

## **Educational Equity Capstone: Step Up**

Spring 2013  
UNST 421-581  
CRN 64020  
M 10:15-12:35  
UTS 206  
6 Credits

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### **Course description:**

This Capstone explores a variety of issues related to educational equity, including, school funding, standardized testing, charter schools, immigration and education, among others. Our community partner is Step Up, part of the Open Meadows Program. <http://www.openmeadow.org/open/meadow/schools/C11/>. Step Up assists students with transitioning to and maintaining success at Roosevelt High School, and with preparing for the transition from high school to college. Step Up has contributed to a decreased drop out rate and significant academic improvement at Roosevelt. Students in this Capstone work in various ways to support the mission and the students of the Step Up program.

This is a “blended” or “hybrid” course, meaning that in addition to class time, we have an on-line component using d2i. **You are expected to check d2i frequently**, as important notices, etc., may be posted. D2i will be an important means of communication for us as a group for the next ten weeks; please check it regularly.

I believe that it is my responsibility to offer you as many resources, experiences and opportunities as I can for you to come into a deep understanding of educational equity issues. I also believe that it is your responsibility to fully engage in and contribute to your own learning and to the quality of your experience in this course. We all share responsibility for co-creating this learning environment, so you are encouraged to contribute your ideas, concerns and/or suggestions.

### **Learning Objectives:**

The goals of any Capstone are to increase students’ skills and awareness in the areas of communication, diversity/variety of human experience, social and ethical responsibility and critical thinking. By participating in this Capstone, students will have the opportunity to:

- Enhance oral communication skills through interaction with community partner students, staff, and the greater community (communication);
- Enhance skills in research, critical thinking, and organization as they gather information and prepare lessons /workshops/group projects (critical thinking);
- Refine written communication skills, and work on documenting their own educational journey, experiences, and opinions on current topics (communication);
- Develop a new understanding of the problems and successes of public education and the need for the community, not just the teachers and parents or government, to address our educational needs, in order to preserve the democratic society many take for granted (ethical and social responsibility);
- Achieve a greater understanding of the challenges of K-12 education in schools with the ethnic, social and economic diversity of the school served by our community partner (variety of human experience);

- Expand their role from that of the typical university student to teacher and community advocate, developing a greater sense of social responsibility and engagement with the Portland educational community (ethical and social responsibility);
- Gain theoretical insight and background information on service learning, and learn the value of reflection in the educational process (critical thinking).

**Required Texts:**

- City Kids, City Schools: More Reports From the Front Row Ayers, William (et.al.), ed. The New Press (2008)
- Portland Education Action Network blog: <http://pdxean.wordpress.com>
- Changing the Odds for Children at Risk Neuman, Susan (on reserve in PSU library)
- Online readings as assigned.

**additional suggested reading:**

- Tough, Paul How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character
- Noguera, Pedro A. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education Jossey-Bass, 2008
- Darling-Hammond, Linda The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future
- Kohl, Herbert Stupidity and Tears: Teaching and Learning in Troubled Times
- Kozol, Jonathan Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools HarperPerennial 1991
- Kozol, Jonathan The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America Crown Publishers 2005
- Kozol: *anything!*
- Rethinking Schools: An Urban Educational Journal [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)
- [www.schoolfunding.info](http://www.schoolfunding.info)
- Loeb, Paul The Impossible Will Take a Little While
- Jensen, Derrick Walking on Water
- Palmer, Parker The Courage to Teach
- Monroe, Lorraine Nothing's Impossible

**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: [drc.pdx.edu](http://drc.pdx.edu). PSU students requesting accommodations must provide documentation of the disability and work with the Disability Services for Students Office (725-4150).

**Course Requirements:**

- **Active participation**  
In this small seminar type course, **you are expected to fully participate and to contribute in a meaningful way.** This course is designed around the premise of peer teaching and learning. Please be in class, and be on time. Your classmates depend upon you; classes work better, and are more interesting and fun when everyone is present and prepared to participate. Each student is expected to actively participate in class. Active participation includes being prepared for class by having read the assignment, participating in discussions and activities, and active listening. Expect to be asked to initiate and/or participate in class discussion. You are earning 6 credits for this one-term, ten week Capstone. Therefore, it is critical that you are available to fully participate in class sessions. **Active participation is worth 20% of your grade.**

- **Reflective Writing**  
Over the course of the term you will be asked to reflect upon and write about various aspects of the course and how the issues raised interact with your own educational journey. You will be offered a series of prompts to guide your reflection and your writing. You will post your writing in the appropriate d2l dropbox, in a format that is private – only you and I have access. You are expected to take some time to reflect on your experiences before sitting down to write. This is an opportunity for you to *weave together your own experience of education along with various elements of the course* and to look at the issue of educational equity through that lens. **Reflection papers are 25% of your grade.**
- **Community-based learning(cbl)**  
You will be expected to work in a meaningful and earnest way over the course of the term with and in support of our community partner and their students. Your primary role will be that of “college guide” to an individual college-bound Step Up student. You will meet weekly with that student, at Roosevelt High School. You will keep a journal of your weekly visits - experiences, observations and learning - in your private Learning Log on d2l. Additionally, as a whole group, Capstone students will collaborate on the production of a manual on college initiation as a culminating project for the term.  
**Community based learning is 25% of your grade.**
- **Online Discussions**  
Each week, the instructor will post (a) discussion question(s) within the Discussion section of d2l. It will be clearly identifiable, as it will be in the Discussion section and will be entitled “Discussion Question #1” and so on. You are required to respond to the Discussion Question, and are also responsible for responding to two other students’ postings. *In weeks 4-7, your discussion posts will be considered for publication on the Portland Education Action Network blog.*  
**Online Discussions are 25% of your grade.**

Here are a few tips to ensure that we all succeed in this on-line community.

- State your point simply and clearly.
- Proofread before sending.
- Avoid use of symbols or abbreviations that may not be familiar to all or explain the symbol.
- Be specific about statements you are responding to, and respond to the idea, rather than criticizing the person who said it.
- Ask for clarification if you don't know what someone means.
- Assume that everyone has good intentions and remember that assumptions can easily be cleared up through a private phone call or face to face conversation.
- Do not use the group to solve personal problems with one or two group members.
- Remember, this is a discussion – feel free to pose your own questions and comments – responding to two other students is a minimum only – you can exceed this if you choose!
- Be careful about getting “timed out” of d2l – you may want to compose your responses elsewhere and then cut/paste.

- **Final Reflection**  
At the close of the term you will prepare and share with the class your final reflection. Your final reflection should summarize your experience this term: what you have learned about educational equity, about yourself, and how you have been affected by the experiences of this course. Be creative and demonstrate your reflection in any form you choose (poetry, spoken word/rant, art, music, etc.)! Be prepared to share your final reflection on the last day of class. **Your Final Reflection is 5% of your grade.**

## Proposed course schedule:

### **Week One**

**M 4/1**

Course introduction; initial meeting and orientation with community partner.

#### Assignment:

- “Teaching For Engagement” by Paul Loeb: <http://paulloeb.org/articles/Teach.htm>
- Capstone Handbook
- Forward, Prologue and Introduction: City Kids City Schools (Ayers, et.al.)
- Review and become familiar with our community partner through their website: <http://www.openmeadow.org/open/meadow/schools/C11/>
- Finding Hope Among the Hopeless [www.inmotionmagazine.com/er/pn\\_hope.html](http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/er/pn_hope.html)
- Marian Wright Edelman: *Standing Up for Children*
- Discussion Question #1

### **Week Two**

**M 4/8**

In class: creating partnerships; creating and understanding the importance of community; the purpose of education

#### Assignment:

- Ayers, et.al.: Part I (in its entirety), Ch. 17
- Changing the Odds for Children at Risk (on reserve in PSU library), Ch. 2
- School Funding Cases in Oregon <http://schoolfunding.info/2012/05/school-funding-cases-in-oregon/>
- Money, Schools and Justice
- Starving the Future [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/25/opinion/blow-starving-the-future.html?\\_r=2&smid=fb-share](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/25/opinion/blow-starving-the-future.html?_r=2&smid=fb-share)
- Discussion Question #2
- Reflection Paper #1

### **Week Three**

**M 4/15**

In class: barriers to educational equity: school funding

#### Assignment:

- Changing the Odds for Children at Risk (on reserve in PSU library), Ch. 3
- No Child Left Behind Act  
[http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/n/no\\_child\\_left\\_behind\\_act/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/n/no_child_left_behind_act/index.html)
- Ayers, et.al. : Ch. 24
- Standardized test boycotts
- Test fraud in Atlanta
- Discussion Question #3

### **Week Four**

**M 4/22**

In class: standardized testing

#### Assignment:

- A Closer Look at Oregon’s Achievement Gap  
<http://stand.org/sites/default/files/Oregon/A%20Closer%20Look%20at%20Oregon%27s%20Achievement%20Gap.pdf?language=es>
- America’s Public Schools: Still Unequal and Unjust  
<http://www.childrensdefense.org/newsroom/child-watch-columns/child-watch-documents/public-schools-unequal-unjust.html>

- If you want our economy fixed, fix education... [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-p-chavous/if-you-want-our-economy-f\\_b\\_1700195.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-p-chavous/if-you-want-our-economy-f_b_1700195.html)
- Ayers, et.al.: Ch. 18-23
- Discussion Question #4

### **Week Five**

**M 4/29**

In class: Waiting for Superman

Assignment:

- What is a Charter School? <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/3>
- What Superman Got Wrong <http://www.notwaitingforsuperman.org/Articles/20100927-RAyersWashPost>
- America's Cradle to Prison Pipeline
- Skanner article
- Exclusionary Discipline
- School suspensions
- Ayers Ch. 31
- Discussion Question #5
- Reflection Paper #2

### **Week Six**

**M 5/6**

In class: the charter school controversy/ cradle to prison pipeline

Assignment:

- Ayers Ch. 27
- <http://dreamact.info/>
- immigration rules expel the people we need most
- Presente
- Discussion Question #6

### **Week Seven**

**M 5/13**

In class: immigration and education

Assignment:

- Changing the Odds for Children at Risk, (on reserve at PSU library) Ch. 8
- Excerpts: The Impossible Will Take a Little While
- Discussion Question #7

### **Week Eight**

**M 5/20**

In class: Boys of Baraka

Assignment:

- Current issues in education: find articles
- Discussion Question #8
- Reflection Paper #3

### **Week Nine**

**M 5/27**

In class: NO CLASS MEETING: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

Assignment:

- Pursuing Happiness <http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.3578877/>
- Prepare your Final Reflection.

### **Week 10**

**M 6/3**

Final class meeting: pot luck; being part of the solution; resources for creating change; share Final Reflections. Evaluations, wrap up, goodbyes.