

EDUCATION 100-3
Selected Questions & Issues in Education
Spring Semester 2004

Tuesdays and Thursdays 13:00-15:00
EDB 7600F

Mark Fettes
mtfettes@sfu.ca

This is an introductory course aimed at beginning students. Diverse motivations for taking the course might include past or present experiences as a learner, the possibility of a teaching career, concern about political and cultural issues related to schools, or an interest in changing conceptions of education in a postmodern world. No prior or further study of education is assumed. Together we will explore fundamental questions arising from a series of shared readings and from our own experiences with learning and teaching. There will be opportunities to contribute to shaping the content of the course . You will be expected to participate in small group discussions and to complete a variety of short writing assignments, both graded and ungraded. At the end of the course you should have a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of teaching and learning, and of some of the ways in which they can fruitfully be investigated. You will also have developed skills in critical reading and writing at the university level.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Codell, Esme R. (1999). *Educating Esme: Diary of a teacher's first year*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Jackson, Philip W. (1992). *Untaught lessons*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Other readings will be available from time to time in class.

REQUIREMENTS

Weekly attendance and participation in activities /discussions	20%
Written work related to readings and discussions	60 %
In-class final exam	20%

EDUCATION 100
Selected Questions & Issues in Education
Spring Semester 2004 • Section D200

Tuesdays 1:30-3:20 p.m., AQ2109 • Thursdays 1:30-3:20 p.m., AQ4150

Instructor: Dr. Mark Fettes
office EDB 8543 • phone 291-4489 • <mfettes@sfu.ca>

Course Assignments

The course consists of three main parts, each approximately four weeks long, and each culminating in a formal written assignment worth 20% of the course mark. For each formal assignment, a more detailed set of guidelines will be available; the following is only a summary. One percent of the course mark will be deducted for each day or part of a day that an assignment is late.

Part 1 (January 8-February 3): Exploring teaching, learning, and schools

The main reading for the first part of the course is *Educating Esmé: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*. You should have read the book by January 13 (it's a quick read). Your **first formal assignment** will be to write a reflection on an extended educational experience of your own. This could focus on part of your time at school or college, or it could involve learning in another context (e.g. sport, music, the arts). A brief (100-word) proposal for the topic of the assignment is due on January 20; a first draft on the approved assignment topic is due January 29, for discussion with peers; the final version is due February 10. Required length: 1200-1500 words. (20%)

Part 2 (February 5-26): Educational genres and the teaching experience

The second part of the course will be introduced by two classes in which we look at a variety of texts that are typical of different kinds (genres) of educational writing, ranging from popular journalism and advocacy to peer-reviewed research articles and professional assessment. In groups of three, you will sign up to present another example of one of these genres to the class. (For this, the three of you will have to find a suitable text, analyze it, and prepare and deliver a 45-minute lecture/activity. You will have at least two weeks to prepare your lesson.) Following your class presentation, for your **second formal assignment** you will each write up a description of what you did and why, evaluate the success of your lesson, and offer suggestions for other ways you might try to teach the same material. This assignment will be due in the third class after your presentation (i.e. a bit more than a week). Required length: 900-1200 words. (20%)

Part 3 (March 2-April 1): Knowing education

The third part of the course is based on Philip Jackson's *Untaught Lessons*. You should have read the book by March 2. Jackson's theme is the multiple effects of teaching and

the challenge of perceiving and understanding what exactly is going on; his four sources of insight are memory, literature, observation, and the experience of being a teacher himself. Using one or more of these ways of knowing, your **third formal assignment** is to analyze the complexities of teaching in one concrete case: a university course (not this one!), a school classroom, a person in literature or film. Like Jackson, you will describe the setting in some detail, and then discuss what kinds of learning may be going on and why, and what implications this might have for the ways we think about education. A brief (100-word) proposal for the topic of the assignment is due on March 16; a first draft on the approved assignment topic is due March 25, for discussion with peers; the final version is due April 6. Required length: 1200-1500 words. (20%)

Attendance and in-class activities

The class meets 25 times. Attendance and participation in each class session is worth 1% of the course mark. Non-participation in the teaching activity in Part 2 (that is, in the presentation by your group of three) will result in deduction of 5% of the course mark. (25%)

Final in-class exam (April 6)

On the final day of class, Tuesday, April 6, there will be a 90-minute exam involving a choice of two short essay questions from a list of six. Each question will be worth 7.5% of the course mark. (15%)

Expectations

The course is intended to help you develop your personal understanding of education and your analytical and writing skills. At the same time, it is recognized that learning is a social as well as an individual process. You are welcome, indeed encouraged, to discuss your assignments with others, provided that you acknowledge any help that you receive. You are, however, expected to submit work that is substantively original and that meets the stated criteria: for instance, your first formal assignment should indeed report on *your own* educational experience, not that of another person or a fictitious character or episode. Submission of work that is substantively not your own constitutes academic dishonesty and, if detected, will result in a failing grade in the course and in possible expulsion from the university.

You are expected to treat the instructor and your fellow students with courtesy and consideration at all times. This includes punctuality at the start of class, attentive listening when others are talking, and prompt transitions between full class sessions and small group work.

Students requiring accommodation for a disability are requested to contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities, who will then advise the instructor of the appropriate form of accommodation.

EDUCATION 100 – Section D2 – Spring 2004

First formal assignment

Purpose: to use writing to help you think about the many factors and outcomes that contributed to one memorable educational experience

Topic: choose one learning experience you have had which remains memorable for you in some way

Format: structure your paper according to the following guidelines:

1. Describe, in 200-300 words, a single moment or episode that gives the reader a picture of what this learning experience was like. Make your description as vivid as possible; try to capture significant details (your thoughts and emotions, what you saw or heard or did, what other people were involved, what the surroundings were like, etc.). (3/20)
2. Now sum up, in 150-200 words, the overall learning experience (that is, not just the episode, but the whole story: beginning, middle, end). (2/20)
3. Now ask: what made this experience memorable for me? In a total of 400-600 words, discuss the role of:
 - a. Personal relationships – did you connect well with the teacher or with the other learners? Were you inspired by a role model or mentor? Why?
 - b. Connection with the subject matter – did you find the topic or activity of particular interest? Was it presented particularly well, or was there something in you that responded strongly to it irrespective of the presentation? Why?
 - c. Cultural status and expectations – did others view this learning experience as important? What rewards and incentives were associated with it? Were these significant for you? Why?
 - d. Your own growth as a person – did this learning experience help transform the ways you see yourself or think about your future? Why? (10/20)
4. Now find one episode in *Educating Esmé* that is in some way similar to your learning experience. In 250-350 words, describe the episode in your own words, and explain why you see similarities between it and your own experience. What qualities in Esmé as a teacher helped to bring this about? (4/20)
5. Finally, state in 150-200 words whether you think that learning experiences of the kind you have described could become more frequent in schools or other formal educational settings, and give your reasons for this conclusion. (1/20)

Grading: will focus on the quality and clarity of your descriptions and arguments.

Deadlines: proposal Jan. 20; first draft Jan. 29; final draft Feb 10.

EDUCATION 100, Section D2 — Spring 2004

Peer review worksheet (first formal assignment)

Reader _____

Writer _____

Purpose of the peer review: *to help writers understand the effects of how and what they write, and to help readers learn to read a text closely for content, structure and style.*

Procedure: *Read the paper once carefully (before class if possible). Then go through it again, and jot down your responses to the following questions (10 minutes). Afterwards you will be asked to share your feedback with the writer. There will follow a short writing exercise (details on overhead) on your overall impressions of the paper and your advice for the writer.*

Title: does the title of the paper convey a sense of what the paper is about? Can you think of a better title?

Vignette and description: Is the description vivid and detailed? Do you understand what the learning experience was? Are you left with questions about what happened?

Analysis: Does the analysis help you understand *why* this was an important learning experience, e.g. in terms of relationships with peers, subject matter, social networks, personal growth? Is the analysis supported by examples, elaboration, critical interpretation, or new information? What makes the analysis believable?

Is there anything the writer may have missed? If you could ask one question of the writer to try to understand their experience better, what would it be?

Application to teaching: Is the comparison with Esmé's classroom convincing? Is the writer's conclusion persuasive? Are arguments and evidence offered for the applicability/non-applicability of this approach to teaching? Can you find counter-arguments?

Overall Impression

Imagine that the writer is driving a car in the same style that he or she writes. What is the ride like for a reader: Smooth or bumpy? Unknown territory or does there seem to be a map? Fast or slow? Steady or erratic? Considerate or heedless? As a traveling companion/reader what advice would you offer to improve the experience/ piece of writing?

Give examples from the text to illustrate your metaphor, i.e. this is an erratic journey because I couldn't tell what was coming in the next paragraph, it started slow and then it was all over and I missed the middle, etc.

Write no more than half a page. Try to give at least one very concrete suggestion for improvement, and find at least one specific cause for praise.

Verbal exercise: Reading and Response as a form of teaching and learning

Four things to focus on when giving verbal feedback to another reader:

1. What did you learn from this piece of writing and what would you like to know more about?
2. If you could change two things in this piece of writing to make it more effective what would they be?
3. Explain what you meant by the metaphor you used to explain your experience of being a reader and show them a concrete example of what you mean.
4. Tell them what you have learned as a writer from reading their work and giving feedback.

EDUCATION 100 • Section D2 • Spring 2004

Second formal assignment

Purpose: To experience teaching in a university context and use writing to reflect on the choices and challenges involved

Nature of assignment: In a *group* of three people, you will plan and teach a 45-minute class with a focus on one or more examples of educational writing. (You will have at least two weeks to prepare the class.) You will then have up to 12 days to write a short *individual* paper (900-1200 words) reflecting on this experience.

Part I: Teaching

1. Your group should decide what you want the class to explore, and what materials you will use, using one or more examples of the educational genres that we have discussed or will discuss in class. These include teachers writing about their practice (journals and autobiography, reflections on classroom teaching and learning), teaching guides (lists of principles, collections of activities, lesson and unit frameworks), policy documents (Integrated Resource Packages, other documents from the school, district or ministry level), news articles and opinion pieces from the popular media, and academic writing (research reports, theory and philosophy). The text or topic should be one you find interesting yourselves.
2. Develop a lesson plan. To do this you can use the BOPPP framework discussed on Feb. 3, or any other approach you believe will be effective. You should include some means of getting reactions and feedback from the class, e.g. oral or written responses to questions, small group activities, guided discussion or debate, etc. You should plan to have all three of you actively involved in guiding the lesson, although possibly in different ways. You are free to use overheads, handouts, take-home readings, blackboard work, or other media. If you wish to use video, please let me know as soon as possible so I can book the equipment. Also be realistic: In a 45-minute class, a 15-minute video is probably the longest you should plan for. I will be available for suggestions and advice if needed.
3. There will be two teaching sessions per class on February 19, 24, 26, March 2 and 4. Your session will be assigned when you sign up as a group. Please note that if any individual fails to turn up for their group's scheduled teaching session, they will lose 5% off their course mark. (They will also find it difficult to complete the written part of the assignment!)
4. The actual teaching will not be graded in any way – so take risks! Have fun!

Part II: Writing

Imagine that you will be attending a conference on how to teach about education at the undergraduate level. You have been asked to give a short paper on your experience of teaching the class, as part of a forum on sharing ideas and insights among instructors. The paper should do the following:

- describe the teaching context (number of students, their backgrounds, purpose of the course);
- outline what you decided to teach and why;
- describe how you planned the lesson and why;
- summarize what you think went well, what you think the students learned, any unexpected difficulties or surprising developments, giving evidence from the class;
- discuss what you might do differently if you taught the lesson again, and any other advice you have for other instructors who might wish to do something similar in their own courses;
- finally, summarize what you learned about teaching, and your own relationship to teaching, from this experience.

Give the paper a title that describes the purpose of the lesson, and feel free to use sub-headings if that helps you structure the paper. It is recommended that you discuss your writing with others in your group – you will later receive a peer review worksheet to help you give feedback to one another.

Papers are worth of 20% of the final mark. I will be looking for clear descriptions of what you did, reasons for your choices, evidence for your claims, and quality of insight.

Papers are due a maximum of 12 days after the one in which you gave the lesson, and can be submitted as paper copies (in class, in my mailbox, or at my office) or sent as e-mail attachments.

EDUCATION 100 • Section D2 • Spring 2004**Second formal assignment – peer review guidelines****Context and purpose of the peer review**

You have been asked to write a short paper describing and reflecting on your teaching contribution to ED100, in a way that would be helpful to instructors in other institutions who teach an introductory course in education. This is one of the most widespread ways in which teachers use writing: to share insights from professional practice.

What makes a good “professional practice” text? The following elements are important:

- Clarity of purpose and context: what you tried to accomplish in your teaching and why;
- Well-chosen examples: you can't describe everything about what you did and how the students reacted, so try to pick out significant moments, activities, or aspects of the class to illustrate what went on;
- Constructive self-criticism: texts that focus only on what went well or what went wrong are less helpful than texts that explore *why* some things worked and others didn't and suggest more general conclusions about effective teaching.

It is recommended that each group of three arrange to meet and give one another feedback at least once during the writing process, preferably at a point where each person has already written a fairly complete draft.

Giving feedback

I suggest that you go through the following process to make your feedback as useful as possible. Two alternative worksheets are provided.

Feedback written on the paper itself:

1. Read the text once quickly, getting a sense of its structure and the main ideas in it.
2. Read it again, more slowly, marking (perhaps with different colours, or different kinds of line) places that you find particularly effective (clear, persuasive, well-written) or especially weak (confusing, unconvincing, poorly expressed). At this point you can also circle any linguistic problems you notice (spelling, grammar, word choice), but this is not the main thing to be looking for.

Feedback written separately (e.g. on one of these worksheets)

WORKSHEET 1

1. Completeness

Look back at the assignment description. For each of the components or purposes listed there, write a short comment about why the paper does this well, or how it might do it more thoroughly.

Title

Teaching context

Topic and lesson plan

What happened

What might be done differently

What was learned about teaching

2. Effectiveness

Take a mental step back and consider whether the paper would make an effective contribution to a forum on teaching about education at the undergraduate level, using the three criteria suggested above. Write a brief appraisal of each, giving examples from the text where possible.

Clarity of purpose and context: How well did the paper communicate the overall purpose of the lesson and the course of which it was part? Suggest one possible improvement.

Well-chosen examples: How well did the paper describe the ways in which the lesson developed and the outcomes for the class as a whole? Suggest one possible improvement.

Constructive self-criticism: How well did the paper communicate insights into teaching this particular topic or this kind of course that might be applied by instructors in other institutions? Suggest one possible improvement.

WORKSHEET 2

<p>1. Description of the teaching context and the lesson. 10% Number of students, background, purpose of the course. Outline of what you decided to teach and why? Description of how you planned the lesson and why.</p>	
<p>2. Summary of the teaching experience. 30% What went well and why? Give examples What do you think students learned? Provide evidence from responses you observed, what are the signals of learning? Discuss surprises, discoveries, difficulties and provide both positive and negative examples to illustrate your understanding.</p>	
<p>3. Critical reflection on practice: Analysis 25% What have you learned? What would you do differently if you were to teach the lesson again. Analysis should include advice, insights that could be communicated to other instructors wanting to learn from your experience. Provide concrete evidence from the teaching experience.</p>	
<p>4. Summary: Implications for practice. 20% Summarise what you have learned about teaching and your own relationship to teaching from this experience. What is the “BIG Picture” or most important lesson learned or idea that you should tell the reader/other teacher. Is this what you expected to learn, why or why not? What can you say about teaching that you didn’t know before? Make a link to your own understanding and how you believe it may have implications for another person’s practice.</p>	
<p>5. Conventions of writing 15% Clarity of explanation, grammar, style. Spelling, proof-read and technical features. Organization and presentation. Is the style appropriate for the educational practice genre? Does it use examples from the teaching experience? Readability: Could an outside reader understand what happened and what was significant?</p>	
<p>Additional Comments:</p>	
<p>Total</p>	

EDUCATION 100 • Section D2 • Spring 2004

Third formal assignment

Purpose: To use the humanist essay form to reflect on a selected issue within the broad social and personal context of teaching and learning.

Model text: We shall be using Philip Jackson's four essays in *Untaught Lessons* as examples of the humanist essay genre. The following guidelines are intended to help you develop your ideas and writing in order to produce a short essay of the same kind, 1200-1500 words in length.

Schedule: This is the plan for the remaining classes in the semester. The required preparation for each class is indicated in parentheses.

March 9: *Untaught lessons*, Ch. 1. Introduction to the essay form. Developing ideas.
(Read chapter 1 before the class.)

March 11: *Untaught lessons*, Ch. 2. Teaching in literature. Looking for sources.
(Read chapter 2 before the class. Bring an example of creative work on teaching: a poem, novel, children's book, video, artwork, etc.)

March 16: *Untaught lessons*, Ch. 3. Observing teaching. Seeing beneath the surface.
(Read chapter 3 before the class. Bring your observations of one class, at SFU or elsewhere, in which you were not a direct participant.)

March 18: *Untaught lessons*, Ch. 4. Experiencing teaching. Connecting with the personal.
(Read chapter 4 before the class.)

March 23: Doing research. Bring drafts of final assignment to exchange with peers.
(Have a fairly complete draft written before class.)

March 25: Writing research. Peer review in class. Drafts handed in.
(Read your peer's draft before the class.)

March 30: Drafts returned with comments. Review of entire course.
(Look back at your notes and readings before the class.)

April 1: Course evaluation and self-evaluation. Video (yes, really!).

April 6: Final exam (two short essay questions out of six).
(Bring a treat to share at the end of class!)

Developing your essay

1. Theme and ideas. An essay should explore a number of ideas connected to one major theme – in the classes we shall look at how Jackson’s essays do this. Generally, the theme has some kind of personal significance which is made clear in the essay. The writer then develops and “tries out” various perspectives on the theme, drawing on what other writers and artists have done, on a variety of personal experiences, and whatever other resources the writer has at his or her disposal.

An example of a suitable theme would be the topic we discussed in a earlier class, of whether a distant, strict, formal teaching style can be effective. To develop an essay on this theme, you would begin by jotting down ideas from your own experience, conversations you’ve had, things that you’ve read, that relate to the topic. You would then think about common themes that emerge: the influence of culture; the role of personality; differences in learning styles; whether some subjects are more easily taught in a formal manner (e.g. the ones with right/wrong answers, like mathematics), etc. Having identified some key ideas, you might go and read some more or discuss them with a friend or observe someone teaching, to help develop them further.

2. Sources. It is really helpful to read widely (and also to watch films, TV, etc), as this gives you a range of cultural sources to draw on. An essay is usually greatly enlivened by quotations from literature or popular songs, references to movie scenes, allusions to political and cultural events, and the like. Of course, it is no good throwing in quotations and references that have nothing to do with the topic! You need to make the relevance clear, as you will see Jackson doing in his essays.

For the class on March 11, try to find one passage from literature, movie scene or other cultural icon that relates to education and come prepared to share and discuss it.

3. Insight. What really makes an essay worthwhile is when it leaves the reader (and hopefully the writer as well) with a new appreciation of the theme, an interest in it and grasp of its complexities that they did not have before. There is no sure-fire way of making this happen, although the more ideas and the more sources that you have to draw on, the more likely it is that you will come up with something interesting.

For the class on March 16, find a class (at SFU or elsewhere) you can observe, and try to attend to the details of what is going on: who sits where, what interactions take place, what else is being learned besides the topic that is formally being presented. You will be asked to describe the scene to someone else and they will ask you as many questions as they can think of about what you might have observed and how it relates to ideas covered in the course. In the class on March 18, we will use the experience of the previous classes to brainstorm themes, ideas, sources and insights that might be useful for the final assignment.

Papers are worth of 20% of the final mark. Grading criteria will be distributed with the peer review guidelines next week.

EDUCATION 100 • Section D2 • Spring 2004

Mid-Term Review

The following is a brief summary of the ideas and concepts that you should have become somewhat familiar with in the first half of the course, and that you will be expected to use in the assignments and final exam that take place in the second half.

Education as an arena of conflicting values and beliefs

You should be able to:

- summarize and provide arguments in support of contrasting philosophies based on:
 - the development of individual potential,
 - the acquisition of socially valued skills and knowledge,
 - the training of the understanding within a discipline or tradition of thought;
- analyze how and why these perspectives inform the practices of governments, universities, teachers, textbook writers and school administrators.

Using the pedagogical triangle

You should be able to:

- describe or sketch the triangle of interactions between teacher, subject, and learner;
- use this to help you analyze the many things going on in an educational setting, including (but not limited to) the development of teacher-learner and learner-learner relationships, learners coming to know or think about the subject in new ways, social and cultural forces influencing what happens in the classroom, and learners discovering new aspects of themselves.

Understanding educational texts

You should be able to:

- define “educational genre” and give examples of a variety of genres;
- analyze the generic features of a particular text and explain how those features relate to its intended purpose;
- critique the effectiveness of a piece of educational writing and make suggestions for improving it, based on an understanding of the genre to which it belongs.

Thinking about learning

You should be able to:

- explain why theories about how people learn are relevant to classroom teaching;
- explain why it can be difficult to apply those theories in practice;
- discuss the relationship of curriculum guidelines and standardized tests to what is actually learned in school;
- suggest ways in which teachers can improve their understanding of how different learners learn.

Thinking about teaching

You should be able to:

- summarize and provide arguments in support of contrasting perspectives on teaching as technique, and teaching as something that involves the whole person;
- analyze how these perspectives inform different kinds of educational text;
- describe examples from your own experiences of teaching, and of being taught, that illustrate the respective contributions of technique and of personality.

Thinking about schools and school systems

You should be able to:

- identify and describe some of the various social and institutional forces that influence the ways in which schools work;
- analyze the ways in which schools and school systems are portrayed in the media and in various kind of academic text;
- identify and critique the kinds of evidence and argument that are used in a given text to make generalizations about schools and school systems.

You and education

You should be able to:

- identify and explain some of the experiences and beliefs that make up your identity as a learner, a teacher (actual or potential), and a student of education;
- make your personal history and identity explicit in the process of analyzing and critiquing an educational text or event.