

**EFR 500**  
**Foundations of Educational Thought**  
**Spring 2007, 3 credits**

Instructor: Rilla Anderson, Ph.D.

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**Course Description**

Foundations of Educational Thought is a course intended to familiarize students with philosophical questions in educational thought. Most central to this course is “Why teach? Who are today’s students? What makes a good teacher? How should we assess learning? How does one develop a critical voice?” We will specifically focus on what acclaimed educational philosophers have written and how that impacts the who, what, where, when, why, and how we educate. Coursework will be problem-centered and will focus on readings and writing assignments. My hope is that through an examination of carefully selected readings, students will see the relationships among the texts and formulate questions and possible solutions pertaining to major conceptual problems or concerns in educational thought. Because this is a comprehensive foundations course it will not do justice to any particular perspective (historical, multi-cultural, social, psychological, philosophical, or feminist); however, it will, in many cases, serve as the foundation for additional, more advanced study in other foundations courses.

**Required Course Texts**

Lee, H. (1960). To kill a mockingbird. NY: Warner Books, Inc.

Dewey, J. (1938) Experience and education. NY: Touchstone.

DuBois, W.E.B. (1973) The education of black people: Ten critiques. 1906-1960. (Ed. H. Aptheker). NY: Monthly Review Press.

Canestrari, A.S., and Marlowe, B.A. (Eds.). (2004). Educational Foundations: An anthology of critical readings. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Keizer, G. (1988). No place but here: A teacher’s vocation in a rural community. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

And a **CHOICE** of either of the following books: (Please note: the McCarty book is for K-12 educators and the Alvord and Van Pelt book is for those students studying higher education and other disciplines.

McCarty, T.L. (2002). A place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the struggle for self-determination in indigenous schooling. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

**OR**

Alvord, L.A. and Van Pelt, E.C. (1999). The scalpel and the silver bear: The first Navajo woman surgeon combines western medicine and traditional healing. NY: Bantam Books.

### **Course Requirements**

1. It is crucial to read all reading assignments **BEFORE** you come to class. Unpreparedness shows and will be reflected in participation grade. (10%)
2. Regular attendance and full participation in class discussions and activities. (10%)
3. Lead/co-lead a discussion/activities for at least one reading. (20%)
4. Write journals as directed for assigned readings. (25%)
5. Write a final synthesis paper and give an informal, oral presentation. (35%)

### **Grading**

Although it falls to me to ultimately assess your achievement, you will have several opportunities to demonstrate your growth as a reader, writer, and educational philosopher. If you come to class having read the materials and being ready to engage in conversation, if you write thoughtful journals and are fully present in discussions, if you are open to examining issues that may not be comfortable for you or open to listening to others' points of view and experience, you will do well in this course. Realistically, reasonably well-done assignments will allow you to comfortably earn a B in the course. Earning an A is more difficult because this work requires learners to delve deeply into the readings. For example, if you write a journal entry in which you see connections beyond those discussed overtly in the readings or in our discussions in class, you are more likely to earn an A. Over the years I have found that students are more comfortable with a specific explanation of grading:

**A:** Perceptive understanding, excellence and originality, superior scores, active participation.

**B:** Mastery of concepts, above average quality, good participation.

**C:** Satisfactory level understanding, acceptable quality, adequate participation.

### **Synthesis Paper 35%**

You are required to write a final synthesis paper—an extended critical essay—that demonstrates your ability to integrate the works of the various authors we read for this class. Papers should synthesize the material; they should not reflect a discussion of each author's view on any particular area and then move on to the next author. Reflect on our books' relevance to your professional and personal worlds. I suggest you make notes to yourself on various topics within each reading that you find interesting and then connect those interesting threads to the writings of the authors and our in-class work. APA style is required and, as always, proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc., is also expected. Synthesis papers, when fully developed, will be a minimum of 10 written pages (not including cover, abstract, or references) with a 12 font maximum. As always, students must properly cite any work other than their own, or risk plagiarism and its consequences. Write a paper that reflects what you've learned in this course—include some personal experience, of course—but focusing too heavily on that means you will write a paper that could have been written prior to taking the course, and that will be

reflected in your grade. Oral presentations on papers are expected to informal and approximately 5-8 minutes, including time following for discussion.

### **Journals 25%**

Journals should be written as reflective pieces and not as book reports. Delve deeply into the readings to see what you discover. Why are these readings useful today? What ideas and concepts are new to you? Analyze, interpret, make connections, be creative, compare/contrast each author with the others, do whatever is necessary for each reading to offer something to you as a learner. You may want to include something on class discussions and a bit on your professional or educational experiences. In addition, you may integrate social issues of the past and present. The world is open to you in this class—and here is your chance to demonstrate how engaged you are with the material! Journals should be 1-1.5 pages single-spaced, 12 font max, and are due the day we discuss that particular reading or book.

### **Presentations on Readings/Lead Discussion 20%**

You will be asked to be the major discussant on a reading of your choice—either individually or in groups of two, depending on the number of students in the class. Following Dewey’s model, your presentations should be progressive in nature, and you should develop small group activities, large group discussions, panels, debates, skits, and other means of sharing your knowledge, experience, critical analyses, and creative endeavors of rethinking education while exploring your reading. Past experience tells me that students generally need at least one hour to adequately present their ideas and activities on the readings. Prior to presenting, please email four questions to me that you will use as the foundation for your presentation. For example, from “TKMB”: “Scout had many teachers. Who were they, and how did they teach?” Your presentation/activities should reflect your particular area of interest. If you teach in higher education, we would expect you to guide us in activities of interest to higher ed students. If your area is early childhood or special education, your activities should reflect that interest. Presentations should be of use to you in your work.

### **Attendance and Participation, 10%**

All students are required to come to class regularly and to participate fully in activities. If you *must* be absent, make-up assignments should be negotiated with me. Remember that it is difficult, if not impossible, to make up class time. Please notice that your grade may drop a full letter for lack of preparedness, attendance, and/or participation.

### **Tentative Schedule**

- January 8: Introduction to EFR 500  
Film: “*A History of Education: The Evolution of Society*”  
Discuss film
- January 15: No class: Martin Luther King Day.
- January 22: Discuss “*To Kill a Mockingbird*”  
Student Discussant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Journal Due

- January 29: **“Why Teach?”**  
Canestrari and Marlowe, Chapters 1-4  
Student Discussant: \_\_\_\_\_
- February 5: Film: “*John Dewey, His Life and Work*”  
Discuss Dewey’s “Experience and Education”  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_  
Discuss handout: “Variations on a Blue Guitar”  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_
- February 12 **“Who Are Today’s Students?”**  
Canestrari and Marlowe, Chapters 5-8  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_  
Journal Due
- February 19: No class: President’s Day
- February 26: Film: WEB DuBois (120 minutes)  
Read “The Education of Black People” (TEBP)
- March 5: Discuss “TEBP”  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_  
Film clip: “*Color of Fear*” (approx. 20 minutes)  
Journal Due
- March 12: No class: Spring Break
- March 19: Conclude discussion on race  
Discuss Gender Issues  
Film clip: “*Failing at Fairness*” (approx. 15 minutes)
- March 26: Film: “*Broken Rainbow*” (60 minutes)  
Discuss both McCarty’s and Keizer’s books  
Student Discussants \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Bring any lesson plan, your own or something you’d like to try. No limitations!
- April 2: **“What Makes a Good Teacher?”**  
Discuss Canestrari and Marlowe, Chapters 9-12  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_  
Journal Due
- April 9: No class: Easter Break
- April 16: **“What Do Good Schools Look Like?”**  
Canestrari and Marlowe, Chapters 13-16  
Film clip: “*Summerhill*”  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_  
Journal Due
- April 23: **“How Should We Address Learning?”**  
Canestrari and Marlowe, Chapters 17-20  
Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_  
Journal Due

April 30:

***“How Does One Develop a Critical Voice?”***

Canestrari and Marlowe, Chapters 17-20

Student Discussant \_\_\_\_\_

Present final papers