

## EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### Topic: The Black-White Test Score Gap: Evidence, Causes, and Solutions

#### EDS 771J

#### *Course Description*

The purpose of this seminar is to explore broadly the meaning of culture, its influence on the “self” and “the other”, as well as the influence of culture on issues of teaching and learning. This seminar centers on readings that provide a research framework for exploring sociopolitical factors as well as structural and cultural factors that influence the school achievement of students who come from diverse groups. This semester’s course specifically focuses on one of the most perplexing and complex problems in education—the achievement gap between Black and White students.

#### *Required Readings*

##### Primary Texts:

Jencks, C., & Phillips, M. (Ed.). (1998). The Black-White test score gap. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

##### Articles/Chapters:

Berlak, H. (Summer 2001). Race and the achievement gap. Rethinking Schools, 15(4), p.10.

Education Trust. (Spring 2001). New frontiers for a new century. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

Hall, E. T. (1989). Unstated features of the cultural context of learning. The Educational Forum, 54, 21-34.

Kober, N. (2001). It takes more than testing: Closing the achievement gap. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.

McIntosh, P. (1992 ). White privilege and male privilege. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), Race, and class and gender. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Morganthau, T. (Feb. 13, 1995). What color is black? Newsweek.

Miner, H. (1956). Body ritual among the Nacirema. American Anthropologist, 58, 503 - 507.

Oakes, J. (1986). Keeping track, part 1. Phi Delta Kappan, 68 (2), 12 - 17  
Keeping track, part 2. Phi Delta Kappan, 68 (3), 148 - 153.

Rist, R. C. (1970). Student social class and teacher expectations: The self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education. Harvard Educational Review, 40 (3), 411 - 451.

Weissglass, J.(August 8, 2001). Racism and the achievement gap. Education Week.

### *Course Requirements*

	% of grade
1. Course participation	
Article/chapter discussion	30
2. Midterm Book Review	30
3. Final Paper	40

#### Grades

A = 100 - 96

A- = 95 - 91

B = 90 - 86

B- = 85 - 81

C = 80 - 76

#### 1. Course participation:

This course is a readings/discussion course; hence attendance and participation in each scheduled session are very important. The degree to which students have mastered the required readings will be determined by participation in class discussions and the student's presentation of assigned chapters/articles. See attachment A for guidelines for reports on chapters/articles and your role as discussion leader.

#### 2. Book Reviews

Each student is to submit and present in class two book summaries and reviews. Suggested books are listed in Attachment B. See Attachment B for guidelines for writing the reviews. The due date for the reviews depends on the topic of the book you select.

#### 3. Final Paper

Each student is required to complete a paper aimed at increasing his/her understanding of the Black-White test score gap. Attachment C for guidelines for this requirement.

### **SCHEDULE OF CLASS ACTIVITIES**

9-4	<p>Course overview, expectations, requirements</p> <p>An Overview of the Test Score Gap Problem</p> <p>Read: Jencks and Phillips: Introduction</p> <p>Jencks and Phillips (J &amp; P): Chapter 6, Why Did the Gap Narrow in the 70s and 80s?</p>
9-11	Discussion of Nieto book
9-18	<p><u>Is the test score gap related to bias in testing?</u></p> <p>J &amp; P: Chapter 2 New Frontiers for a New Century It Takes More Than Testing</p> <p><u>Is the test score gap related to genetics and IQ?</u> J &amp; P: Chapter 3</p> <p>Book choice: McNeil</p>
9-20 (Thurs)	<p>Sonia Nieto Lecture at 4:00 and small group discussions on the 21<sup>st</sup></p> <p>Required</p>
9-25	No class
10-2	<p><u>Is the test score gap related to family background and parenting practices?</u></p> <p>J &amp; P: Chapter 4</p> <p>Book choice: Clark</p>
10-9	<p><u>Is the test score gap related to teacher expectations and teacher quality variables?</u></p> <p>J &amp; P Chapter 8 Rist article</p> <p>Book choice: Foster, Howard, Ladson-Billings</p>
10-16	Fall Break
10-23	<p><u>Is the test score gap related to school -related variables?</u></p> <p>J&amp;P Chapter 9 Oakes article</p> <p>Book choices: Comer</p>
10-30 and 11-6	<p><u>Is the test score gap related to cultural differences?</u></p> <p>J &amp; P Chapter 10 and 11</p> <p>Miner article Hall article</p> <p>Book choices: Anderson, Majors &amp; Billson, Rathbone, Simon &amp; Burns, McWhorter</p>

11-13 and 11-20	<u>Is the test score gap related to societal racism and prejudice?</u>  Morganthau article McIntosh article Berlak article Weissglass article  Videos: Retail Racism and True Colors  Book choices: Stephan, West, Feagin
11-27	<u>Is the test score gap related to social structure of inequality ?</u>  J & P Chapter 15  Book choices: Anyon, Conley, Hacker, Kozol, Lipman, Wilson
12-4	Remaining Book presentations
12-11	Summary, synthesis, and evaluation

## **Attachment A**

### **Guidelines for Article/Chapter/Book Discussions**

Prepare a 3-4 page, detailed and specific summary of the author's major points.  
Duplicate copies for your classmates.

Section 1: Summary of article/chapter/book  
(Books are to be summarized by chapters.)

Section 2: Personal Response  
How well did the author present her/his arguments?  
How does this piece relate to other works you have read in the course?  
What major insights did this piece reveal to you?

Each presentation will be followed by questions and comments from the class and the professor.

## Attachment B

### Suggested Books for Review

- Anderson, E. (1999). Code of the streets: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city.
- Anyon, J. (1997). Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform.
- Ayers, W. (1993). To teach.
- Clark, R. M. (1983). Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed or fail.
- Comer, J. P. (1997) Waiting for a miracle. New York: Dutton Books
- Conley, D. (1999). Being black, living in the red: Race, wealth, and social policy in America.
- Feagin, J. R. (2000). Racist America. New York: Routledge.
- Foster, M. (1997). Black teachers on teaching.
- Hacker, A. (1992). Two nations: Black and white, separate, hostile, and unequal.
- Howard, G.R. (1999). We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools.
- Kozol, J. (1992). Savage inequalities.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers.
- Lipman, P. (1998). Race, class, and power in school restructuring.
- McNeil, L. M. (2000). Contradictions of school reform: Educational costs of standardized testing. New York: Routledge.
- McWhorter, J. H. (2000). Losing the race: Self-sabotage in Black America. New York: The Free Press.
- Majors, R., & Billson, J. M. (1992). Cool pose: The dilemmas of black manhood in America.
- Paley, V. G. (1995). Kwanzaa and me: A teacher's story.
- Paley, V. G. (1979). White teacher.
- Rathbone, C. (1998). On the outside looking in: A year in an inner-city high school.
- Simon, D., & Burns, E. (1997). The corner: A year in the life of an inner-city neighborhood.
- Stephan, W. (1999) Reducing prejudice and stereotyping in schools.
- Wilson, W. J. (1996). When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor.

## **Attachment C**

### **Final Paper**

Please make an appointment with me before Thanksgiving to discuss your paper.

#### Option 1:

Congratulations Secretary of Education! Your first assignment is to prepare a 10 page policy briefing paper that outlines America's greatest challenge—closing the Black-White test score gap. The paper should have 3 distinct sections:

1. Describe the nature of the problem
2. Summarize the major causes
3. Propose a 10-point (at least) plan for change.

The paper (doubled spaced, Times, 12-font) should be written for a general audience. It should be readable, concise yet powerful, and easily understood by a lay audience.

#### Option 2:

You may choose to write a 10 –15 page research-based paper that focuses on one narrow aspect of the course. For example, you might select topics such as: tracking, racism in education, cultural dissonance between home and school, pre-school education, the need for teachers of color, etc. The audience for this option is an academic one.

#### Option 3:

An open-book final examination.