

of a class that incorporated evaluation into their growth as writers. Articles are interspersed with "interludes": the reflections of individual teachers and students on working through issues in evaluation and assessment, and alternatives to grading. The final chapter presents a series of workshops, together with a complementary list of resources, for faculties who would like to look together at such issues as: developing intrinsic motivation, contract grades, using rubrics and holistic scoring, communication with parents and the public, and alternative assessment across the curriculum. This chapter is a nice touch, insofar as it takes the issues treated in the book into a field of potential action, rather than leaving them as objects for reflection.

On the whole, *Alternatives To Grading Student Writing* lacks the kind of energy and vision that I have come to associate with Stephen Tchudi. The problem is not that I expected definitive answers, but rather that the topic demands a wider field of vision than the committee was able to provide. For example, the work of critical pedagogy and women's studies should have been considered, insofar as there are texts available, that analyze the culture of power in schools and universities; in addition, it seems to me that committee members should also have studied classroom teachers in elementary and secondary schools, many of whom are scholarly in their use of portfolios, rubrics, coaching and working with parents. The book may, however, be a valuable addition to the library of university teachers who are curious about how alternatives to grading are being pioneered in American universities.

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HENRY A. GIROUX. *Channel Surfing: Race talk and the destruction of today's youth. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press (1997). 254 pp. \$39.95 (HC). ISBN: 1-55130-124-5.*

And where do intellectuals stand in relation to politics? . . . [T]hose who are mindful of the ties that link everything in this world together, who approach the world with humility, but also with an increased sense of responsibility, who wage a struggle for every good thing – such intellectuals should be listened to with the greatest attention, regardless of whether they work as independent critics, holding up a much-needed mirror to politics and power, or are directly involved in politics. (Havel, in Giroux, 1977, p. 137)

In *Channel Surfing*, Henry Giroux holds up the mirror to politics and power in an attempt to make visible the political, economic, and cultural conditions "that undermine democratic public life and take the

young. . . as its first victims" (p.38). The book is a collection of essays – new and previously published (and revised) – which critique the ways in which youth and race are represented in selected texts of the mass media. Giroux believes that mass media texts have a pedagogic function and that how youth and race are imagined in the media and imagined by the public contributes significantly to how society treats young people and racial minorities. So, he examines the representations of young people and blacks in a diverse set of media texts: a Calvin Klein advertising campaign, a variety of Hollywood films, mainstream magazines, journals, and television. It is Giroux's claim that there is "a growing demonization of youth and [a] spreading racism in the United States" (p.15) and a concomitant attack on and abandonment of the compassionate spheres of public life: public education, health care, social services. These serve to undermine and constrain the development of citizenship and democracy. Giroux calls on cultural workers and educators to ". . . address these critical issues and to once again assert that education for critical citizenship is, in part, about assuming responsibility and bearing witness, combining intellectual rigor with social relevance, and sustaining those public spheres where democracy can flourish and sustain itself" (p. 16). In the first section of the book, called "Fashion, Demonization and Youth Culture", Giroux examines how youth are scapegoated and commodified in the world of advertising ("Something comes between kids and their calvins") and Hollywood films ("Hollywood and the demonization of youth"). In the third essay ("Bashing the sixties: public memory and the lost hope of youth"), he deconstructs recent attempts by conservatives to "bash" the 60s as one of the strategies in the demonizing process and highlights how the results of this attack has led to the despair that is developing among large numbers of young people.

Section two, "Race, Media and Whiteness", examines instances of the larger social context that have helped shape the preceding conceptualizations and representations of youth. In "White Noise: racial politics and the pedagogy of whiteness", Giroux discusses and critiques the emergence of the new scholarship on whiteness. In particular he raises the problem that the new scholarship's characterization of whiteness lacks an understanding of the complexity of whiteness as a form of identity and cultural practice. In the same essay, he also provides an instance – the juxtaposition of two films, *Dangerous Minds* and *Sutures* – of an educational strategy for refashioning the meaning of racial identity in oppositional terms. Next, Giroux looks critically at the recent media hype over the rise of black public intellectuals in the

United States and the ways in which the topic has been represented in the, largely, white press (“in living colour: black, bruised and read all over”). Then comes a critical look at the racially divided response to the outcome of the O.J. Simpson trial (“Playing the race card”); and, finally, “Race talk and the crisis of democratic vision” in which he and Susan Searle elucidate race talk in the highly publicized book, *The Bell Curve*, and examines its reception and public success as “. . . symptomatic of the growing crisis of democracy and racial justice that plagues the United States.”

As a media educator, I found this book a disturbing and hopeful book.

- Disturbing, because of the bleak portrait Giroux paints of a growing proportion of American – and Canadian, because we are a prime market for American cultural texts – youth and the thrust of responses to them and representations of them by a society moving increasingly to the right. Disturbing, because of the questions that bubbled-up as I moved through the book. As I read, I initially questioned his claim about the seriousness and extent of the problems he describes. I questioned, too, his selections of the media texts used to illustrate and analyze his claims and the extent to which they were representative. I questioned his, at times, almost inaccessible, prose; his, occasionally arrogant, readings of the texts; his condescension to other public intellectuals who all appear to have their shortcomings. Disturbing, too, because his call to educators to respond to the pedagogy of cultural texts by encouraging critical reading of media is “old hat” to media educators. Additionally, his plea for cultural workers to produce texts which challenge mainstream media, seems naive and hopeless in the face of the enormous volume of media texts produced by a handful of media conglomerates which actively promote “the dominant” ideology of America.
- Hopeful, because one of his strategies for resistance to this barrage of messages is to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and space to produce their own radio and television programs, newspapers, magazines, films, and other forms of public art. Giroux’s affirmation of faith in young people to represent themselves to themselves and others, and his own indomitable spirit and belief in himself as a public intellectual, provoked much thought and questioning in my mind and mitigated considerably the sense of disturbance I felt in reading the book.

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