A Curriculum of Fear
Nicole Nguyen

By traveling through daily life at the school, A Curriculum of Fear investigates how students and school staff made sense of, negotiated, and contested the intense focus on national security, terrorism, and their militarized responsibilities to the nation. Drawing from critical scholarship on school militarization, neoliberal school reform, the impact of the global war on terror on everyday life in the U.S., and the political uses of fear, this book maps the social, political, and economic contexts that gave rise to the school’s Homeland Security program and its popularity. Ultimately, as the first ethnography of a high school Homeland Security program, this book traces how Milton was not only “under siege”—shaped by the new normal imposed by the global war on terror—it actively prepared for the siege itself.

Origins, originality, and the privileges of nature
Thomas Docherty

The prevailing cult and culture of managerial audit and measurement systemically translates qualities into quantities. Further, it requires that those measurements be inserted into a form of warfare that we normalise as ‘league-table competitiveness’. The system as a whole then operates in a neo-Hobbesian state of war of all against all, which serves the interests of none and which damages the world’s intellectual and natural ecologies. Ecology is subsumed under economics. This chapter considers what must be done to construct a new model of the institution that will help not only to shape the good society but,
even more fundamentally, will help to preserve and sustain the society itself in a time of ecological disaster. What should be the university’s proper relation to the state of nature? The chapter argues that the contemporary institution must reject all forms of political fundamentalism – including especially the dominant prevailing modes of market fundamentalism – if it is to work against any and all forms of political terror. The chapter situates the question of the survival of the university within the abiding question of the survival of the species and of our social existence.

Welcome to Milton High
Nicole Nguyen

in A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in U.S. Public Schools

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Beginning with an autobiographical account, the introduction of A Curriculum of Fear relates the author’s interest in schools featuring specialized Homeland Security program, especially Milton High School. Based on the author’s fieldwork and rooted in political geography, sociology, and critical education studies, this book examines the inner workings of Milton and its Homeland Security program. As the first ethnography of a U.S. public school with a specialized Homeland Security program, it explores how synchronizing the school with the needs of the national security industry shaped its students understandings of the world and their place in it. Moving messily between scales, this ethnography traces how Milton, by design, undertook the epistemic, political, and emotional work needed to train its students as the next generation of national security workers. By investigating this remaking of Milton, it documents the deep implications of these national security pedagogies on young people’s psyches, social imaginaries, and daily interactions.

Teaching War and Feeling Fear
Nicole Nguyen

in A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in U.S. Public Schools

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The first chapter locates Milton High School within national efforts to install militarized regimes of discipline in public education through the corporate takeover of schools, wage war under the banner of national security, and draw young people into the war-making business through fear by examining the genealogies of neoliberal school reform, zero-tolerance school policies, school militarization, and fear in U.S. politics. Knitting these strands together lends itself to an understanding of how the Milton school staff thought about the shifting purposes of education, the needs of their students, and the role of national security in their daily lives.

Student, Terrorist, or Patriot?
Nicole Nguyen

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The fifth chapter looks intimately at the profound effects of an education focused intensely on terrorism, paying careful attention to how the school nurtured students’ fears. Within a racialized economy of fear, students and school staff calibrated their conduct in order to ward off terrorist threats, manage their fears, and express their love for the nation.

Thinking Differently While under Siege
Nicole Nguyen

in A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in U.S. Public Schools
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In the conclusion, Curriculum of Fear offers some closing thoughts on the enduring intersections of education, war, and national security at work at Milton High School. The chapter aims to call for the resistance of intensifying the relationship between war, national security, and U.S. public schools.