Sul Ross State University

EDUA 2303 Trends in Education

Spring 2026

Department of Education

Instructor: Jennifer Miller, PhD.
Associate Professor of Education
Office
BAB 102, Alpine
Office Phone: 432-837-8013
Cell Phone: 254.485.0758
Fax: 432-837-8390
Email: jennifer.miller@sulross.edu

Class Meeting Time: 12:50-2:35 PM T/Th.

Office Hours: Tuesday, 3-6 pm & Thurs. 9-12 pm & by appointment

Book time with Miller, Jennifer

Course Description:

This course will provide an examination of the social, historical and intellectual underpinnings of education in the United States. Ideally, students will have the opportunity to participate in field observations at all levels of kindergarten through twelfth grade schools with varied and diverse student populations.   The exploratory nature of the course provides understanding of schooling and learning environments in the United States. Topics of student will include digital and cultural literacy, social-emotional intelligence, cognitive processing, equity, and STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). The Core Curriculum Skills of Teamwork and cooperative learnings will be implemented through assigned group projects. The course is open to all students who may be considering a career in education, as well as those who simply want to be more informed about public schools and education in the United States.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Educator Standards Featured in Course:
Standard 2- Knowledge of Students and Student Learning
Standard 4- Learning Environment

Course Objectives:

At the completion of the course, the learner will be able to:
1. Identify issues and social trends confronting contemporary education, including equity and cultural literacy.
2. Identify major historical events and persons who have influenced the progression and development of education in America.
3. Reflect on values promoted through classroom learning environments.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Discuss trends in education
2. Develop oral presentation skills
3. Develop critical thinking skills through writing reflective papers on trends and issues in education.

Core Curriculum Skills to Be Addressed in This Course:
1. Teamwork: Students will develop teamwork skills to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

2. Communication: Students will develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.

Required Instructional Materials:
This course is an Open Educational Resource (OER) course. Students are not required to purchase any materials. Readings for each weekly module will be posted on Blackboard.

Blackboard and Online Access:
This course is designed to be delivered face to face. However, there is a Blackboard Course for EDUA 2303, and all instructional materials, assignments and grades will be maintained on Blackboard. Students are directed to review the Blackboard course throughout the semester.

Description of Course Assignments:

List of Assignments with Description Following:

Category	Points	% of Final Grade	Purpose
Discussions & Peer Responses (10 total; lowest 2 dropped)	250	25%	Engagement with trends, readings, and ideas
Learning Journals (10 total; lowest 2 dropped)	250	25%	Reflection, sense-making, and critical thinking
Midterm Exam	150	15%	Content knowledge + conceptual understanding
Team Challenge Project (Technology-Enhanced)	200	20%	Collaboration, research, communication
Educational Activities in Schools	100	10%	Real-world observation & connection
Final Exam	150	15%	Synthesis of course concepts
Total	**1,000**	**100%**	

Assignment Descriptions and Expectations

Discussion Boards and Peer Responses: Students will participate in weekly online discussion forums focused on course readings, class topics, and current trends in education. Discussion posts are designed to help students analyze ideas, ask questions, and make connections between theory, practice, and personal experience. Posts should demonstrate critical thinking, clarity of expression, and engagement with course content. When AI tools are used for brainstorming or revision, their use must be disclosed.

Requirements:

- **Initial Post (300 words):**
  Respond thoughtfully to the weekly prompt by synthesizing course readings, class discussion, and/or relevant examples.
- **Peer Response (150 words):**
  Respond constructively to at least one classmate by extending their thinking, asking clarifying questions, or offering additional insight.

Points: 250 total (25 points each; lowest 2 dropped)

Learning Journals (Critical Thinking Journals): Learning journals provide students with an opportunity to reflect on course topics and explore how ideas about learning, teaching, technology, and educational systems connect to real-world contexts. Journals are not summaries. Instead, they should show how students are thinking about educational trends and how those ideas are evolving over time.
Each journal entry should:
- Demonstrate understanding of the weekly topic
- Make connections to readings, discussions, or observations
- Include personal reflection and critical analysis

Note: Three of the Learning Journal entries will be designated as Critical Thinking Journals and require deeper analytical writing. The reflection will not only include content learned, but also personal conclusions on the issue and how the information presented strengthened or altered your viewpoint. The reflection is not a summary of the issue. Rather, it is designed to get you to critically evaluate the issue, the evidence/data presented, and develop your own conclusions.
- Paragraph 1 Analysis: Students will describe the issue and break it down into its various parts.
- Paragraph 2 Evaluate: Students will assess the credibility of statements and evidence regarding the issue.
- Paragraph 3 Inference/Synthesis: Students will compile all of the information described to form their own conclusions about the issue.

The following rubric will be used to evaluate the 3 deeper critical thinking journal reflections:

Descriptors	Points Allocated
Written response is innovative	5
Key question is answered with supporting evidence (including citations)	5
Written response is creative	5
Reflection synthesizes multiple findings to reach a conclusion	5
Response reflects salient points of the issue	5
Correct grammar, word usage, spelling, punctuation, and APA format	5
TOTAL	25

Educational Activities in Public Schools: Students are required to complete a minimum of four (4) hours of instructor-approved educational activities in school or education-related settings. These activities are intended to help students observe learning environments and understand how educational systems function in practice. Approved activities may include: attending a library, museum, or community education program; attending and supporting an academic extracurricular event such as a STEM night, read aloud program, art performance, UIL

event, etc.); attending a school board, parent informational meeting or district meeting; mentoring or tutoring with an after-school program) Students must submit a completed Educational Activities Form with verification and a short-written reflection addressing:

- What learning looked like in the setting
- How learners were supported
- Connections to course concepts

Points: 100 Total

Team Challenge Project (Technology-Enhanced): Students will work in small teams to explore one of the 10 key questions in education addressed in the course. Teams will research their selected topic and create a technology-enhanced project such as a presentation, video, podcast, website, or digital media product.
Project Requirements:
- Use at least four peer-reviewed scholarly sources (published within the last 5 years)
- Incorporate technology as a meaningful part of the project
- Demonstrate clear communication, organization, and collaboration
- Include proper citations and references

Teams will present their projects during class. All group members are expected to contribute equitably with assigned roles for each team member: Project & Research Lead or Content & Media Lead. In two-person teams, responsibilities will be shared across combined roles. Both students must demonstrate meaningful contributions and may be asked to document individual contributions. Teams may use AI tools to support brainstorming, drafting, or design; however, all use must be disclosed, and students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final work. **Points:** 200 Total

Midterm: The midterm exam will assess students' understanding of key concepts, terminology, and themes covered in the first half of the course. The exam may include multiple-choice, short-answer, and applied questions and will be delivered in class and/or through Blackboard. **Points:** 150 Points

Final Exam: The final exam is a cumulative assessment designed to evaluate students' ability to synthesize course content, apply concepts, and demonstrate critical understanding of trends in education. The exam will be completed online through Blackboard during the scheduled exam period. **Points:** 150 Points

In Class Activities: Students will engage in a variety of in-class activities, such as small-group discussions, case studies, interactive exercises, and applied learning tasks. These activities are designed to reinforce course concepts and promote active learning. Participation and preparation are essential.

Grades: A high degree of engagement is expected and will contribute to your learning as an active participant. This includes interacting with the instructor, speakers, and other students; completing outside of class assignments and readings, and being prepared to participate in class discussions.
Grading Scale
A = 90-100%
B = 80 – 89%
C= 70 – 79%
D = 60 – 69%
F = below 60%

EDUA 2303 Course Calendar
<mark>Tentative and May Be Subject to Change</mark>

Week / Date	Guiding Question	Topics & Activities	Assignments / Due Dates
Week 1 Jan 15	Where is education headed?	Welcome, syllabus, trends in education Module 1 In-class: I Am From Poem	Discussion #1 Journal #1
Week 2 Jan 20 & 22	How do learning environments support engagement?	Learning environments & student experience Module 2	Discussion #2 Journal #2
Week 3 Jan 27 & 29	What skills do students need to thrive?	SEL & student development Module 3 Guest Speaker	Discussion #3 Journal #3
Week 4 Feb 3 & 5	Does technology expand access to learning?	STEAM & instructional technology Module 4	Discussion #4 Journal #4 (Critical Thinking) Form teams
Week 5 Feb 10 & 12	How can STEAM learning be engaging?	Designing STEAM learning Module 5 Library research support	Discussion #5 Journal #5
Week 6 Feb 17 & 19	If you know how your brain learns, can you learn anything?	Learning science & strategies Module 6	Discussion #6 Journal #6
Week 7 Feb 24 & 26	How do instructional choices shape outcomes?	Learning design & opportunity Module 7	Discussion #7 Journal #7 (Critical Thinking)
Week 8 Mar 3 & 5	-	Midterm Exam Module 8	Midterm Exam
Week 9 Mar 10 & 12	**Spring Break at SRSU**		
Week 10 Mar 24 & 26	How do teachers create safe classrooms?	Positive classroom environments Module 9 Guest Speaker	Discussion #8 Journal #8
Week 11 Mar 31 & Apr 2	Why do the arts matter in education?	Arts & education policy Module 10	Discussion #9 Journal #9 (Critical Thinking)
Week 12 Apr 7 & 9	How can technology support learning responsibly?	Technology integration & AI literacy Module 11	Discussion #10 Journal #10
Week 13 Apr 14 & 16	-	Team Challenge Project Work Week Project development & support	Discussion #11 Journal #11

Week 14 Apr 21	-	Team Challenge Project Presentations	Discussion #12 Journal #12 Team Project Due
Week 15 Apr 28	-	Educational Systems & Reflection Module 13	Educational Activities Documentation Due
Final Exam	-	Online Final Exam via Blackboard	Final Exam Due (April 30th)

Core Curriculum Scoring Rubric for Communication

Criteria	Not Observed=0	Minimal = 1	Improving = 2	Proficient = 3
Organization		Organizational pattern has little organizational structure; contains random unconnected elements.	Organizational pattern is observable; lacks organization and sometimes disjointed and/or awkward.	Organizational pattern is clearly and consistently observable; contains elements of transition, logical development, and coherent flow of ideas
Technique		Marginal demonstration of appropriateness and quality of technique for the chosen mode. For example, executes basic genre and disciplinary conventions on written works; poor oral delivery; poor craftsmanship of visual works	Attempts to demonstrate appropriateness and quality of technique for the chosen mode. For example, executes expected genre and disciplinary conventions on written works; satisfactory oral delivery; satisfactory craftsmanship of visual works.	Demonstrates appropriateness and quality of technique for the chosen mode. For example, executes appropriate genre and disciplinary conventions on written works; or, effective oral delivery; or, notable craftsmanship of visual works.
Purpose and Audience		Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task(s). The purpose of the message is not at all apparent or is missing, and the style is not appropriate to audience.	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions). The purpose of the message is vague or unclear, and style is moderately appropriate to audience.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context). The purpose of the message can be clearly discerned, and style is appropriate to audience.
Academic Language		Many errors in grammar and format. Language choices are questionable and minimally effective. Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning.	Includes some errors in grammar and format that occasionally interferes with communication. Language choices are mundane, commonplace, and partially effective.	Very few errors in grammar and format that does not interfere with communication. Language choices are mostly effective and contributes to the overall meaning.
Supporting Material		Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas but insufficiently makes reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the intended message or topic. Fails to attribute sources as appropriate.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the intended message or discipline. Makes reference to weak/partial supporting information or analysis and sources are inconsistently attributed.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the intended message or discipline. Refers to supporting information or analysis, or establishes credibility or authority on the topic, and generally attributes sources as appropriate.

This Core Curriculum Rubric was adapted from the SRSU Quality Enhancement Plan Cardinal Rubric that drew upon the Association of American Colleges and Universities oral communication VALUE rubric, the National Communication Association's Speaking and Listening Competencies for College Students, Texas A&M University's Visual Communication rubric, Otis College of Arts and Design's Fine Arts rubric, Lane Community College Communicating Effectively Rubric, and Stephen F. Austin State University's assessment rubric for Oral and Visual Communication

Course Policies and Expectations

- **Late Work:** 10% deduction per day, maximum 1 week late.

- **Attendance:** Students are to make themselves aware of the SRSU policies on Absences and Class Attendance posted in the SRSU Student Handbook. Make-up work is at the discretion of the instructor as it relates to "explained and excused" absences. The Absences/Class Attendance policy includes all absences excused or unexcused. In this course you are expected to attend all classes (as scheduled electronically on Blackboard), to be punctual, and to complete all assignments on time.

- **Academic Integrity:** Students must adhere to Sul Ross's Academic Honesty policy. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused. Examples of academic dishonesty include but not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part of another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites or generative A.I. without citation.

- **Prohibited Uses of A.I.**: 1. Using AI tools to generate answers for quizzes, exams, or other assessments is strictly prohibited. This includes using AI to write essays, solve problems, or complete assignments without proper attribution. 2. Presenting AI-generated content as one's own work without proper attribution is considered plagiarism. Students must clearly distinguish between their own work and any AI-generated assistance. 3. AI tools should not be used to engage in unethical or inappropriate behavior, such as generating harmful, offensive, or misleading content.

- **Consequences of Violations**: Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity and may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to: · A failing grade on the assignment · A failing grade for the course · Referral to the institution's academic integrity board

- **Best Practices for Using AI Tools** 1. Always disclose the use of AI tools when submitting assignments or participating in discussions. 2. Evaluate AI-generated content critically and ensure that it aligns with course objectives and academic standards. 3. Use AI as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for original analysis and creative thinking.

- **Seeking Guidance**: If you are uncertain about the appropriate use of AI tools in a specific context, please consult with the instructor before proceeding. The instructor of the course is available to clarify the policy and provide guidance on acceptable practices.

- **Communication:** Check Sul Ross email regularly.

Student Responsibility Statement

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

ADA Statement

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartze@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website.

Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

Libraries

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources *unless permission is expressly given* for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

Classroom Climate of Respect

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

Supportive Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create a supportive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

References

CASEL. (2020). SEL basics. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. https://casel.org

Common Sense Education. (2023). AI in the classroom: A beginner's guide. https://www.commonsense.org/education

CrashCourse. (2017, July 10). How to learn faster: Study skills [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com

Edutopia. (2016). 5 ways to build a positive classroom culture. George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://www.edutopia.org

Edutopia. (2017). Morning meetings that build belonging [Video]. George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://www.edutopia.org

Edutopia. (2018). What equity really means in schools. George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://www.edutopia.org

Edutopia. (2019). What will schools look like in 2030? [Video]. George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://www.edutopia.org

Edutopia. (2020). Using tech to make learning more engaging [Video]. George Lucas Educational Foundation. https://www.edutopia.org

EDUCAUSE. (2024). Horizon report: Teaching and learning edition. EDUCAUSE. https://library.educause.edu

Freedom Writers. (2007). I am from poem scene [Film clip]. Paramount Pictures.

Kennedy Center. (2021). Why the arts matter in schools. The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. https://www.kennedy-center.org

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). What is culturally relevant teaching? Edutopia summary. https://www.edutopia.org

NASA. (n.d.). STEM at home activities. National Aeronautics and Space Administration. https://www.nasa.gov/stem

PBS NewsHour. (2017). The debate on charter schools [Video]. PBS. https://www.pbs.org/newshour

RetrievalPractice.org. (2019). 3 strategies that boost learning. https://retrievalpractice.org

Smithsonian. (2020). Why STEAM matters. Smithsonian Institution. https://www.si.edu

TED-Ed. (2019). How art shapes learning [Video]. TED Conferences. https://ed.ted.com

Texas Education Agency. (n.d.). What is a charter school? Texas Education Agency. https://tea.texas.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (2022). Equity action highlights infographic. https://www.ed.gov

Miller-Ray, J., Brown, A., Ritzi, C., Morales, C., Williamson, S., Qvarnstrom, J., & Perez-Gallego, J. (2024). Total Eclipse En Frontera. Bulletin of the AAS, 56(9). https://doi.org/10.3847/25c2cfeb.dcdd4f81

Kazachenko, M. D., Perez-Gallego, J., Miller, J., Vielma, F., Adams, M., Ben, T., Corchado-Albelo, M. F., French, R., Guerrero-Rish, O., III, C. M., Ofman, L., Pascual, E., Raftery, C. L., Schiller, J., Tilipman, D., & Williams, J. (2024). Eagle Pass, TX: The First American City on the Path of Totality: Organizing an Eclipse Party in the Stadium. Bulletin of the AAS, 56(9). https://doi.org/10.3847/25c2cfeb.5baa13ea

Miller, J., Tomas, T., Maryboy, N., & Begay, D. (2018). A Rural Navajo Reservation Makerspace. Dimensions, (September/October), 50–52.