**Michigan State University**
**College of Education**

**ED 800 Online**
*Concepts of Educational Inquiry*
*Spring* **2009**

**Instructor: Steven Weiland, Professor of**
**Educational Administration**

### Subject and Goals

ED 800, the introductory course in the MSU online MAED program, is designed to be foundational. It provides an opportunity to think and write about essential questions of education, including: What are its purposes, traditions, characteristic activities, and recurring problems and efforts at reform? What is most worth knowing and how are individual, institutional, and social views of education and the curriculum at all levels reconciled? How do we learn, what do we want from teaching, and from education outside of schools and beyond the years of formal schooling? What role does knowledge of human experience unlike our own play in our learning? How do conditions of contemporary life (e.g., globalization and the new information and communications technologies) influence education?

To consider responses to these questions we will focus on some of the most effective ways to study learning, teaching, administration, and leadership. Our goal is understanding of essential methods and domains of educational inquiry: 1) Philosophical thought, a traditional feature of "foundations of education"; 2) Classroom-based, or teacher (or practitioner) inquiry; 3) Theories of the mind, intelligence, and the organization of the curriculum; 4) Biography and history focused on learning out of school; 5) Ethnographic "participant observation" and personal reflection focused on experience in other cultures; and 6) New communications and information technologies and their impact on teaching and learning--and educational careers. These do not exhaust the possibilities of educational inquiry but they offer opportunities to sample influential, timely, and practical work.

Our educational inquiries inevitably begin with our own experience and preferences but they don't end there. Thus, the course aims to provide encounters with different domains and forms of inquiry, and their purposes, uses, and meanings. We will study work by important writers on education and related fields, and make considerable use of online resources via hypermedia, or the course's own extensive web of electronic links. And the syllabus includes a volume of poetry, one that addresses many questions of inquiry. John Dewey once said, speaking of the role of the arts in education: "I know of no work that better develops the power of attention, the habit of observation and of consecutiveness, of seeing parts in relation to a whole." Thus, ED 800 represents the fact that studying education, from early schooling through adult work, is a multi-disciplinary endeavor inviting us to understand the nature of learning, teaching, administration, and leadership from different but complementary perspectives.

### Self-Paced Format

ED 800 is an unusual course in the College of Education's online MA Program, offered as it is in a *self-paced* format. Students can earn credit for the course by completing the eight units according to a schedule they set for themselves, within the timeframe of the Summer 2010

semester calendar. Needless to say, good planning and steady application are essential to completing the course in a satisfying way.

The course is also unusual in the extent to which it uses *hypertext*, or what is now often called *hypermedia* when it includes video, audio, photography, online exhibits, and more. That means that ED 800 utilizes many links to such online resources. The units are designed to offer, in the instructor's writing and the links appearing with it, a course-based web of information, interpretation, opinion, and resources of many kinds in different media. Students in the course become, in effect, *hypertext* or *hypermedia readers*, deciding what attention and priority to give to the varied resources and what relations to consider among them. The web for the course, so to speak, operates as a network of resources for learning, anchored in the syllabus but offering many paths for exploration. Thus, beyond its attention to questions of educational inquiry, ED 800 is intended to contribute to students' abilities in what is now called "information [or digital] literacy."

## Assignments and Grades

Each of the eight course units includes assignments in reading, listening, and viewing. There is also a writing assignment for each unit, an essay of approximately 500 words for Units 1-7. Submitting the writing assignment for a unit gains access to the next one. The writing assignment for Unit 8, approximately 2,500 words, serves as the Final Exam. There are no required interactions among students (e.g., postings to group discussions), though there are opportunities for voluntary ones. Course grades will reflect performance on the written work: *Unit Essays 1-7* (70%) and *Unit Essay 8* (30%). The recommended (NOT required) book by Joseph Williams is a brief but excellent resource for improving writing.

## Books and Films

Required Books are listed below in the order in which they appear in the course. All are available in paperback editions from bookstores or online merchants like Amazon and Barnes and Noble. The Student Bookstore in East Lansing will also be able to fill orders by phone (517-351-4210) or online (www.sbsmsu.com).

Vivian Paley, *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* (Harvard University Press)
Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind: Beyond Facts and Standardized Tests, The K-12 Education That Every Child Deserves* (Penguin Books)
Philip Cusick, *A Passion for Learning: The Education of Seven Eminent Americans* (Teachers College Press)
Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (HarperCollins)
Billy Collins, *Sailing Alone Around the Room* (Random House)

Recommended Book. Also available from online booksellers.

Joseph M. Williams, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace* (Third Edition; Pearson Longman)

Required Films are available from rental outlets or from online book and DVD sellers.

*Spellbound*  (2002; Directed by Jeffrey Blitz)
*Whale Rider* (2002; Directed by Niki Caro)