EDUC 392: Education in a Multicultural Society

Section 30737: Monday, 4-7pm
Winter 2015
Room: 2340 SEB

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.

(bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress)

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Office Hours: By appointment.

392 OVERALL COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS

This course introduces the work of teaching and the context in which teachers do that work in the contemporary United States. This course is focused foremost on cultivating an understanding of how teachers can act and think in ways that maximize the learning opportunities for all students; in essence, what it means to be an effective, culturally responsive educator. We will examine illustrations of some of the teaching dilemmas that arise in relation to racial and socio-economic inequities and that coincide with the increasing diversification of our society. In the process of doing so, we will contemplate how teachers might configure their professional realities in ways that allow them to take advantage of and build upon the variety of cultural knowledge and resources which students, their families, and the school community possess.

Our study of culturally responsive teaching rests on the premise that although U.S. schools traditionally serve some students better than others, teachers can work in ways that either exacerbate or ameliorate group differences in children’s opportunities to learn. Through learning how to mitigate cultural conflicts and misconceptions between home and school, teachers increase their likelihood of diminishing the differences in educational outcomes that are witnessed along the lines of race, class, gender, ethnic and linguistic differences, which are a function of institutional, social, economic, and political forces. With these foci in mind, our class community will:
1. Examine our own assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching and equitable classrooms and schools;

2. Study the various ways teachers have employed culturally responsive practices in their classrooms and the dilemmas that might arise in pursuing these approaches in an increasingly diverse society;

3. Develop a working understanding of the context of teaching in the United States, including the demographics of the school-aged population, the landscape of academic achievement and opportunity gaps, historical influences, and the policies and programs that schools have used – with greater and lesser success – to contend with diversity;

4. Simulate and engage with dynamic teaching practices with the intention of developing professional insight into the moves that teachers make – raising our awareness of the relationship between teachers’ thinking and decision-making and all students’ learning opportunities;

5. Develop a “working” understanding of what else we may need to do, experience, or learn in the interest of building our capacity to be culturally responsive and effective teachers over the course of our professional development.

In addition to reading educational and social science literature that bear upon these five objectives, we will pursue these objectives in light of what we can learn from our practicum placements and from “records” of teachers and schools that have worked towards equity (i.e., case studies, video footage, and web sites of teaching and school practices). Because this course provides only an introduction to thinking about being an effective teacher, our aim is to orient ourselves to the professional possibilities inherent in pursuing this goal and to develop questions and ideas that can be further explored and experimented within other parts of the teacher education program, including subject-matter methods courses and field placements.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

**Attendance, Preparation, and Contributions (25%)** Interns are expected to:

- Actively Engage the Content and Activities of the Course: While attendance and participation are important signals of professionalism in general, as students of education you are aware that they have further, more important implications for a learner's development. Much of our learning will take place through interactions in class. This is not a lecture-based course; active learning is the objective. By engaging with each other in discussions, explanations, critiques, and clarifications we contribute to our own and each other's understandings. The richness of this learning community is something to which we all have the responsibility to contribute; all of your interactions in class should be responsible, timely, thoughtful, and respectful. In addition to sharing comments and active listening during discussions, you will also be asked to reflect on your personal experiences and course materials through journal writing. Journal assignments are mandatory. I expect that your
writing/thinking will demonstrate a careful analysis of the required readings and a sincere attempt to “puzzle” over the focus issues. These responses will be considered evidence of preparation for class. Although students are encouraged to volunteer their participation in class, I will also call on students in order to maximize classroom opportunities to hear from ALL students.

**Attend Every Class and On Time:** Class attendance is mandatory, and absences will be reflected in your final grade via a deduction in participation points. Missing more than one class may result in an incomplete or further disciplinary action. Class will begin at 4:10 pm sharp. For each tardy and early departure, points will be deducted from your participation grade. If you must miss class for an excused illness or emergency, you are responsible for contacting the instructor in advance of class, acquiring class materials, and making up in-class activities and assignments.

**Missing Class:** There are three excused reasons for missing class: illness, family or personal emergency, and religious holidays. If you cannot be present for a class session, let me know as soon as you know that you will be absent, but *no later than 2 hours* before class begins.

Acceptable absences for religious holidays: please let me know at least two weeks in advance if you will miss class for this reason. While it will not be possible to recreate a missed class, please make arrangements with me to complete alternative work that will support the learning you missed. I will specify the due date for this alternative assignment. The Teacher Education Office will be notified if you have more than two absences. As suggested above, participation points will be deducted for absences and late arrivals. Three absences—excused or unexcused—are grounds for failing this course.

**Prepare for Each Class Session:** You are responsible for completing all readings, written work, and reflection tasks before the class session for which they are assigned. In addition, being prepared for class requires bringing all needed materials, including assignments and readings with you to each class session. NO late assignments will be accepted.

**COURSE GRADING**
Grades will be determined using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-87.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>64-66.9</td>
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**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Below are brief descriptions of the major course assignments; detailed instructions will be distributed in class and posted on our CTools site as necessary. Assignments are due to CTools *before* each class.
session. Barring extenuating circumstances (instructor’s discretion), and in the absence of alternative arrangements, NO LATE WORK will be accepted. This guideline will be strictly adhered to.

**Participation: 25%**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project (weight)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Feedback Form (Optional, but highly appreciated)</td>
<td>In order to make sure that it doesn’t take me until the midterm review to address your questions and concerns, I ask that every week you take a few minutes to answer a few questions about how class went for you. This form can be accessed by clicking on the Weekly Feedback Form link at the bottom of the Resources list (under the last class folder) on CTools. If you have difficulty locating it, you can also access the form by going directly to <a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1apVICiTJfv3XKoWvVKxC-Z50mmkkDOgCV4i0BBZs1gg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1apVICiTJfv3XKoWvVKxC-Z50mmkkDOgCV4i0BBZs1gg/viewform</a>. The form is anonymous, although you are more than welcome to identify yourself if you have particular concerns you would like to discuss. Responses containing identifying information will never be shared with the class.</td>
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<td>Teaching Philosophy (5%)</td>
<td>Interns will prepare (or bring in) a 2-3 page double spaced document that answers the questions of what, why and how they intend to teach. This document will characterize interns’ orientation(s) towards the work of teaching, expectations/goals for students, as well as the implications for their work.</td>
<td>January 26th, 2015 (Week 2)</td>
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<td>My story (10%)</td>
<td>The purpose of this assignment is for interns to explore their own personal stories over 3-4 double spaced pages. Writing this My Story is your opportunity to take risks and be bold in your writing. Try a different writing style, stretch yourself, reach deep within, and focus deeply on your narratives about who you are. You may address other questions and topics, but the fundamental purpose of this assignment is to be vulnerable and write about your personal history as a beginning step to understand how your personal identity may influence your teaching.</td>
<td>February 23rd, 2015 (Week 6)</td>
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<td>Transformative Teaching Group Project (25%)</td>
<td>The interns will work collaboratively to design dynamic units that demonstrate a deep understanding of CRP (culturally responsive pedagogy), critical pedagogy (if desired), and good teaching praxis, along with their potential to improve the educational experiences of diverse students.</td>
<td>Anytime between March 30th, 2015-April 6th, 2015 (Week 10-11)</td>
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**Open Genre Final Project (15%)**

As a culminating project, interns will contemplate their growth and development throughout the course. They will then briefly present this growth to the class through any media form of choice (dance, art, speech, poem, music, puppet show, etc).

*April 13th or April 20th (Week 12 & 13)*

**Multicultural Teaching Philosophy Revisit (20%)**

Interns will revisit the teaching philosophy, submitted at the start of the semester. They will be expected to revise this philosophy and apply new concepts and understandings from the course.

*April 24th, 2015 (Friday after last class, Week, 13)*

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**ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENTS**

**Attend to Electronic Etiquette:** (Borrowed in part from Matt Ronfeldt) Common sense demonstrates, and research is now showing, that we are not as good at multi-tasking with electronic devices as we may think. Appropriate use of electronic devices is a part of your professional participation in our class. Using laptops or cell phones as tools for your learning is acceptable, as long as it is not distracting to you, your colleagues or your instructor. Examples of acceptable use of electronic devices include making records of your practice and consulting resources for work in class. Non-instructional texting, phone calls, social networking, shopping, and other non-instructional use of these devices during class is unacceptable, and will result in a reduction in your participation grade. If you are concerned about your ability to meet this professional expectation, please discuss your concern with me. Please let me know if there is an emergency that affects your need for using a phone during class time. **Being caught out of accordance with the above policy will result in full loss of the day’s participation points. No questions asked.**

**Meet with the Instructor:** I would like you to set up appointments to meet with me if you are experiencing difficulty with the course. If life situations are affecting the quality of your work in the course, please discuss these matters with me as soon as possible.

**Own Your Work and Cite the Work of Others:** You will draw on multiple resources as you complete assignments for this course—readings, conversations with peers and colleagues, the internet, your experiences, etc. When you produce assignments for this class, you MUST provide citations and attributions for the work of others. This includes references or resources in any media form you used. As a professional practice, you should also footnote and succinctly describe and attribute ideas that were generated in conversation with others. Be fair and honest in representing your work to others. Do not plagiarize, cheat, or otherwise misrepresent your work. If in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, check with me or consult the following website: www.lib.umich.edu/acadintegrity.


**Accommodations**

Please talk with me if you require accommodations due to religious practices, learning disabilities, physical requirements, medical needs, or for any other reason. We will work together to identify resources and make accommodations. As adults, we all have a broad range of needs and responsibilities—it is your job to speak up and talk with me if you need an accommodation.

If you are registered with the Office for Services for Students with Disabilities, please share your VISA (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations) form with me at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress.

If you think you may need an accommodation to complete the requirements of this course, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

**GUIDELINES FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS**

Given the content of this course, we often discuss sensitive matters (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, politics, etc.). Because I consider it essential to our learning together, everyone in this class must feel safe to express her- or himself and to ask potentially embarrassing questions. As such, it is important that we commit to and honor certain principles of discourse. To facilitate this, we borrow the following discussion guidelines from Gary Fenstermacher:

1. Listen and understand before you judge. Learn to “hear” and comprehend before you draw conclusions or evaluate what others are saying.

2. Probe and ask questions as a means of gaining a fuller measure of understanding. Before you ask questions that criticize or negate, ask questions that ensure you grasp what the other person is saying. Some examples: “If I understand you correctly, you are contending that . . .” OR “Would you help me gain a better understanding of what you are saying by explaining a little more the idea that . . .”

3. Do what you can to make the discussion atmosphere safe for different perspectives and for considerate controversy over different perspectives. Present your own positions gently and tentatively, and listen to the positions of others in the same way.

4. Invite fellow students who are not participating to engage the topic. Ask them what they think (and take a genuine interest in their answers). Keep an eye on the ebb and flow of discussion and take responsibility for keeping the discussion moving along, treating all participants considerately, and maintaining a balanced and gracious tone.

5. Be aware of your own participation, checking occasionally to ask whether you are monopolizing the conversation or failing to contribute at all.
ENGAGING WITH RESEARCH

During this course, you will be asked to read a number of pieces written by past and present educational researchers and scholars. Unlike a textbook, such work is not a distilled version of complex ideas; it is itself complex and challenging. In other words, most of what you will be discussing is what you might have called ‘primary sources’ in high school, which has several implications.

• First, you must engage with the text – the work we will be reading will not “tell” you things. Instead, you must ask questions while you are reading and carefully consider the evidence provided in order to form an understanding of the content. Please do not expect to understand everything perfectly upon a first read. I still do not feel like I understand perfectly all of the readings that we will cover in this course, and I have read some of them many, many times. Even worse, though, is to give up on a work because you find yourself struggling. Rest assured that everyone in this class (again, including me) will at times struggle with what an author is saying, whether in an entire piece in general or in a particular section, paragraph, or even sentence. If you have questions or concerns, you are not alone. However, this means that…

• Second, you must use your classmates and me as resources – I am asking you to engage with text at an academic level. This moves beyond a simple understanding of the points of a work. Instead, you will ask questions, make claims, support arguments, and suggest critiques. You won’t come to class with all of the answers, and neither will I. Together, however, we will work to suggest possible answers and investigate the questions that will doubtlessly follow. If you do not remain open to the ideas of others you will struggle to do this. I am positive that some, if not all, of you will bring up observations or questions in class that will change how I understand a particular work. You absolutely must be open to this as well.

• Finally, you must carefully read, and reread, regardless of where things fall in the class schedule or when your assignments are “finished”. My goal for you in this course is not that you get an “A” (although I’d be thrilled if everyone did), nor is it that you can spit back a few key points that you think that I think are important. Instead, I want you to benefit from the ideas in the work that we will consider. Remember that this class is not just some requirement that needs to be checked off a list before you can go out and have a real job. Its goal is to help to prepare you to be a teacher, one of the most demanding, challenging, frustrating, and amazing things a person can do. Ultimately, what you get out of this course is up to you, not me. If you can scan each assigned reading well enough to be able to make a comment or two during each class discussion and consider yourself done, you will turn this class into a requirement that needs to be checked off a list. If, though, you make your goal to really try to understand and engage with the material, our meetings can be transformed from 39 hours of time you owe the University of Michigan in exchange for your degree to a real opportunity for you (and me!) to gain something. I very much hope that all of you will choose this latter option.