Facilitating Classroom Discussions  
ED 406: 004 ~ Cohort 2  
Winter, 2014  

Instructor:  
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Scarlett Middle School Teaching Partner:  Mr. Ian Shepard, 6th grade Social Studies  

Class Meetings: Wednesdays  
Session 1:  January 8, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Session 2:  January 15, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Session 3:  January 22, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Session 4:  January 29, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  

All class meetings will be held at Scarlett Middle School, 3300 Lorraine Street, Ann Arbor, MI. The class will convene in room 144. Class will start promptly at 8:30 a.m. (i.e., we are not on Michigan time). We will meet at SOE, room 4212 if AA schools are cancelled.  

Each class session will have the following schedule:  8:30 to 9:30 – Room 144; 9:35 to 10:30 – Media Center or Rooms 214 and 213; 10:30 to 10:45 – break, 10:45 to 11:30 – Room 144.  

Class Readings & Materials.  
•  All readings and required instructional materials are found on CTools.  
•  You and a partner(s) will each need a video camera.  

Course Goals and Perspectives  
One of the most powerful skills you can acquire as a classroom teacher is the ability to engage students in classroom discussions that support their conceptual development, text comprehension and content-area learning. In the early part of the last century, Vygotsky (1934/1978) suggested that higher order functions, such as reading and reasoning, develop through social interaction. A century later, we know that learning classrooms are think-rich and talk-rich classrooms. Discussions support student learning because they provide opportunities for students to learn from each other and work out their own understandings in negotiation with their peers.
This class is designed to provide opportunities for you to learn about the characteristics of learning-oriented classroom discussions and the instructional practices that foster them. You will also have the opportunity to plan and lead discussions with small groups of middle school students in their 6th grade social studies class at Scarlett Middle School, and you will reflect on the experience of engaging students in discussion. You will practice listening to students’ ideas and using “discussion moves” to take up and extend their thinking.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Build trusting and respectful relationships with middle school students by reinforcing norms for discussion.
- Assist and support all of your students’ participation in discussions.
- Design text-based discussion opportunities for students using a variety of “texts” – including published curriculum materials such as the textbook and additional sources such as artifacts, artworks, supplemental texts, etc. – to support students’ understanding of particular disciplinary concepts and processes.
- Prepare and sequence discussion questions that scaffold students’ understanding of disciplinary concepts, topics, and processes.
- Listen to and take up students’ ideas during discussion using non-evaluative responses that build students’ conceptual understanding and encourage them to build on each other’s ideas.
- Enact discussion in which the teacher models curiosity about texts and ideas and everyone is accountable for using accurate knowledge and rigorous thinking.
- Evaluate the quality of classroom discussions in terms of student engagement, development of ideas, a learning of disciplinary concepts/topics/processes.
- Use these evaluations to reflect on your instruction during discussion and make plans for continued improvement as a facilitator of discussion.

While this course is situated in a middle school social studies class and content, the knowledge and skills you will acquire can be applied in many contexts with students of all ages. Our planning and instruction will focus on Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies. The primary High Leverage Practices for this course are:

HLP2: Posing questions about content.
HLP4: Leading whole class (in this instance, small group) discussions of content.
HLP5: Working with individual students (or small groups) to elicit, probe, and develop their thinking about content.
HLP6: Setting up and managing small-group work.
HLP8: Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse that are central to the content.
HLP14: Enacting a task to support a specific learning goal.
HLP19: Analyzing and improving specific elements of one’s own teaching.
This course will also provide an opportunity to consider the practice implications of the Teacher Education Program’s Ethical Obligations of Teaching as they relate to facilitating classroom discussions:

1. To care for and demonstrate commitment to every student
2. To develop and continually work to improve instructional competence, and to strive to engage in professionally-justified teaching practice at all times
3. To ensure equitable access to learning in one’s own classroom
4. To learn about and demonstrate awareness of and appreciation for cultural difference and social diversity, particularly as they are present in one’s classroom, and to draw on diversity as a resource in instruction
5. To demonstrate through concrete actions an awareness of the capacity of every individual to learn
6. To take responsibility for obstacles to student success and to work assiduously to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities
7. To understand and exercise carefully the power and authority of the teaching role
8. To treat students, colleagues, parents and care-givers, and community members with respect and generosity in all communications with and about them
9. To represent the ideas of the academic disciplines and subject-matter that one teaches with integrity
### Major Assignments and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Due Dates and Submission Process:</th>
<th>Points (Total=100)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation &amp; Attendance</strong></td>
<td>I expect your full participation in and on-time attendance at every class. This includes active engagement with your peers and middle school students during class, written and oral reflections on your work with middle schoolers, attention to middle schoolers’ learning, discussion and analysis of readings, and professionalism. Part of the Participation and Attendance grade is 5 points for the completion of a brief survey for feedback on the course.</td>
<td>1/8/13 – 1/29/13</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #1: Video analysis of a teacher’s discussion practices.</strong></td>
<td>With your field partner(s), analyze one teacher’s discussion practices using video records. Write up your findings, using specific examples from the video, and be prepared to share these in class. Bring a paper copy of your analysis to class.</td>
<td>Post to CTools’ Assignment folder by: Wednesday, January 15, 8 a.m.</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #2: Jataka Tale discussion lesson plan</strong></td>
<td>You and your field partner will plan for, rehearse, and enact a reading and discussion of a short <em>Jataka Tale</em> using IRA strategies with 6th grade middle school students. You will be provided with the initial draft of the lesson plan that you will finalize. Video record the lesson when you teach it and upload to Edthena.</td>
<td>Send your plans via email to Klo by Monday, January 20, 5 p.m. *</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #3: Stations for creative engagement in learning about the Gupta Empire lesson plan</strong></td>
<td>You and your partner will plan for, rehearse, and lead an interactive station that provides the sixth graders with opportunities to learn about the Gupta Empire. Video record one enactment of the lesson when you teach it and upload to Edthena.</td>
<td>Send your plans to Klo via email by Monday, January 27, 5 p.m. *</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #4: Analysis and reflection on the opportunities to plan and facilitate social studies discussions with the sixth graders.</strong></td>
<td>Individually, you will write an analysis and reflection of your planning for and leading the variety of discussions with the Scarlett sixth graders.</td>
<td>Post to CTools’ Assignment folder by: Wednesday, February 5, 8 a.m.</td>
<td>20</td>
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*In order to be eligible to enact your lesson at Scarlett you will need to submit the final plan by 5 PM on the Monday before you teach the lesson so that I can review and approve it. NOTE: Because of fieldwork on Tuesday afternoons, plans need to be submitted by Monday evening in order for all plans to be reviewed and returned to you by Tuesday evening.

When submitting work, please use the following naming process: Last name first name course # assignment #. Example: Smith Jane_406_assignment #1

**Grading**
The system is based upon earning points for each of the course requirements. You should be able to determine your class grade at any point in the course by totaling your points earned and dividing them by the points possible up to that time. Grades will also be posted on CTools which provides a running summary for you.

A+ for truly exceptional work

94-100 = A  
90-93.9 = A-  
88-89.9 = B+  
84-87.9 = B  
80-83.9 = B-  

77-79.9 = C+  
74-76.9 = C  
70-73.9 = C-  
67-69.9 = D+  
64-66.9 = D

Written work for this course must be of high quality – without significant spelling errors, misuse of grammar or punctuation, and with thoughtful sequencing of ideas. Papers that do not meet these high standards will need to be rewritten with diminished points.

**Additional Policies and Resources**

**Attendance and Participation**
Attendance and participation are expectations in this class as a form of professionalism. I expect you to attend every class, to arrive on time for a prompt start, to stay till the end, and to participate in and contribute to class. It is vital that you attend every class session if at all possible. If you cannot be present for a class session, let me know by e-mail or text by 8:00AM the day of class. It is also important that you notify your Scarlett partner(s) if you need to be absent. Acceptable absences include absences due to documented illness and religious holidays; please let me know at the start of the semester if you will miss class for a religious 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. **Failure to contact me about your absence and/or failure to complete a make-up assignment will result in 15 points deducted from your course total.**

More than one absence from the class will make successful learning of the material in the course challenging and put you in danger of not being able to complete the course successfully. Given the short duration of this course the Office of Teacher Education will be notified if there is more than one absence. As always, participation points will be deducted for absences and late arrivals.

**Late work**
I expect that all assignments for this course will be turned in on time. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact me via email prior to the submission deadline. Unexcused late work will impact your grade in
correspondence with how late the work is submitted (for example, points may be lost for each
day of lateness).

**Professionalism and Expectations for Working with Scarlett Middle School Students**

One aspect of professionalism is preparedness. I expect that you will thoughtfully prepare for all
field-based work in this course. For our field-based assignments (at Scarlett) being able to work
with students is contingent upon thoughtful preparation [submitting acceptable plans on time].
Failure to submit plans in a timely manner will result in not being able to engage in the field-
based work and you will receive a 0 for the assignment(s).

Another aspect of professionalism in a school setting is professional dress. Take your cues from
the teachers at our school site regarding dress and ask about what is appropriate. In the past,
interns have been surprised to find that people in the school setting considered their clothing to
be “revealing” or too informal. When in doubt, go for the more formal clothing choice. You’re an
adult in the room--any parent or professional walking in should be able to identify you as one of
the people in charge. Wearing unprofessional attire to our school site may be grounds for not
being able to work with students.

**Use of Personal technology**

Appropriate use of electronic devices is also 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 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 are not acceptable in this class at any time, 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.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know 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. As soon as
you make me aware of your needs, I 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.

**Academic Integrity**

All work must be your own and done specifically for this course. Be sure to provide citations and
attribution for the work of others included in your written work if you do use other resources.
This includes references or resources in any media form (including the web) you used.
University policy is very clear on the issue of plagiarism. For specific information about this
issue see:  www.lib.umich.edu/acadintegrity/students.
**Additional Resources**

A CTools site has been created for this course where you will find all resource materials (syllabus, information sheets for specific assignments, readings in pdf format, and additional resources for your work this semester).
Course Schedule and Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Assignments:</th>
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| 1       | Jan. 8| Read/Prepare Before Class  
• *History Alive! Chapter 9 “Daily Life in Ancient Egypt”* [Read carefully so that you have background information for your work with the sixth graders during class.]  
• Information for the poster creation lesson and discussion. Mark the stopping places for your section of the chapter.  
• Michaels, O’Connor, Hall, Resnick (2010). *Accountable Talk sourcebook: For classroom conversation that works* (pp 1 through 35).  
• *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King, Jr. |

Introduction to Discussion

Guiding Questions:
- What is discussion? What is it not?
- What is involved in facilitating a classroom discussion?
- Why is facilitating a classroom discussion a high leverage practice?
- How can teachers build trusting and respectful relationships with middle school students?
- Why is setting goals such an essential aspect of classroom discussions?
- How can the CCSSI_ELA standards be taught in social studies classrooms?

Class Activities (activities in bold are with the middle school students in their social studies class)
- Overview of course and the practice of facilitating a discussion
- Discussion of *Accountable Talk*
- Debrief key components of discussion
- Prepare for Chapter 9 summary work – creating a poster for one section of the text - with the sixth graders.
- **Meet with your middle school student partners.**
- **Focus on students’ reasoning and preparation of a summary poster following the reading of one section of their social studies textbook. (Chapter 9: Daily Life in Ancient Egypt)**
- Debrief about the summary poster creation and discussion of Chapter 9.
- Prepare for video analysis of one teacher’s discussion practices.
- Begin preparations for the mandala symbolism work for next week.
Read Before Class

- *History Alive!* Chapter 15: Hindu Beliefs
- *Accountable Talk sourcebook: For classroom conversation that works* (pp 32 through 46 and select two of the Appendices that appeal to you).
- Information for the mandala lesson using “see, think, wonder” for this class.
- Draft lesson plan for and one of the following Jataka Tales assigned to you: *Prince Five-Weapons and Sticky Hair* or *The Elephant King Goodness* (These materials will be used to plan for the Jataka discussions to be held on January 22.)

Prepare/Submit

- Assignment #1 ~ Video analysis of a teacher’s discussion (post to CTools by 8 a.m. and bring a paper copy to class)

Understanding how Students Reason with Texts and Preparing Discussions

Guiding Questions

- How do students make sense of and reason with texts as they learn disciplinary concepts, skills, or processes?
- How can teachers assist and support all their students’ participation in discussions?
- How can visual texts support content learning?
- How can visual texts be created to organize information and share learning?

Class Activities (activities in bold are with the middle school students in their social studies class)

- Discussion of the video analysis of the MLK, Jr. *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*
- Discussion of use of visual texts.
- Prepare and practice mandala lesson for this morning.
- **Employ the “See, Think, Wonder” routine with the images in Chapter 15 beginning with 15.4 and have sixth graders create a mandala as graphic organizer to understand and share the five basic beliefs of Hinduism.**
- Debrief on the “See, Think, Wonder” lesson.
- Prepare plan for the Interactive Read Aloud using Jataka Tales to be enacted next class.
| 3 Jan. 22 | **Read Before Class**  
• Chapter 16, The Story of Buddhism  
• Review “Teacher Moves” in *Accountable Talk Sourcebook* pgs 26-35* (pdf on CTools)  
**Prepare/Submit**  
• Jataka tale final lesson plan (email to Klo by Monday, January 20, 5 p.m.)  
• Bring Lesson plan, copy of the Jataka Tale, images of Dharma, Karma and Samsara and video camera to class today.  

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**Preparing for and Enacting Discussions**

**Guiding Questions**  
• How can teachers develop a sequence of questions to support and extend students’ thinking about texts and disciplinary concepts, skills, or processes?  
• How can teachers listen to and take up students’ ideas during discussion?  
• How can teachers enact discussions in which the teacher models curiosity about texts and ideas and everyone is accountable for using accurate knowledge and rigorous thinking?  

**Class Activities** *(activities in bold are with the middle school students in their social studies class)*  
• Identifying and reinforcing classroom norms and “Teacher moves” in *Accountable Talk*  
• Rehearse Jataka Tale lesson  
• **Enact Jataka Tale lesson with 6th grade middle school students**  
• Debrief Jataka Tale lesson  
• Begin planning for stations of learning for Chapter 18 – “The Achievements of the Gupta Empire”  
  1. Universities and Literature  
  2. Painting and Sculpture and Metalwork  
  3. Mathematics and Roads
| 4 | Jan. 29 | **Read before class:**  
• Chapter 18: The Achievements of the Gupta Empire  
• Diana Hess (2009), Skillful teaching of controversial issues discussions. Chapter 4 in *Controversy in the Classroom* (pp 53-76).  
**Prepare/Submit**  
• Gupta Station lesson plan (email to Klo by Monday, January 27 by 5 p.m.)  
• Bring plans, materials and video camera to class  

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**Enacting and Evaluating Discussions**

**Guiding Questions**
- How can teachers design text-based discussion opportunities for students using a variety of “texts” such as artifacts and artworks – to support students’ understanding of particular disciplinary concepts and processes?  
- How do teachers use their professional resources to plan and enact lessons?  
- How do we know what students are learning through discussion?  
- How can we become better at facilitating discussions?  

**Class Activities** *(activities in bold are with middle school students in their social studies class)*
- Rehearse and set up stations for Gupta Empire lesson  
- Enact each station 3 times (15 minutes each). Final station is to put the palm-leaf book together.  
- Debrief lesson with the sixth graders.  
- Discussion of the Hess reading.  
- What have we learned about facilitating discussions with students?  
- Course feedback information  

| Feb. 3 | **Prepare/Submit to CTools**  
• Individual analysis/ reflection on discussions with sixth graders.  
• A personal reflection on this course (5 pts. of your participation grade).  