Course Description

You are a member of the species Homo sapiens, which means you possess a brain of roughly 1300 cubic centimeters, tiny little teeth, cannot run particularly fast, and yet your species has conquered (and is destroying) the planet. How you did this is simple: LEARNING. Your huge brain, your ability to communicate with each other, and to present ideas that are incredibly abstract to each other has made you the only species that asks after its own existence. At least the only species that we know of.

As a student of the humanities — that is, specializing in the human — you have developed your own specific course of study. In this course we will all work to understand each other’s own course of study. This will include open discussion, the writing of a “capstone essay,” and some traditional lectures. Below you will see descriptions of individual assignments, and the presentation of a way of grading in this course.

Details on all this follows below. Don’t worry — it’ll be worth it.

The Normal Information:

Instructor: Matthew Wilhelm Kapell, MA, MA, PhD
matthewkapell.com
Office: Clark Hall 412H
Telephone: 408.924.7807 (Worst bet)
Email: matthew.kapell@sjsu.edu (Best Bet)
Office Hours: M: 4.30-5.00; Th: 1.30-2.00; and always by appointment and via any reasonable method (phone, Philz, etc.)

Humanities 190:
Senior Seminar in Humanities

T/TH 12.00-1.15
Dwight Bentel Hall 202
What We Will Do Here

You have spent a lot of time (and money) on your education and you are nearing its completion. In this Senior Seminar, or Capstone course, we will work along two **parallel paths**. They are designed to inform and reinforce each other and we will be going back and forth between them.

**The First Path:**

We will be examining the idea of knowledge, of learning, of teaching, and how these things are in part a process of schools. We will examine the development of the philosophy of education (pedagogy) and knowledge, itself (epistemology) and look at how these things grew, first in schools and later in universities.

**The Second Path:**

You will be examining your own education and placing who you are, now, as at least the creation of what you chose to study. You will offer a short auto-ethnography of yourself and your education, create an overall plan for how you got to where you are now (that is, make it make sense) and then provide a final, capstone paper that combines the idea of education in the United States, today, with your own educational path.

Required Texts

Students are encouraged to get themselves a copy of any college writing book such at *Elements of Style* by Strunk & White.

**America's Education Deficit, Henry A. Giroux**

A book on how education, once considered simply a necessity of a shared democratic culture, has become a system of power directed against young people by politicians of all side of the spectrum. Rather than seeing education as good for society we've redefined it as only good for the individual and as a product to be purchased. Giroux wants to know why.

**On Critical Pedagogy, Henry A. Giroux**

A selection of essays written over twenty years by the same author as the above work. As an individual in class you will not read all of the essays, but different parts of the class will read different essays and report on them to the rest of the class.

**Experience and Education, John Dewey**

The most important thinker on education in the United States was the philosopher John Dewey. We will examine both his theory of knowledge and how he thinks people learn. His notion of Truth and his understanding of “learning by doing” both changed American education dramatically.
**Pedagogy:**

1. the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.
2. the art or science of teaching; the function of work of a teacher.

**Epistemology:**

1. a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, method, and limits of human knowledge.
2. the theory of knowledge, especially in regard to its methods, validity, and scope.
3. the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion.

**Pragmatism:**

1. a philosophical movement that stresses practical consequences as constituting the essential criterion in determining value or truth.
2. (in education) the position, proposed by John Dewey, that learning occurs in a social environment and is dependent on context, place, and time; the position that education is necessary for democracy and the creation of a new social order.

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**General Schedule:**

(This schedule is subject to change with reasonable notice and is primarily offered as a way for students to consider organizing their time and planning their learning. See following pages for descriptions of exams and essays.)

**Week 1:** Introduction to the course; introduction of students to each other.

**Weeks 2-5:** Lectures on the history of formal education with special attention to the ancient organization of knowledge, the sharing of knowledge in foraging societies, the development of the first “universities” in the North African Muslim world, and the development and history of European and North American schooling and universities in the Modern Era.

**Week 2** will include introductory discussion of Giroux’s *On Critical Pedagogy* as well as the assignment of specific chapters of the book to students.

**Week 4** Auto-Ethnography essays will be due.

**Weeks 6-10:** Deep reading of Dewey’s *Experience and Education* and in class group discussions of individual and group learning. Lectures on the American philosophy of pragmatism and the birth of progressive education in the early 20th century.
**General Schedule:**

*Continued*

**Week 8:** Midterm Examination.

**Week 10:** Power and Pedagogy Papers due.

**Weeks 11-13:** Lectures on the relationship between the humanities and the sciences (the “two-cultures”). In-class discussions of both books by Giroux.

**Week 13:** Presentations of roughly ten-minute length from all students on their own educational experience as related to an assigned essay in Giroux’s *On Critical Pedagogy*.

**Week 15** Discussions of final capstone papers in class, non-formal presentations of what each students is working on toward that paper.

**Weeks 16:** Final Capstone Papers are due. There will be a ritual celebration.

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**Empiricism:**

noun

1. the theory that all knowledge is derived from experience through the senses.
2. the practice of relying on observation and experimentation, especially in the natural sciences.

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**Paradigm:**

noun

1. in philosophy a set of concepts, theories, research methods and thought patterns accepted by practitioners in a field.
2. an example serving as a model of phenomena; a pattern evident within a knowledge community.
Humanities Department:

Relevant Humanities Program Learning Objectives (PLOs)

1) The ability to frame questions and pursue answers to aesthetic, social, cultural and global problems using interdisciplinary methods.
2) Skill in written, visual and verbal communication, including argumentation.
3) The ability to identify, select, use, and cite information sources appropriately.

Learning Outcomes

Additional Course Learning Objectives (CLOs)

1) Students demonstrate the ability to identify a research problem, and effectively design and execute an interdisciplinary research strategy using multiple humanities and/or social science methods.
2) Students demonstrate skills in critical and creative thinking.
3) Students demonstrate scholarly concern for their work, i.e.: show concern for excellence in inquiry; exhibit the ability to critically reflect on and improve their work; and so on.
4) Students productively collaborate with peers and the professor.

Essays:

Auto-ethnography
What is the personal history of your educational path? How have you come to be in this class at this time? What do you expect from the course, from your college education, and from everything you have learned up to now? (3-5 pages)

Pedagogy and Power
In your lifetime education has changed dramatically. Looking to one essay from Giroux's On Critical Pedagogy you will offer a thesis-driven examination of the good or the bad of those changes with reference to your own educational experience. You will present your ideas to class. (5-7 pages)

Capstone Paper
Using both John Dewey's understanding of learning and Henry Giroux's commitment to resisting power through education, examine both your own educational status and your plans for the future. This will be your major paper. (10+ pages)
Midterm Exam

New Ideas, New Terms, and New Ways of Thinking

A combination of Defining Important Terms and explaining the Contributions of Important People, the Single Midterm Exam will use an 8½ x 11 green or blue book and take the entire period. You will be given more Terms and People than you have to respond to and you will pick from among them.

Power Presentation

Each student will present one of the essays in On Critical Pedagogy in relation to their own educational status to class with appropriate professionalism. Each presentation will offer an overview of the essay and the student’s take on those ideas. I will be VERY liberal in failing students lacking preparation.

Class Etiquette

Some simple rules for the rest of your life:

Emails require salutations with a name and closing declarations with your name.

We will treat each other with respect both in class and outside.

In class we will work to listen to fellow learners (which includes me) and we will respectfully ask questions.

If I see your phone I will take your phone. I may give it back, but I’m grouchy so you’ll not be sure.

Attendance is an absolute requirement and I reserve the right to fail you for repeated absences.

What is the real rule? Common Courtesy.

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on the Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ website at: http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/
Remember: Humanities is **EVERYTHING** human.

**Dates and Weights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auto-Ethnography</td>
<td>11 September</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>11 October</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Paper</td>
<td>23 October</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Presentation</td>
<td>13, 15 November</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Always Happening, Always Assessed</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Paper</td>
<td>6 December</td>
<td>30%</td>
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The normal grade distributions apply with 90-100 being in the A range, 80-89 in the B range and so on. Failing students will know they are failing long before the due date of the Capstone Paper.

I tend to be generous with the '+' part of the grade scales so a person who has shown dramatic improvement during the term and finished with an 86% average is likely to earn a B+.

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*Vox, Veritas, Vita*

The Latin motto of the California State University System.

It translates as:

*Voice, Truth, Life*