

George Mason University
Ph.D. in Education Program
Proposal for Independent Study Course

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requests approval of the Independent Study course described on the attached proposal:

Complete one: EDUC 897: Curricular Practices: Past and Present (Title)

Credits: 3 Semester and year to be taken: Fall 2006

Attached is a 2-4 page proposal describing (check the appropriate type):

- 1. Reading course
- 2. Research course in _____ (field)

Course Instructor: Dr. Dennis R. Dunklee

[Signature] _____ 8/28/06
Signature Date

Student:

[Signature] _____ 8/3/06
Signature Date

List dates of portfolio reviews: Portfolio I _____ Portfolio II _____

Approved Not Approved [Signature] 8/28/06
Chair, Doctoral Advising Committee Date

Approved Not Approved [Signature] 8-31-06
Director, Ph.D. in Education Program Date

Distribution: Student
Chairperson, Doctoral Advising Committee
Instructor
Director, Ph.D. in Education Program

Due no later than the first day of classes of the semester for which you are registering.

EDUC 897: Curricular Practices: Past and Present

Fall, 2006

I. Rationale:

I aspire to work on Education Reform in Pakistan and (if possible) other developing countries through a multi-lateral organization like UNESCO or the World Bank. In order to achieve that end, one of my stated goals for this doctoral program is to gain an understanding of the historical background and current practices in U.S. Education in several areas including curriculum. I plan to use this independent study to gain an understanding of the fundamentals of curriculum development and past and present curricular practices. Furthermore, I plan to study the transition challenges and successes of Muslim adolescents from K-8 US Islamic schools to Public high schools for my final dissertation. One aspect of that research will require an understanding of the differences between several educational practices of the two school systems (K-8 Islamic schools and U.S. public high schools), which may include: the purpose, goals, methods, curricular practices, non-religious content, climate, discipline, structure of school day, parental involvement, parental support, and etc. I believe this study will provide a necessary framework to investigate the differences in curricular practices of the two school systems.

II. Topic description:

I plan to examine historical developments in curriculum as a background to curricular practices of the twenty- first century. A primary aim of this independent study is to combine the theoretical background with the reality of existing curricula in schools

today. I plan to examine the wide range of concepts and issues associated with curriculum thought and practice. By the end of this study, I expect to identify:

1. the historical context and background of current curricular practices and issues;
2. some classic ideologies and orientations to American schooling;
3. the ways in which philosophy (conceptions of knowledge and value), learning theory, developmental psychology (social, emotional, cognitive) and socio-cultural context serve as foundations for curriculum thought and decision-making;
4. the meaning of three major dimensions of schooling: curriculum, instruction and organization, and the relationship between these dimensions;
5. ways to view school characteristics/practices and school context from a curricular perspective;
6. approaches to planning and effecting educational change with a likelihood of success;
7. features of a conceptual framework for curriculum design and analysis and how to apply key elements:
 1. scope
 2. sequence
 3. depth
 4. continuity
 5. breadth
 6. integration
 7. balance
 8. focus

III. Tentative Readings List:

- A. The curriculum studies reader (2nd edition). Edited by: David Flinders and Stephen Norton. Routledge, 2004. ISBN # 0-415-94523-2
- B. Curriculum foundations, principles, and issues (4th edition). Edited by Allan Ornstein and Frances Hunkins. Pearson 2004. ISBN # 0-205-40564-9
- C. If possible I will try to obtain a complete curriculum guide for Fairfax County Public Schools, and an Islamic School. I will refer to these guides throughout the

semester as a way of focusing theoretical issues as they compare to actual curriculum in schools.

IV. Independent Study Outcomes

Two projects/papers: Paper 1 due mid-October and will be a critique of a curriculum platform and Paper 2, the final project, will focus on one of many key curriculum issues. Here are the complete descriptions for the papers/projects:

Project 1: Critique of a Curriculum Platform

Platforms often include explanations of how schools should be defined to most effectively foster these priorities. Platforms also address the rationale or underlying assumptions supporting the author's position. This may be explicitly made or may be implicit in the criticism of schools made by the authors of curriculum platform.

A critique of a curriculum platform should include following points:

1. What does the author propose should be the curriculum priorities of schools?
2. How does the author justify the "platform"; what is the underlying rationale for his/her point of view?
3. Given the author's platform, what would be some possible implications for areas such as instruction, curriculum, organization, means of evaluation, teacher preparation, etc. if it were adopted?
4. What is my critique of the author's position?

Each of the following texts present a curriculum platform, a statement of curriculum priority for what should be taught in schools; this list is a tentative one:

- Adler, Mortimer. [The Paideia Proposal](#)

- Apple, M. Ideology and curriculum: Cultural and economic reproduction in education
- Berman, L. New priorities in the curriculum
- Bestor, Arthur. The Restoration of learning; or other titles
- Brameld, T. Toward a reconstructed philosophy of education
- Bruner, Jerome. The process of education
- Conant, James. The American high school today
- Counts, G. Dare the schools build a new social order?
- Dale, E. Building a learning environment
- Dewey, John. Democracy and education or The child and the curriculum
- Finn, Chester. We must take charge
- Ford, G. and Pugno, L. eds. The structure of knowledge and the curriculum
- Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the oppressed or Education for critical consciousness
- Gardner, Howard. The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach or Multiple intelligence theory
- Goodland, John. A place called school
- Green, Maxine. The public school and the private vision
- Heslep, Robert. Education
- Hirsch, E.D. Cultural literacy
- Illich, Ivan. Deschooling society
- Neill, A.S. Summerhill
- Parker, J. and Rubin, L. Process as content
- Patterson, C.H. Humanistic education
- Phenix, P. Realms of meaning
- Ravitch, Diane. The schools we deserve

Project 2: Critical Issues in Curriculum Theory and Practice

This project will focus on a singular key issue in curriculum debates, to research the evolution of this issue, and then finally to identify ways in which this issue is, or is

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not, a part of the curriculums (of FCPS and Islamic school) I will use throughout the semester. I will select an issue, idea, problem, or source of conflict that I see as particularly important to contemporary debates about education. I will reflect on my selection and consider what really is involved or at stake. How has it played out in the curriculum plan I plan to use? In essence, I will try to gain a greater understanding of what are the defining elements of the issue, competing points of view, how the issue has evolved over time, and what is at stake in terms of possible consequences of the issue for American education.

References:

Much of the plan for this study is borrowed from Dr. Ellie Wilson's course syllabus for: **EDIS 780: Fundamentals of Curriculum – Fall, 2005.**