, vital questions and engaging writing. The material is

100% original, none of it dummed down or filtered through the lens of a textbook author.

You will read the material assigned before it is to be discussed. Your notes on the main points in the reading will be typed up and brought to class. These “5 Main Points” will be your cue cards to use when you volunteer or are called upon to contribute to the discussion. (See Discussion section below.) These discussions are meant to review and analyze the material as well as to provoke a lively debate and critique of prevailing policy. Your instructor will be the ringleader in this effort but appreciates active, informed participation. Discussion is, therefore, rewarded. In addition to the readings, the instructor has Googled for hours on end to find relevant films. His contacts with the BBC and Open University have opened a cornucopia of material on India and Africa not otherwise available in the US.

There are periodic multiple-choice quizzes and short ~~and one longer~~ writing assignments. There will be a comprehensive, objective Final Exam.

### **Reading Assignments**

You will need to purchase the following texts (complete listing of specific readings and films are found on the class website):

Benjamin, Gail R. (1997) *Japanese Lessons: A Year in a Japanese School Through the Eyes of an American Anthropologist and Her Children*. New York: New York University Press.

Peshkin, Alan (1988) *God's Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School*. Chicago,IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lancy, David (2008) *Studying Children and Schools: Qualitative Research Traditions*. Logan, UT: Utah State University.

Textbooks are available through the USU bookstore, and, alternatively, through [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) as a fundraiser for the USU Museum of Anthropology (Old Main 252). Ordering through Amazon.com often nets students a better price on both new and used texts, and, if the link is made through the museum’s website, your books will be cheaper AND the

Museum benefits as well, receiving a percentage of the price of everything purchased.

<http://www.usu.edu/anthro/museum/catalog/amafundmus.html>

To facilitate buying books through Amazon.com, museum personnel have created links for all SSWA courses. Simply go to the website listed above, look up your course, click on the textbook(s) featured for your class, place them in your Amazon.com shopping cart, make your purchase, and voila—your textbooks are shipped to you and the museum automatically receives a commission on the sale. Shipping is free for orders of \$25 or more.

Keep in mind, as well, that any time you plan to make a purchase from Amazon.com, if you go to their website via a Museum of Anthropology link (by clicking, for example, on *any* featured book, whether or not you plan to buy it), the museum will then receive a small commission on everything you buy—not just books related to your courses. It's a nice way for the museum to fund outreach events here at USU, programs for Cache Valley families, and even undergraduate internships in the museum.

Additional Readings are available through the class website. You can access them on the “Additional Readings” link on our Blackboard homepage. They are organized according to topic.

## **Quizzes and Final**

There will be 8 multiple choice quizzes over the course of the semester, worth 30 points each. Your two lowest scores will be dropped, for a total point value of 180 points for quizzes. Quizzes are taken online and will be available from 7 am to 11 pm for one day only. If you miss a quiz, there will be no make-up, instead, that will be a dropped quiz. Dates for quizzes are given on the Anth 2010 website Calendar.

The Final (objective and comprehensive) will be taken on the class website. To prepare, review your 5MPs and those of your study partners. The final is optional/extra credit. If you are happy with your grade at the end of week 14, you do not need to take it. You can earn up to 30 points on the exam. It will be available on Blackboard during the first two days of Finals Week until 11 pm, Tuesday.

## **In-class Discussion**

This is a seminar, which means that, in lieu of lectures, members will collaborate in the creation of knowledge. The Instructor has laid the groundwork, in selecting reading material and in designing the class, but the area we'll cover is so vast, no single scholar can claim expertise. To facilitate discussion and inquiry, 100% attendance and completion of reading assignments is expected. Any absence must be accounted for in writing. Further, each member is expected to bring insights to the discussion—there will be no on-lookers.

As a way of structuring this activity, *each student must complete twelve 5MPs*. These are brief written (typed) assignments that list the five main points in the particular reading assigned for a particular class. These will also serve as "sound bites" for you to refer to when called upon to contribute to discussion. Hence, although the 5MPs are designed to be brief, you must be prepared to defend your choices and elaborate on the points in discussion.

You will be randomly assigned to a group of readings you will do for your 5MPs. You will get 14 readings (spread out over the course of the semester) and only need complete 12, so you may skip or drop two. If you're absent on the day your reading is discussed, you may not hand in a 5MP. On the other hand, if you are present and have a 5MP due, you will be called on to present your ideas. The 5MP lists can be found on Blackboard under the "Writing Assignments" link.

This is a pass/fail assignment. The 5MPs will receive 10 points each, if satisfactory, for a total of 120 points.

## **Online Discussion**

Where our in-class discussions will focus on our readings, the on-line discussions give you an opportunity to apply what you are learning in class to current events and issues.

Weeks 3-7 our discussion topics will focus on important, but potentially divisive or controversial issues, like vouchers. Using the kind of analysis and critical thinking employed in class, we will attempt to cut away the

hyperbole and hype to discover what the issue is and what is driving or causing it.

During weeks 8-14 you will read and respond to letters written by Katherine Shakespeare, sharing her two years as a teacher in Baltimore, Maryland. A set of 3 or 4 different letters will be available each week through the end of the semester. Katherine gives us a window on a scene that most of us never see or even know about. And yet, more than a million students, possibly several million, occupy classrooms like the ones she describes. The result, of course, is that these children become angry, illiterate and unemployable adults. Your comments should address, as examples, the causes of this crisis, its extent, its impact on our civilization and economy, why we haven't solved the crisis and what changes we might consider in our national attitudes towards reproduction and parenting.

You should submit carefully written, thoughtful ideas to our discussion. Your opinions matter but you should also use concrete examples from the literature or from your experience to support your arguments. This assignment is more than "posting for points." Feel free to engage in repartee with your classmates; point out errors or if you feel someone has provided insufficient or poor evidence. The goal is not consensus, but debate and discussion.

0-5 points are given for each comment of 5 sentences or more that are original and relevant to the conversation. Postings that are free of English usage errors and typos and that are buttressed with material from published or online sources will be graded more favorably. You can earn no more than 20 points in any week. You can receive up to 120 points for your participation in this on-line discussion.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is recorded and, in view of the seminar-nature of the class, skipping more than a couple classes would signify that you have missed significant content and your grade will, inevitably be affected. In other words, you can't expect to get a good grade if you skip class.

Also note that, without an explanatory letter from Disabled Student Services, no open laptops are permitted in class. Individuals violating this rule will be asked to leave.

## **Grades**

5MPs = up to 120 points

Online discussion= up to 120 points

Quizzes = up to 180 points

Final Exam = up to 30 points

Total Possible: 420

If your total score=

395 and above=A

378-394=A-

365-377=B+

352-364=B

336-351=B-

etc.

## **Accommodating Disabilities**

If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation, the student must inform the instructor and provide documentation through the Disability Resource Center. Any requests for special consideration must be discussed with and approved by the instructor during the first week of class. In cooperation with the DRC, course materials can be provided in alternative formats.