Course Overview

In the song “Poetry” from Boogie Down Production’s *Criminal Minded* album KRS-One claims:

Well now you're forced to listen to the teacher and the lesson  
Class is in session so you can stop guessin'  
If this is a tape or a written down memo  
See I am a professional, this is not a demo  
In fact call it a lecture, a visual picture  
Sort of a poetic and rhythm-like mixture

One of hip hop’s forefathers, KRS-One is often referred to as the “Teacha,” one who has used the vehicle, movement, and culture of hip hop to illuminate stories of place, struggle, triumph, learning and lyricism. Today, it has become virtually impossible not “to listen” to the imprint that hip hop has left on our myriad institutions, and for the sake of this course: language, culture and history. Hip hop culture (in its own right) is an important and formidable area of exploration, discussion and learning, one that is worthy of its own academic study—not merely as a tool that leads to more “acceptable” subjects like Shakespeare or “the classics” (adapted from Duncan-Andrade, Morrell, 2002). Nonetheless, the “text” of hip hop culture is oftentimes not only aligned to engage the stories of our students, but also bridges coursework across subjects and disciplines, and is therefore useful and relevant in the classroom. Since they are “literary texts,” hip hop lyrics can be explored, analyzed, evaluated and utilized to help students meet the standards set forth by NCTE/IRA. Furthermore, as we situate them, hip hop texts can be understood—consumed and produced—in relation to the social, cultural, and political ecology from which hip hop has emerged. Hip-Hop and the Teaching of English is an opportunity for us to listen to what hip hop has taught us, to develop our own hip hop scholarship and pedagogy, as well as a framework to “keep it real” in the development of practice and praxis.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to engage the intersection between hip hop history, culture and scholarship, and critical pedagogy. Along with developing a framework to examine and appreciate the multiple varieties of hip hop that fill urban and global contexts, course participants will develop responses, presentations and curricula that address the needs of the 21st century student. By the end of the course, course participants will develop (or begin developing):

1. A critical awareness of social tensions as presented in hip hop related to language, culture, and power;
2. Critical approaches to teaching hip hop, teaching about hip hop, teaching through hip hop (adopted from M.A.K. Halliday, 1984);
3. A critical methodology (adapted from Alim, 2006; Fairclough, 1995; Hymes, 1964) for exploring, investigating, understanding, and shaping pedagogies around students’ lives, interests, and social locations;
4. A practice that is accountable, student-centered and relevant in creating curricula that engages hip hop and critical pedagogy.

In addition to these specific objectives, there are two broad pedagogical aspects of critical English education that frame this course. These aspects of pedagogy, or **praxis**, owe much to Paulo Freire’s (1970) “problem-posing” approach to teaching and learning. They include (adopted from Kirkland, 2010):

**Reflection**

Who am I as an English educator (As all things can be considered political, we must continually question as teachers how we are situated politically as we teach)? What is the (political) theory/philosophy informing my teaching of English? How can I understand it both in terms of my own educational and personal experiences and in terms of my students’ experiences and needs?

**Action**

How do I fashion an English course that simultaneously meets curriculum standards and reflects the multiplicity of voices expressed in the 21st century? How do I fashion an English course that has relevance and a potential to improve students’ lives and understanding of the human experience as captured in hip hop texts? How can hip hop influence English curriculum in ways that strengthen democracy, spread justice, and support and sustain the linguistic and cultural diversity of the United States?

### Course Texts

Most course texts will be available in our course reader. Readers are available at Village Copy (13th and University). Additional course material including rap songs and other media will be viewed during or before class and are all available on Youtube.

### Course Requirements

1. **Weekly Reading Summaries/Response Papers**

We will be studying several texts this semester, including academic and nonacademic texts, fiction and non-fiction, poetry, drama, film, and music to stimulate our classroom discussions and response papers. We will study these texts as university students; however, the approaches to inquiry that we will practice are geared toward fostering and illuminating strategies and dispositions for teaching secondary English.

Upon reading and reflecting on readings, students will be responsible for writing (5) 250-word analytical responses, (1) original poem, and (1) poem by another author – summarizing, synthesizing, and analyzing the week’s designated readings. As your responses are to help you understand the readings, you will not receive feedback from me. However, you will receive credit for each response paper. Each paper will be given a maximum of two points based on both comprehension and analytical discourse. Late responses will not be accepted.

**Strategies for Active Reading**: As you study and think about the course readings, please keep in mind that there are various ways to read a text. You can apply various analytic frames to illuminate issues and themes within texts. Utilize these “ways of reading” as **reading prepositions**. These include the following:

- **Reading within** the text: You should read all texts for meaning and comprehension with the attempt of first understanding the author’s argument and the ways in which she attempts to achieve it.
- **Reading around** the text: You should read all texts sensitive to the contexts in which they were written.
- **Reading against** the text: Only after you have made sense of a text and situated it within its context can you be critical of the text. Keep in mind that individuals, who are not very different than you, have written the texts you will encounter in your lifetime. As such, disagreeing with texts is not intellectually presumptuous. Rather it is the opposite: intellectually permissible.
- **Reading with the texts**: You should read the texts and determine if they supplement each other, contradict each other, or build upon each other. Course texts are determined to build a critical awareness around the week’s theme, and therefore are often situated to supplement each other.
Framing Questions for “Weekly Reading Summaries”:
Whenever you set out to do a critical reading of a particular text, you can use the following questions as a framework to guide you as you read. Whenever you set out to do analytical writing, you can also use the following questions as a framework to guide you as you write. An analytical text is effective if it is written in a manner that allows the reader to answer all four of these questions satisfactorily:

- What’s the point? This is the analysis/interpretation issue, which examines the author’s angle.
- Who says? This is the validity issues, which examines on what (data, literature, hearsay, etc.) are the claims based.
- What’s new? This is the value-added issue, which explores the author’s contribution to existing knowledge.
- Who cares? This is the significance issue (the most important issue of all—the one that subsumes all others), which asks, a) is this work worth doing; b) is this text worth reading; c) does it contribute something important?

2. Presentations*

Utilizing the frameworks above, over the course there will be various presentations and/or readings. Presentations will be in the form of (1) original poem, (1) poem by another author, (2) 3 x 3 x 3 format presentations (this format will be explained to you prior to your presentations), and (1) Midterm presentation. Presentations are expected to be concise and include:

- Responses to framework questions for critical reading and analytical writing of the texts;
- Why or why not the readings are relevant? To English education? To Hip Hop education?;
- If, at all, the readings relate to each other, supplement each other, or contradict each other;
- Any connections to other readings, texts, theories or ideas.

*This presentation framework is a suggestion only. You are encouraged to present the work in the style, manner and order that is accountable to your practice. For the 3 x 3 x 3 presentation formats, please submit Powerpoint to me prior to class, and for Midterm Powerpoint or Prezi is encouraged.

3. Preemptive Education Conference (Attendance is Required)

2012 PREEMPTIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE
(Urban Word NYC’s Annual Mentor, Teacher, Educator & Community Activist Training)


Date: September 28th- September 30th
Locations: Teachers College, New York University, and El Puente

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28TH 2012, 7-9pm FREE to the Public**

Poetry is Pedagogy
Word Life Panel & Performance @ Teachers College, Columbia University Cowin Center, 525 West 120th street
This powerful panel of youth poets paired with academic/organic intellectuals serves as the springboard for a community dialogue surrounding issues of pedagogy, hip-hop, and social justice! Featuring Dr. Ernest Morrell, Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Dr. Kersha Smith and poets Darren Arthur, Sabrina Ross, Danni Green, and members of the 2012 Urban Word NYC slam team.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29TH 2012, 8:30am-5pm**

Professional Development
Hands-on Workshops @ NYU Silver Center, 100 Washington Square East
Building on the opening night’s dialogue, educators, academics, teaching artists, community leaders, and youth lead hands-on professional development sessions to innovate and cultivate the craft of progressive pedagogy!

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2012**

Pedagogy in Practice & YOUTH DAY CONCERT!!!
Youth Day and Concert @ El Puente: Leaders for Peace and Justice, 211 South 4th Street (Brooklyn)
This final day of the conference invites educators to witness critical hip-hop, spoken word and digital pedagogical approaches in practice with a day of youth workshops followed by an Urban Word concert of YOUTH artists!

REGISTER NOW!!!
Visit preemptiveed2012.eventbrite.com OR email Jamila@urbanwordnyc.org

4. Midterm Report & Presentation (Due by Oct. 23)

Your Midterm Report will be a presentation of your findings based on “Fear of a Black President vs. Fear of a Black Planet.” (The links to these works are found in the weekly coursework syllabus below). This paper should be no more than 5 - 8 pages typed and double-spaced. You should also reflect on and respond to the course objectives, course readings, and our discussions of theory, research, and philosophy to help you clarify your own positions and reasoning. On Oct. 23, you will also present your paper, findings and philosophy. Please allow for no more than 10 minutes to present your work, and focus your presentation on no more than 3 main points/ideas. I have deliberately given no guidelines for your presentation, therefore do you and keep it real.

Fear of a Black President vs. Fear of a Black Planet

As hip hop educators, our work is steeped in the myriad “isms” that shape American culture. We live in a politically volatile time when partisan lines are being drawn, and punches are being thrown from all sides. As Jay-Z stated, “My president is black,” and more than any other president in history, he is also aligned to the hip hop community. As we grow our accountability in the field of hip hop education, we become sensitive to the politics of our own identities and their relationship to hip hop culture. For some it is easier than others.

In Ta-Nehisi Coates’s recent article in The Atlantic, “Fear of a Black President,” he poignantly uncovers the line President Obama walks (and has walked) in this charged political climate, and as the first black president. In 1990, political hip hop group Public Enemy released the controversial and critically acclaimed “Fear of a Black Planet” album that unapologetically addressed myriad issues impacting the Black community. For your Midterm Report, please explore both pieces of literature (the Coates’s article, and Public Enemy album + supplemental writings regarding it) and formulate an opinion on them; a response to the work; ways to cross compare and/or contrast the pieces; and your own opinion to the validity of the statements that they make. In order to do so, think about your prior experiences in learning hip hop, reading hip hop, and writing hip hop and/or teaching it to others. In addition, use your responses to the other assignments you completed for this course. What are the purposes of learning/studying/teaching through the ideas presented? These are only some of the issues you might consider. You do not need to respond to each (or any) of the questions above. These are just ideas to get you started, and you are welcome to approach the subject matter in the most intuitive way that suits your understanding and experience of the source material (article and album) presented.

5. Final Project (Curriculum)

Teaching Hip Hop Unit Plan (1-2 Units/student)

Create a unit plan for an adolescent age group of your choosing. In your unit plan, please indicate the context for which the plan has been developed. (By context, I mean descriptions of grade level, school environment, student population, students’ prior knowledge, and standards the unit aims to meet.) Your plan should focus on some aspect of hip hop, considering the following questions: what about hip hop would you teach? How would you teach it? Since hip hop is a central to the lives of many urban youth, your plan should either focus on the teaching of hip hop itself (its history, its structures [grammars], its politics), the teaching of reading with regard to hip hop in texts, the teaching of writing, or etc.

Please outline your unit plan as follows: Unit objectives (in correspondence with IRA/NCTE and NYS Learning Standards for ELA); Activities designed to stimulate learning, capable of moving students who experience the activities from one developmental level to the next; and Assessments.

After you have written your unit plan, write a statement of no more than 2 pages explaining how your unit plan responds to
what you have learned in the course. Specifically discuss how it demonstrates course objectives and accounts for the big issues the course is designed to address.

**NOTE:** Curricula Examples due prior to final class (date TBD). Students are expected to bring in 2-3 examples of different curricula templates, styles or ideas. We will work as a class to decide on the curriculum model that we will use for our final projects.

6. **Self-Assessment Portfolio (PhD Students Only)**

Complete the tasks described below. You may talk with peers as a part of your process, but you should tailor your responses to the particulars of your growth and learning in line with the course objectives. As such, your responses should differ in significant ways from those of your peers. You are encouraged to draw on outside resources but are required to make use of course readings as relevant in your responses. You have until the last day of class to complete your self assessment.

Choose one of the options below. Develop your responses in response to the course objectives outlined in the course syllabus. Please use knowledge that you have gained from the course. Your responses should provide evidence of what you have learned from the course.

**Option A:** Self-Assessment Rubric
Create a rubric to assess what you have learned in the course. The rubric you create should be based on the course objectives and should work to measure, quantitatively or qualitatively, your learning in each area. As you assess yourself using the rubric you created, provide examples of your learning, statements which discuss your learning, and/or commentary based on class experiences. In addition, you should articulate how and why you created your rubric, and what specifically is it designed to assess (and what it cannot assess).

**Option B:** Email Discussions
Learning is a collaborative process. This option requires you to collaborate with a peer via email to discuss major issues in the course. Using email, you will be required to have a minimum of five exchanges between you and your partner about issues in hip hop and the teaching of English. At an agreed upon point, collect your conversations and use the information gathered to reflect upon your learning in the course. Your reflection should respond to the course objectives outlined in the syllabus. Your reflection paper should be no more than 5 pages, typed and double-spaced using 12 pt font.

**Option C:** Creative Assessment
Assess yourself in some creative way. You might choose to write a series of poems, songs, or letters to demonstrate what you have learned from this course. You might also want to create a rap video, a hip hop/graffiti collage, blog, and so forth to demonstrate your learning. Or you might want to use a multi-genre approach. Your creative product should respond to the course objectives outlined in the course syllabus.

**Grading**

Grades are criterion-referenced. That is, grades will be assigned based on the percent of the total possible points that you receive on the assignments. Points are distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Summaries (5 points each)</td>
<td>25 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preemptive Education Attendance</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentations (Poems = 2.5/each; 3 x 3 x 3 = 5/each)</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Report &amp; Presentation (20 for Report/5 for Presentation)</td>
<td>25 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Curriculum</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PhD Graduate Grading Scale

Reading Summaries (3 points each) 15 points
Preemptive Education Attendance 15 points
Class Presentations (Poems = 2.5/each; 3 x 3 x 3 = 5/each) 15 points
Midterm Report & Presentation (20 for Report/5 for Presentation) 25 points
Self Assessment Portfolio 10 points
Final Curriculum 20 points

Total 100 points

Participation: You will spend much of the next few weeks with classmates sharing ideas, theories, advice, and experiences. You are a valuable resource for your peers, and the stronger the community we build in this class, the richer the experiences we will have here. No percentage value has been assigned to class participation. However, if your final average falls between grades (for example between an A- and a B+) the following criteria will be used to determine your final grade.

a) Clear evidence that you have read the weekly readings (i.e. productive, consistent participation in discussions, completion of assignments)
b) Completion of tasks that support the work in class
c) Active and supportive listening in the classroom and offering constructive feedback to peers and instructors

Attendance

Attendance matters. It matters to us as instructors; it matters to peers who count on your support and feedback. I expect you to attend all class sessions of Hip Hop and English Education. You will be allowed one unexcused absence. More than one unexcused absence may result in failure of the course. If you know you are going to be absent, notify me before class. If you are unable to reach me, call my office and leave a message.

Ground Rules for this Course**

1. Acknowledge that oppression (i.e., racism, classism, sexism, etc) exists.
2. Acknowledge that one of the mechanisms of oppression (racism, classism, sexism, etc.) is that we have been systematically taught misinformation about our own group and especially members of devalued/subordinate groups (this is true for both dominant and subordinate group members).
3. Agree not to blame ourselves or others for the misinformation we have learned in the past, but accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
4. Agree not to blame victims for their oppression.
5. Assume that people (both the groups we study and the members of the class) are always doing the best they can.
6. Actively pursue information about our own groups and that of others.
7. Share information about our groups with other members of the class and we will never demean, devalue, or in any way "put down" people for their experiences.
8. Agree to actively combat the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
9. Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If members of the class wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside the classroom, they can preface their remarks with a request and the class will agree not to repeat the remarks. **Written by Lynn Weber Cannon, Memphis State University, 1986.
## Course Organization
(*The chart below denotes readings and other materials to be discussed in class on the corresponding date. Therefore, all required materials should be read [or watched] before attending class. *)

### Part 1: The Case for Rap Music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics &amp; “Readings”</th>
<th>Assignments &amp; Dues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1  
Sept. 4 | Welcome to the Cypher | |
| | Lecture:  
Introductions  
“Rap Music” Tony Hoagland  
Course Syllabus: Hip Hop and the Teaching of English  
“Backwards Rappers” Prince Ea  
“Changing Education Paradigms” Sir Ken Robinson | 1. Introductions  
2. Poem: “Rap Music”  
4. Syllabus Review |

### Part 2: Hip Hop and Lit Hop as a Vehicle for Critical Pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Readings</th>
<th>Assignments &amp; Dues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 2  
Sept. 11 | Hip Hop History & Keeping It Real | |
| | Lecture:  
“Hustle” John Murillo  
Defining Hip Hop/Keeping It Real  
Class Poetry Reading | 1. Poem: “Hustle”  
John Murillo  
2. Discussion/Activity:  
Defining Hip Hop and Keeping It Real  
Poem due: Can’t Stop Won’t Stop  
(incorporate 11 of 22 section titles) |
| Week 3  
Sept. 18 | Critical Pedagogy, Praxis and Hip Hop | |
| | Lecture:  
Critical Pedagogy  
Paulo Freire  
Hip-Hop as Vehicle for Praxis | 1. Poem: “B –Boy Infinitives” Patrick Rosal  
2. Lecture/Discussion:  
Is hip hop a vehicle for critical pedagogy and critical literacy?  
Summary due: Art of Critical Pedagogy + The Critical Cultural Cypher |
| Week 4  
Sept. 25 | Hip Hop Industry, Race and the Blame Game | |
| | Lecture:  
Jon Sands  
2. Lecture/Discussion:  
The Olive Garden  
3. Poetry Reading |
### Week 5 Oct. 2

**Language, Privilege & Power**

- Mos Def “Mathematics” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5vw4ajnWGA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5vw4ajnWGA)
- Lupe Fiasco “Double Burger with Cheese” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaSUcV5UsQY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaSUcV5UsQY)
- Kendrick Lamar “The Heart Part 2” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n5r6N7grNA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n5r6N7grNA)
- Jay Electronica “Dimethyltryptamine” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SThOdYGRml8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SThOdYGRml8)
- Lecture: 3 x 3 x 3s
- Ode to the Small ‘r’
- Triglossia

**Assignments & Dues**

1. Rap Reports 3 x 3 x 3
2. Lecture/Discussion: Triglossia
3. Poem: “Ode to the Small ‘r’” Aracelis Girmay
4. 10 Tenets of HHNL

**Summary due: Roc the Mic Right + Critical Hip Hop Language Pedagogies AND 3 x 3 x 3 presentation on one song (“Rap Reports”)**

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### Part 3: Pedagogies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Readings</th>
<th>Assignments &amp; Dues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 6 Oct. 9 | **Midterm Reading:**
|               | Fear of Black President vs. Fear of a Black Planet                                                                 |
|               | No Class                                                                                                            |
| Week 7 Oct. 16| **Midterm Reports + Presentations next week**                                                                      |
|               | No Class                                                                                                            |
| Week 8 Oct. 23| **Midterm Reports due + Presentations**                                                                             |
|               | Please allow for no more than 10 minutes to present your work, and focus your presentation on no more than 3 main points/ideas. I have deliberately given no guidelines for your presentation, therefore do you and keep it real. |
|               | Midterm Presentations                                                                                               |
| Week 9 Oct. 30| **Hip Hop Pedagogy: Breaking it Down**                                                                             |
|               | Stovall, David. *We Can Relate: Hip-Hop Culture, Critical Pedagogy and the*                                         |
|               | 1. Mikal Amin Lee (“Hired Gun”)                                                                                    |
|               | 2. Discussion: Rap Text Analysis                                                                                   |
**Secondary Classroom.** pp. 585-599.


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3. Song Brain Storm for Rap Text Analysis

Summary due: Critical Pedagogy Comes at Halftime + We Can Relate + Beats Rhymes + Classroom Life

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**Week 10**

**Nov. 6**

**Studying Sexual Politics in Hip Hop & the Education Gap**


Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt.* pp. 3-12.

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1. Film: Beyond Beats and Rhymes

Summary due: The Hip Hop Wars + From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt

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**Week 11**

**Nov. 13**

**Studying Sexual Politics in Hip Hop (continued)**

Rap’s Long History of ‘Conscious’ Condescension of Women, Mychal Denzel Smith


Lupe Fiasco Boycotts Spin Over ‘Bad Bitch’ Reviews, Sowmya Krishnamurthy


Kanye West Is Better at His Job Than I Am at Mine (But I’m Way Better at Being a Fake-Ass Feminist), Kiese Laymon

http://gawker.com/5935845/kanye-west-is-better-at-his-job-than-i-am-at-mine-but-im-way-better-at-being-a-fake-ass-feminist

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1. Present 3 x 3 x 3s

No summaries due

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**Part 4: Curricula Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td><strong>Lyrics as Literature</strong></td>
<td>1. Poem: “Wheels of Steel” Adrian Matejka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td><strong>Curricula Examples</strong></td>
<td>Assignment TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>Cirelli/Sitomer. <em>The Poetry Jam.</em> (various examples)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td><strong>Curricula Work Group</strong></td>
<td>Assignment TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td><strong>Curricula Presentations and Next Steps (Last Class)</strong></td>
<td>*Final projects due Dec. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 11</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Appendix A
Grading Scale and Rubric

Steinhardt School of Education Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>65-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Incomplete/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF</td>
<td>Incomplete/Failing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>No Grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no A+

Letter Grade Rubric

A—Outstanding Work
An "A" applies to outstanding student work. A grade of "A" features not simply a command of material and excellent presentation (spelling, grammar, organization, writing style, etc.), but importantly, sustained intellectual engagement with the material. This engagement takes such forms as shedding original light on the material, investigating patterns and connections, posing questions, and raising issues.
An "A" paper is excellent in nearly all respects:
- It is well argued and well organized, with a clear thesis
- It is well developed with content that is specific, interesting, appropriate and convincing
- It has logical transitions that contribute to a fluent style of writing
- It has few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors
- It demonstrates command of a mature, unpretentious diction

B—Good Work
A "B" is given to work of high quality that reflects a command of the material and a strong presentation but lacks sustained intellectual engagement with the material.
A "B" paper shares most characteristics of an "A" paper, but
- It may have some minor weaknesses in its argumentation
- It may have some minor lapses in organization and development
- It may contain some sentence structures that are awkward or ineffective
- It may have minor mechanical, grammatical, or diction problems
- It may be less distinguished in its use of language

C—Adequate Work
Work receiving a "C" is of good overall quality but exhibits a lack of intellectual engagement as well as either deficiencies in the student's command of the material or problems with presentation.
A "C" paper is generally competent; it is the average performance. Compared to a "B" paper, it may have a weaker thesis and less effective development.
- It may have serious shortcomings in its argumentation
It may contain some lapses in organization
It may have poor or awkward transitions
It may have less varied sentence structures that tend toward monotony
It may have more mechanical, grammatical, and diction problems

D or F—Unsuccessful Work
The grade of "D" indicates significant problems with the student's work, such as a shallow understanding of the material or poor writing.

- It presents no clear thesis
- It displays major organizational problems
- It lacks adequate support for its thesis
- It includes irrelevant details
- It includes confusing transitions or lacks transitions altogether
- It fails to fulfill the assignment
- It contains ungrammatical or poorly constructed sentences and/or demonstrates problems with spelling, punctuation, diction or syntax, which impedes understanding

An "F" is given when a student fails to demonstrate an adequate understanding of the material, fails to address the exact topic of a question or assignment, or fails to follow the directions in an assignment, or fails to hand in an assignment. Pluses (e.g., B+) indicate that the paper is especially strong on some, but not all, of the criteria for that letter grade. Minuses (e.g., C-) indicate that the paper is missing some, but not all, of the criteria for that letter grade.
Appendix B
Tips for Writing Midterm Paper and Self Assessment

In writing papers for this course, keep in mind that following points. They apply in particular to the midterm report, but most of the same concerns apply to other required writing assignments for this course as well. (For guidelines on APA-style citations and reference format, see: APA. (2001). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th ed. Washington, DC: APA.)

1. Pick an important issue: Make sure that your analysis meets the “so what” test. Why should anyone care about this topic anyway? Pick an issue or issues that matters and that you really care about.

2. Keep focused: Do not lose track of the point you are trying to make, and make sure the reader knows where you are heading and why.

3. Aim for clarity: Do not assume the reader knows what you are talking about; it is your job to make points clearly. In part this means keeping focused and avoiding distracting clutter. But in part it means that you need to make more than elliptical references to concepts and sources or to professional experience. When referring to readings (from the course and elsewhere), explain who said what and why this point is pertinent to the issue at hand. When drawing on your own experiences or observations, set the context so the reader can understand what you mean. Proceed as though you were writing for someone who is neither a member of this class nor the teaching profession.

4. Provide analysis: A good paper is more than a catalogue of facts, concepts, experiences, or references; it is more than a description of the content of a set of readings; it is more than an expression of your educational values or an announcement of your prescription for what ails schools. A good paper is a logical and coherent analysis of the issues raised within your chosen area of focus. This means that your paper should aim to explain rather than describe or declare. If you give examples, be sure to tell the reader what they mean in the context of your analysis. Make sure the reader understands the connection between the various points in your paper.

5. Provide depth, insight, and connections: The best papers are ones that go beyond making obvious points, superficial comparisons, and simplistic assertions. They dig below the surface of the issue at hand, demonstrating a deeper level of understanding and an ability to make interesting connections.

6. Support your analysis with evidence: You need to do more than simply state your ideas, however informed and useful these may be. You also need to provide evidence that reassures the reader that you know what you are talking about, thus providing a foundation for your argument. Evidence comes in part from the literature, whether encountered in this course or elsewhere. Evidence can also come from your own experiences in and around schools and classrooms. Remember that you are trying to accomplish two things with the use of evidence. First, you are saying that it is not just you making this assertion but that authoritative sources and solid evidence back you up. Second, you are supplying a degree of specificity and detail, which helps to flesh out an otherwise skeletal argument.

7. Do not overuse quotations: In a short paper, long quotations (more than a sentence or two in length) are generally not appropriate. Even in longer papers, quotations should be used sparingly unless they constitute a primary form of data for your analysis. In general, your paper is more effective if written primarily in your own words, using ideas from the literature but framing them in your own way in order to serve your own analytical purposes. However, selective use of quotations can be very useful as a way of capturing the author’s tone or conveying a particularly aptly phrased point.

8. Cite your sources: You need to identify for the reader where particular ideas or examples come from. For the purposes of such identification of published sources, you need to give the author’s last name, publication year, and (in the case of quotations) page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence or paragraph where the idea is presented. In general writers in education use the APA style of citation; see the APA publication manual or any mainstream educational journal for particular examples. Be sure to list cited sources at the end of your paper. Note that citing a source is not sufficient to fulfill the requirement to provide evidence for your argument. As spelled out in #6 above, you need to transmit to the reader some of the substance of what appears in the source cited, so the reader can understand the connection with the point you are making and can have some meat to chew on. The best
analytical writing provides a real feel for the material and not just a list of assertions and citations. Depth, insight, and connections count for more than a superficial collection of glancing references. In other words, do not just mention an array of sources without drawing substantive points and examples from the sources and do not draw on ideas from such sources without identifying the ones you used.

9. Take care in the quality of your writing: A paper that is written in a clear and effective style makes a more convincing argument than one written in a murky manner, even when both writers start with the same basic understanding of the issues. However, writing that is confusing often signals confusion in a person’s thinking. After all, one key purpose of writing is to put down your ideas in a way that permits you and others to reflect on them critically, to see if they stand up to analysis. So you should take the time to reflect on your own ideas on paper and revise them as needed. You may want to take advantage of the opportunity in this course to submit the draft of the final paper, revise it in light of comments, and then resubmit the revised version. This, after all, is the way writers normally proceed. Outside of the artificial world of the classroom, writers never turn in their first draft as their final statement on a subject.