

Access to Education - Syllabus

Fall Term – 2012

Monday/Wednesday 10:15 am to 12pm

September 24 - December 5, 2012

6 Credits

Class Location: XS – B Building – Room 291

Instructor Contact Information:

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Course Summary:

This class will explore the genesis of the American public education system and the role of public schools in our society today. Students will learn about the barriers facing America's student population in 2012, and the role of government, business, the community and individuals in supporting public schools. Through speakers, reading, research, and program planning and mentorship, students will learn the successes and challenges in obtaining a viable education in public schools, and the options you have to change your life, and the lives of those in your community, that can improve access to education for all people.

Texts:

1. Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America – Jonathan Kozol
2. Better Together: Restoring the American Community – Robert D. Putnam, Lewis Feldstein

Community Partner:

The community partner for this course is **Marathon Education Partners**, (www.marathoneducationpartners.org) a Portland based non-profit organization, founded in 2002, that brings together over 100 low-income children (Scholars) with over 100 adults (Partners) in the community who are committed to helping these Scholars reach their goal of a college education. Marathon strives to provide encouragement, guidance, and a higher education scholarship opportunity to children with financial need. The program matches individuals and families (Partners) who want to give back to their

communities by sharing their experience and knowledge with children (Scholars) through the crucial stages of their educational development.

The program selects promising students (Scholars) in the fourth grade whose families lack the financial resources to afford college. Scholars are then matched with individuals or families (Partners) who agree to pledge \$100/month for 10 years toward a college investment/savings fund. Partners also agree to contact their Scholar often to provide encouragement and guidance over that 10-year period. In addition, Scholars, participate in community events designed to motivate and encourage them to succeed academically. Marathon Scholars are recruited from Title 1 public schools in the Portland Metropolitan area, which means that approximately 50% or more of the students are on free and reduced lunch. Marathon Scholars all qualify for free and reduced lunch, which means they live in a household that makes less than approximately \$22,000 a year for a family of four. Many of the Marathon Scholars are first generation Americans and most, if not all, are the first in their family to go to college.

Course Requirements:

Students in this class will have a two-fold mandate:

1. **Reflection/participation/attendance:** To engage in a serious self-reflection and class discussion on the state of education in this country and what we can do as individuals and as part of communities and organizations to improve access to education for the next generation. Reflection will include **participation in class discussions, weekly journal writing, and two written papers 5 to 7 pages in length** incorporating thoughts, discussion, text and course materials. Your class attendance and participation will be heavily weighted in your grade. There are no unexcused absences in this class. If you cannot attend class or a meeting or function for the class, you must let your instructors and or team members know as soon as possible.
2. **Volunteering in Schools/Projects for Marathon:** This class will meet once a week in class and the other class time you are expected to volunteer at least three hours a week at a Marathon school. **During the first week of class, on September 26th, we will have representatives from the schools you will be volunteering in our class to discuss with you potential volunteer projects.** The projects will include weekly time spent at the schools working with students on academics and other after school activities. The times and places you can volunteer will be flexible to fit your schedule, but you are expected to volunteer at least three hours a week in a Marathon School.

If you choose to do a project for Marathon instead of volunteering in the schools, the Executive Director of Marathon Education Partners will also be in our class on September 26th to discuss potential projects with you for the non-profit organization. Examples of projects that PSU students have done for Marathon Scholars in the past are:

- Designing and executing a summer think-tank for the Scholars complete with trips to businesses the Marathon Scholars said they wanted to pursue as careers, including vet clinics, architecture firms, OHSU, Trail Blazers etc.
- Creating a resource guide for Marathon families to include, food, clothing and shelter resources in the Portland Metro area
- An art day where PSU students and Marathon students created art projects that were sold at the Marathon Annual Auction
- A cook book of recipes from Scholars/PSU students representing all the different countries they are from
- A Scholar talent show, Marathon's first facebook page and website.

The contributions the PSU students have made to Marathon have been significant and we look forward to the contributions of this class.

Class Grading:

Grades are comprised of a maximum of 100 points. (95-100 = A, 90 – 94 = A-, 89- 85 = B+, 84 – 80 =B, 79- 75 = C+, 74-70 = C, 69-65 = D+, 64- 60 = D)

Grading will work as follows:

Papers: 15 points each x 2 papers: 30 points.

Reading/Journaling: 20 points

Project for Marathon/Volunteering and participation in events: 30 points

Class participation and attendance: 20 points.

Each area of grading will be based on the following breakdown: 50% of points allotted for the content of the work, including the rigor of thought applied to the content, and how the concepts discussed in class and readings are applied to the project; 30% for the style of presentation including organization, grammar and design and 20% for responsiveness including follow through in meetings and timely submissions of work.

Goals/Objectives:

To provide Capstone students with an academic opportunity, through service learning, to increase skills and awareness in areas of communication, diversity/variety of human experience, social and ethical responsibility and critical thinking.

-Communication – Students will enhance their written and oral communication skills by interacting with each other, students and teachers at host schools, instructors, members of the community partner, representatives from other organizations and

PSU staff in mentoring and developing their projects for Marathon, as well proving learning and writing competencies through journal reflections and class papers.

-Diversity/Variety of Human Experience – Students will enhance their understanding of the challenges students face in public school and for many as first generation Americans striving towards a college education. Students will learn to further appreciate the difficulties faced by first generation/immigrant/refugee community in obtaining an education in America.

-Social/Ethical Responsibility – Expand role of student to educational developer for Marathon program and schools and expand role of student to role model for partner students. Students will learn to develop a new sense of today's public educational system and better understand the additional resources and capacity necessary for low-income, migrant, and special needs students need to achieve higher education.

-Critical Thinking – Further develop research skills in researching new program elements for Marathon, further develop organizational skills in implementing projects, preparing presentations, writing papers and participating in discussions. Students will learn to apply their areas of study to the projects they complete for Marathon.

WEEKLY CLASS OUTLINE (subject to change)

Class 1: Sept. 24 – Introductions to each other, introduction to course outline, expectations and flow, introduction to Service Learning and to Marathon.

Create class talent & profile matrix.

Assignments:

- Order your books!
- Think about the volunteer activities and or projects you would like to do.
- Weekly Reading: Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America: Part One: The Shadow of the Past, Chapters 1 through 3
- Journal Entry: Focus on your personal educational experience and what you most look forward to learning in this class

- Watch the following videos and read the articles on first speaker: Ron Herndon:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv7QYnuMTSQ>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aIkjR4iZdg>
<http://mobile.theskanner.com/article/Leaders-Protest-Jefferson-High-School-Back-on-the-Chopping-Block-2010-06-16>
<http://portlandobserver.com/?p=12021>

Class 3: Oct 1 – Topic: Equity in preparing and advocating for children and families for success in education and life. **Speaker: Ron Herndon**, Director of Albina Head Start/Chairman, National Head Start Association.

Feedback on volunteer work and projects; decide on project teams and timelines.

Assignments:

- Review the following video and be prepared to discuss at next class:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>
- Weekly Reading: Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America: Part One: The Shadow of the Past, Chapters 4 & 5
- Journal Entry: Reflect on Mr. Herndon’s work and advocacy. What was your understanding of Head Start before the class discussion and what did you learn about the Head Start program that surprised you?

Class 5: October 8 – Reflections on the work and advocacy of Ron Herndon. Discuss Sir Ken Robinson’s video and explore opportunities to enhance the education system today. Introduction to next speaker: Duncan Campbell. Discussion of volunteer work.

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America: Part Two: A Bright Shining Light, Chapters 6 through 8
- Journal Entry: Reflect on your learning to date on challenges and opportunities for children in public school today.
- Watch the following videos and read the article on Duncan Campbell:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhtQz7YGs_g
<http://www.katu.com/news/specialreports/128112043.html>
<http://www.bizjournals.com/portland/print-edition/2012/01/20/rough-childhood-spurred-childrens.html?page=all>

Class 7: Oct. 15 – Topic: Overcoming obstacles and leveling the playing field for all children. **Speaker: Duncan Campbell**, Business owner, philanthropist and Founder of Friends of the Children. Discussion and assignment of Paper 1: Barriers for pre and elementary school-aged students today.

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America: Part Two: A Bright Shining Light, Chapters 9 through 11
- Journal Entry: Reflect on your personal thoughts regarding Mr. Campbell’s life experience and drive to make a difference for children.
- Work on Paper #1: Topic: Barriers for pre and elementary school-aged students today. Focus on one or two key barriers for young students and present options to overcome those barriers. Share your personal thoughts on the roles of

community/government. Paper should include references from a minimum of two additional sources beyond class texts.

Class 9: Oct. 22 – Discussion and resources for Paper #1 – how it is going. Introduction to Portland Public Schools Facility Bond campaign and next speakers: Nancy Hamilton.

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America: Part Two: A Bright Shining Light, Finish book
- Paper #1: Due Monday, October 29th in class.

Class 11: Oct. 29 – Topic: The difference first-class facilities have on educational success; the role of State and Local Government and business within Public Schools.

Speaker: Nancy Hamilton, former Portland Mayor Chief of Staff and economic development adviser to former Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Better Together: Restoring the American Community, Chapters 1 through 3
- Journal Entry: Reflect on your personal feelings relative to the facilities bond measure and state and local government's role in public education, where we are succeeding and what the challenges are.
- Prepare updates for class on Marathon work to be shared on 11/5

Class 13: Nov. 5 – Reflect on facilities bond, business and government influence in the conversation. Share progress of school based mentor work/projects. Introduction to next speaker (11/19): Karen Gray, the increasing changes in Oregon's student demographic and the weight gentrification is playing on East Portland school districts.

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Better Together: Restoring the American Community, Chapters 4 through 6
- Journal Entry: Reflect on your observations in the classroom tied to the class learning and speakers to date. Discuss your thoughts on how you can personally continue to give back to students.

NOVEMBER 12 – HOLIDAY: NO SCHOOL

Class 16: Nov. 19 - Topic: The new student demographic and obstacles to learning.
Speaker: Dr. Karen Gray, Superintendent, Parkrose High School.

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Better Together: Restoring the American Community, Chapters 7 through 9
- Journal Entry: Reflect on the obstacles that Dr. Gray spoke about that surprised you. Discuss obstacles that you experienced throughout your academic journey.

Class 18 – Nov. 26: Topic: The Cradle to Career Continuum. **Speaker: Nate Waas Shull**, Portland Schools Foundation/All Hands Raised

Assignments:

- Weekly Reading: Better Together: Restoring the American Community, Finish book.
- Journal Entry: Reflect on how your education experience reflected elements of cradle to career continuum. What resources do you feel you still need to transition to career.
- Final Paper (#2): Tying it all together. Discuss greatest opportunities and greatest challenges for preschool through high school public school students today. Touch on preschool preparedness, first class facilities, student support beyond the classroom, the role of government, and the fluid transition from PreK to career. Paper should include references from a minimum of three additional sources beyond class texts.

Class 20: Dec. 3 – Last Class. Final paper due during class.

Disability Notice: If you have a disability and are in need of academic accommodations, please notify the instructor immediately to make arrangements. For information on available disability services, see: HYPERLINK "<http://www.pdx.edu/iasc/drc.html>" <http://www.pdx.edu/iasc/drc.html>. PSU students requesting accommodations must provide documentation of the disability and work with the Disability Services for Students Office (503- 725-4150).