

**UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies**  
**School of Education**  
**EDC 102: Introduction to American Education**  
**Online Syllabus**

---

Instructor: Josh Smith, M.A., M.B.A.  
Email: josh@uri.edu  
Office: 715 Chafee, mailbox 7th floor  
Phone: (401) 874-7404  
Office Hours: Monday – Friday by appointment

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

---

**Course Catalog Description:**

The goal of this course is for students to develop an understanding of education in American society, to begin to analyze educational principles and practices, and to **apply** these principles to modern approaches to learning and teaching. Students will be introduced to the complex nature of the American public school system and apply these ideas by researching and describing educational contexts. The course also incorporates themes of diversity by studying persistent inequities in American education, and comparing schools situated in different communities. The course is learner-centered and project-based, with most of the artifacts created and refined by students through BrightSpace. Effective research methods, writing, and collaboration methods are stressed in the context of creating these artifacts.

**Course Objectives:**

*Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:*

1. *To answer the question "Who is in our schools today?" you should be able to:*
  - Identify the characteristics of professions and develop an argument for or against declaring teaching a profession.
  - Describe what we mean by culture and groups within a culture.
  - Describe the theories and ideologies that influence how schools respond to students from diverse groups.
  - Identify the challenges that many students face as a result of being at risk because of societal factors, such as poverty, over which they have little or no control.
  - Discuss the importance of diversity, equality, and social justice in delivering high-quality education for all students.
  - Describe the role that schools play in the education and socialization of today's children and youth.

2. *To answer the question "How and what we should teach in school?," you should be able to:*
  - Identify different conceptions of standards and analyze the consequences that these conceptions have for teaching and learning.
  - Define accountability for student learning and describe how the No Child Left Behind Act is holding schools, districts, and states accountable for student achievement.
  - Understand the meaning of "helping all students learn" and explain how standards and assessments may influence efforts to meet this goal.
  - Define philosophy and describe methods of inquiry used by philosophers.
  - Elaborate on the major tenets of idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism.
  - Relate philosophical concepts to teaching and learning.
  - Identify the major tenets of *authoritarian* educational philosophies of essentialism, behaviorism, and positivism.
  - Identify the major tenets of *non-authoritarian* educational philosophies of progressivism, humanism, and constructivism.
  - Relate educational philosophy to classroom organization, discipline practices, motivation, and classroom climate.
  - Describe and analyze characteristics of direct and indirect teaching strategies.
3. *To answer the question "What has led us to where we are now?," you should be able to:*
  - Describe the organizational structure of schools, school districts, and the authority relationships among schools, states, and the federal government.

**To meet General Education requirements, students will also:**

1. Use key educational indicators to develop search terms to perform research to inform instruction.
2. Use information frameworks (e.g. CRAAP guidelines) to evaluate reliable sources to gather information to describe an educational context. Represent, analyze, and synthesize educational indicators.
3. Use a variety of educational indicators to draw conclusions about a community, district, and school.
4. Use APA format to cite specific information in describing an educational context.

**Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards Addressed:**

1. **Standard 1.** Teachers create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the world in which we live.
2. **Standard 4.** Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of learners and an understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning.
3. **Standard 10.** Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.

4. **Standard 11.** Teachers maintain professional standards guided by legal and ethical principles

### **Required Texts**

Hall, G. E., Quinn, L. F., Gollnick, D. M. (2020). *Introduction to Teaching: Making a Difference in Student Learning*. Los Angeles: SAGE. 3rd Edition.

### **Technology Requirements:**

Computer access to the Internet is required in order to successfully navigate this course. Google Chrome is the recommended browser for BrightSpace compatibility. You will require additional plug-ins (Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash, Real Player, Quicktime). These are all free downloads. Internet Explorer for Windows, version 6 or higher is also an option. Be sure to turn off the pop-up blocker.

### **BrightSpace Help:**

You can call the Help Desk at (401)-874-4357.

### **Classroom protocol:**

For this online course, BrightSpace is our “classroom.”

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your **PRESENCE** on the site as well as your **CONTRIBUTIONS** to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your **regular, on-time forum postings and responses**, and timely assignment submissions. If you’ve never taken an online course, “hanging out” on BrightSpace will take some getting used to, and it will be easy to forget about the course from time to time, so be sure to set calendar reminders to keep you active.

### **Online Learning:**

**This course is divided into five (5) weeks.** Each **Module** on BrightSpace contains the learning objectives for that lesson, assigned readings, videos, and links to other important content on the internet, written assignments, quizzes, and discussion activities.

### **Written Assignments:**

1. All assignments must follow the **American Psychological Association (APA) (6<sup>th</sup> edition)** editorial style:
  - a. 1” top, bottom, and side margins
  - b. ½ inch paragraph indentations
  - c. double spaced
  - d. one hard return at the end of each paragraph (never use double hard returns)
  - e. avoid excessive quotes

- f. reference list

For all the written assignments, I give page numbers for length of the work as a general guide. Going over or under this length will not affect your grade. The important thing is to answer everything you are asked to address in the paper and to be specific/clear in your response and **FOLLOW THE RUBRIC**.

### **Course Policies:**

1. Attendance at online module weeks is expected. If you are unable to attend a week for legitimate reasons, you must responsibly and professionally communicate this to your Instructor **by email**. Clearly, attendance and active participation at seminars are highly valued.
2. No make-up work is available for missed modules, although you will find session materials on BrightSpace. In the case of a medical emergency, you are responsible for obtaining documentation from medical personnel and providing it to me at the *next* module.
3. Late work will NOT be accepted unless **prior** arrangements have been made with your contact for the course.
4. Norms of academic integrity, honesty, and excellence are expected in this course. Any dishonest act (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) will be dealt with according to University policy.
5. Respect for yourself, your colleagues, and your students are norms of this course. As such, I anticipate that you will, as I will, treat colleagues and other students with respect during discussions and in any written communications. Please turn off and put away cell phones/personal electronic devices during seminars, unless you request special permission from the instructor prior to the start of class. Laptops/tablets are permitted during seminar as long as their use is limited to the content of this course. If this guideline is not followed, I reserve the right to take away all attendance/participation points without notice.

### **Other Important Notes:**

1. Students are expected to communicate with the instructor frequently, especially when they encounter difficulties completing any of the course assignments and **BEFORE** due dates!

### **ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES**

#### **Office of Disability Services**

1. Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Students should also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098.

2. From the University Manual: **6.40.10 and 6.40.11 Accommodations for Qualified**

## **Students with Disabilities.**

Students are expected to notify faculty at the onset of the semester if any special considerations are required in the course. If any special considerations are required for examinations, it is expected the student will notify the faculty a week before the examination with the appropriate paperwork.

## **The URI Academic Enhancement Center**

☐ <http://web.uri.edu/aec/> ☐

## **The Writing Center**

The Writing Center is for all writers, all disciplines, at all levels, and all stages of writing. It will only improve your grade. If possible, call ahead for an appointment (874-4690).

☐ Drop-in tutorials are often available. You may make repeat appointments, requesting the same tutor each time if you wish.

☐ See their Web Page: <http://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/>

### **Accessibility**

YouTube **Accessibility** Assistance: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/189278?hl=en>

Microsoft **Accessibility** Assistance: <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/office-accessibility-center-resources-for-people-with-disabilities-ecab0fcf-d143-4fe8-a2ff-6cd596bddc6d>

## **Professional Conduct:**

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses, which are dealt with firmly by the College and University. Scholastic integrity presumes that students are honest in all academic work. **Cheating** is the failure to give credit for work not done independently (i.e., submitting a paper written by someone other than yourself), unauthorized communication during an examination, or the claiming of credit for work not done (i.e., falsifying information). **Plagiarism** is the failure to give credit for another person's written or oral statement, thereby falsely presuming that such work is originally and solely your own.

If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following website: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/whatisplagiarism>, the URI Student Handbook, and University Manual sections on plagiarism and cheating at <http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/>.

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to

know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation;
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently;
- Unauthorized possession or access to exams;
- Unauthorized communication during exams;
- Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student;
- Taking an exam for another student;
- Altering or attempting to alter grades;
- The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams;
- Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references;
- Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty;
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the Instructor.

Please note the following section from the **University Manual**:

**8.27.17.** Instructors shall have the explicit duty to take action in known cases of cheating or plagiarism. The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized. The circumstances of this failure shall be reported to the student's academic dean, the instructor's dean, and the Office of Student Life. The student may appeal the matter to the instructor's dean, and the decision by the dean shall be expeditious and final.

Such action will be initiated by the instructor if it is determined that any written assignment is copied or falsified or inappropriately referenced.

Any good writer's handbook as well as reputable online resources will offer help on matters of plagiarism and instruct you on how to acknowledge source material. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to indicate your references, PLEASE ASK.

**Please note:** Students are responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the published "**Community Standards of Behavior: University Policies and Regulations**" which can be accessed in the **University Student Handbook**.

### **Course Expectations:**

1. Students are expected to demonstrate positive and professional attitudes while in this course.
2. Students are required to act professionally toward instructor and classmates including the presence of a positive tone in all dialogue and the respect for cultural awareness and sensitivity.
3. Students should be prompt and prepared for each weekly unit. You are responsible for completing the reading assignments **during** each unit. This will facilitate discussion and provide you with an opportunity to secure an

understanding of the concepts via PowerPoints, online lectures, discussions and/or questioning.

### **Grading Scale**

A = 93.5 -100	B - = 79.5-83.4	D+ = 66.5-69.4
A- = 89.5 -93.4	C+ = 76.5-79.4	D = 64.5-66.4
B+ = 86.5-89.4	C = 73.5-76.4	F = below 64.5
B = 83.5-86.4	C - = 69.5-73.4	

## **Course Requirements & Assignments:**

### **1. Participation in Discussions/Forums, & Weekly Homework 35%**

You are expected to participate in each discussion forum. Each unit/session will require some form of active participation such as peer teaching/presenting, discussion, group work, etc. Students should be prepared to share and apply their understanding of the assigned readings during each unit.

### **2. Weekly Quizzes 25%**

These short quizzes are the backbone of this course. You will be taking them weekly on the reading(s) for the module. These quizzes will be available on Thursdays until Saturday at midnight on BrightSpace. Each quiz posted on BrightSpace will be timed for 30 minutes and will have 20 multiple choice & True/False questions. Out of 12 total quizzes, I drop the lowest 2, counting only your highest 10 quizzes.

### **3. Academic Autobiography/Teaching Philosophy Statement 10%**

You will write an academic autobiography and consisting of aspects of your educational past experience in K-12 schools. You should connect your essays to topics discussed in the forums and from your understanding of chapters 4, 7 and 12. This paper is a 4-5 page informal paper that provides a clear, concise account of your educational past and your teaching approach, methods, and expertise if you were to become a teacher.

### **4. Using Research to Inform Instruction 20%**

Each of you will write an individual formal research paper. The paper will be roughly 8-12 pages.

### **5. Final Exam 10%**

A comprehensive final exam will be given during the exam day. The exam will include material from our activities, reading assignments, and peer presentations. It will a take home exam and done through BrightSpace.