

COLLEGES OF WORCESTER CONSORTIUM, INC.
Certificate in College Teaching
IDND 30519: Teaching & Learning in a Diverse Classroom (1 credit)
Spring 2008

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Class Meets: Online, January 21, 2008 – April 6, 2008

Course Description

As the population of students in higher education becomes increasingly diverse, faculty members must be prepared to examine, confront, and manage the issues and challenges facing the education of all students regardless of ethnic, cultural, economic, gender-based, linguistic, or physical differences. This course is an attempt to ground the day-to-day experiences of being a faculty member in the larger political, economic, historical, and sociological contexts in which teaching and learning take place.

Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom addresses several central questions: How do we, as faculty members, prepare ourselves to effectively reach and teach students whose race, ethnicity, culture, identity, and physical capabilities differ from our own experience? How can we implement culturally responsive pedagogy in our classrooms? How can we insure that all students are actively involved in the educational process?

During this class we will discuss our own cultural experiences, gain insight into the cultural experiences and perspectives of others, and work collaboratively to analyze case studies from multiple perspectives. We will discuss the ways in which we, as faculty members, can work through diversity issues in higher education, and create and implement plans of action that enhance educational opportunities for all students.

Course Purpose

This course will focus on faculty members' responsibilities to students of all backgrounds and dispositions. It will provide you with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of diverse student groups. The collaborative nature of this course will provide opportunities for you to work with other aspiring faculty members, and to learn about issues and programs, and develop plans of action to address issues that we identify throughout the course. Throughout this course you will be encouraged to recognize, examine, and challenge your assumptions about the groups to which you belong, as well as your assumptions about culturally different groups.

I truly believe that when we, as educational leaders, view the world through the multiple perspectives of the students and communities we serve, we have the opportunity to create settings for learning that enhance the educational success of all students.

Course Objectives

Through this course you will be expected to:

- Examine and challenge your assumptions about diverse groups (including the groups to which you belong)
- Articulate a personal vision of what diversity brings to the classroom, and explain how your vision will be put into practice in your classroom
- Analyze current theories and practices related to learning and diverse groups of students
- Analyze how mass media functions to promote certain attitudes about diverse groups of students
- Articulate how major challenges faced by oppressed groups might manifest themselves in your classrooms
- Define steps you might take in order to mitigate challenges faced by oppressed groups

Multiple Perspectives - Openness and Sensitivity

Many of our readings may be construed by some students to be somewhat controversial. My goal for this course is that you begin to see situations and issues as others might see them – that you look at the same situations through different lenses and understand them through different perspectives. You do not need to change your unique perspective – nor do you have to agree with the perspectives of others or me. I will, however, ask you to temporarily “adopt” the perspectives of some of the authors and case participants.

Diversity is a sensitive topic to discuss, which may present its own set of challenges in an online course. On one hand, participants have the opportunity to monitor their thoughts before “speaking” on the discussion boards. On the other hand, email and written communication lack visual cues and therefore can be easily misinterpreted. For each of us there are issues that may be highly sensitive. An issue that may be “no big deal” for one of us may be one that has impacted the personal and professional life of another. I ask you to keep this in mind as you think through the readings and discussions. Try to honestly share your views, and share them with sensitivity.

Naturally all of the etiquette rules that apply to face-to-face discussions apply to our online classroom discussions!

Course Schedule

This course is taught in an entirely online format using Clark University’s BlackBoard course management system. All our discussions will take place asynchronously using discussion boards, providing the maximum degree of flexibility possible to you in terms of reading, responding, and discussing.

Discussion Board or Email?

I log into the discussion board on a daily basis, though I may not respond to your questions and comments for up to 48 hours. I do this purposefully, as I do not want to quell any ongoing online conversations between students in the class. I *strongly* encourage students in the class to respond to one another – not only does it provide your fellow students with a timely answer, but it helps to build a tighter knit classroom community. *This is a discussion-oriented class, so you should be discussing the readings and prompts with each other, not just with me!* I assure you that I will read all your questions, comments, and responses, and will be actively engaged in your discussions throughout the course.

You should post all questions that are not private on the discussion board. This gives your classmates an opportunity to understand your questions, respond, or benefit from the response of others. Please always feel comfortable using email for questions that are more private in nature – I will do my best to respond as quickly as possible to these!

Students with Disabilities

If you believe that you may need some type of accommodation in this course, please contact Disability Services at Clark University (<http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/ada>; 508.793.7468) in order to begin the process.

Copyright Notice

The materials used on the course website are for use only by students enrolled in the course. Copyright to all discussion board postings and student work remains the sole possession of the author.

Course Assignments

Assignments in this course are meant to be discursive and reflective. As such, there is an expectation of frequent and thoughtful participation, as well as a fair amount of writing about course-related topics of interest to you.

There are four (4) assignments in this course. All assignments should be typed and double-spaced, with 1” margins and 11 or 12 pt. font (Times New Roman or Arial). Feel free to use a citation style your discipline commonly employs.

1. Discussion Board Participation (30%)

- You will engage in meaningful online discussions and interactions with others in the class. You will do this by frequently posting to the course discussion board as indicated on the weekly course schedule (pages 4-6 of the syllabus). Your participation accounts for 30% of your final grade, so you must be an *active* participant!

With respect to your discussion board postings, the course schedule identifies the number and types of each response required for a given week. Please use the following definitions as guides to your postings:

- ▶ What is a **substantive posting**? A substantive posting is an original posting that is based upon and integrates the readings, discussion prompts posted by the instructor, and/or your professional or personal experience. It provides a springboard for discussion amongst your classmates... it should make us think and reflect.
- ▶ What is a **response**? A response is a thoughtful reaction or reply to a substantive posting. In a response, you are expected to reflect upon what the original posting contained, consider it in light of your own professional/personal experiences and the course readings, and post a response that supports, extends, and/or challenges the original posting.

2. *Self-Reflection (20%)*

- The purpose of the self-reflection is to get you to think about who you are as a teacher and learner, and how you came to be that individual through genetic, familial, cultural, social, educational, linguistic, and other such frames. These frames help us to not only better understand ourselves, but to better understand the complexity and nuance of experiences our students bring with them to the classroom. Your self-reflection should be no less than 4 pages, and may address any combination of the topics dealt with in class or which have helped to shape who you are, but which we will not have the time (unfortunately) to discuss at length (e.g. – sexual orientation, physical or learning disabilities, etc.)
- Your self-reflection should also address how these characteristics and traits are expressed through your instruction, and what role they play in shaping the classroom environment in which you teach.

3. *Reflection Paper (20%)*

- You will write a reaction paper of no less than 5 pages in length that integrates and reflects upon several of the readings and class discussions. Because we are such a small class, and I personally want this experience to be as relevant to your own work and interests as possible, you and I will email about and agree upon a topic of your choosing.

4. *Field Experience (30%)*

- You will conduct a field experience observation, which will consist of approximately 3 hours in the field. You must receive permission from the gatekeeper (department chair, principal, superintendent, etc.) in order to conduct this observation. Field experiences provide you with an opportunity to observe theoretical constructs and analyze what you are learning in authentic settings. You will select one equity issue (race, class, gender, language, etc.) and observe as much as you can about this issue. After the observation, you are to prepare a paper of no less than 5 pages that describes what you observed, how those observations connect to class readings and readings you complete on your own, and what your recommendations would be in order to improve the state of equity in the classroom/school you observed. You may conduct your observation at a university, K-12 school, or other approved institution.

Assignments must be submitted on time. Assignments that are submitted late may lose up to five points per day. If there is an emergency and you must be late, please contact me as soon as possible.

Grading and Expectations

Grading Procedures

You will be graded on a traditional A-F scale, which will be awarded as follows:

- Participation & Discussion Boards: 30%
- Self-Reflection: 20%
- Reflection: 20%
- Field Experience: 30%

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Comment</i>
A	Excellent work demonstrating careful study and in-depth analysis
A-	Very good work that has been carefully executed; requires somewhat deeper analysis
B+	Good work, indicating careful thought and attention to the task, yet requires several areas of improvement
B	Work of graduate standard, but omissions exist or careful analysis is somewhat lacking
B-	Effort is evident, but work indicates a lack of understanding of the demands of the task
C+	Poor quality work with little attention to detail and the demands of the task
C	Work of very poor quality, indicating no understanding of the depth of analysis required
F	Serious neglect or evidence of cheating

Course Schedule

I will grade your assignments within the week in which they are submitted. I try to provide meaningful feedback within 48 hours, but due to the length of each assignment I may return them piecemeal throughout the week.

Course Calendar: This calendar will serve as a guide and is subject to change. Changes may be made to meet the needs of the course participants as the course evolves.

Due Dates: These are also found on course calendar and are highlighted throughout the syllabus

Participation & Discussion Boards: Ongoing

Self-Reflection: February 4th

Reflection Paper: March 9th

Field Experience: April 6th

Session One (Jan 21-27)	
Introduction	<p>Reading(s) 1. Major Educational Philosophies</p> <p>Fundamental Question(s) How does our upbringing and life experiences play a role in who we are, how we see the world, and how we teach?</p> <p>Discussion Board Topics Posting 1: Please introduce us to yourself using any and all means with which you feel comfortable. Feel free to tell us as much or as little about yourself as you like. In addition, please be sure to answer these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you choose to enroll in this course? • What do you hope to learn in this course? • From the reading, identify which philosophy (if any) most closely aligns with your own personal philosophy of education, and discuss why you connect with it. If you do not identify with any of the philosophies, explain why. <p>Posting 2: Please respond to at least two of your classmates</p>
Session Two (Jan 28-Feb 3)	
Educational Philosophy	<p>Reading(s) 1. J. Dewey (1897) 2. Selections from Hirsch (1987) 3. Selections from Freire (1970) 4. A Nation at Risk</p> <p>Fundamental Question(s) How does our upbringing and experience play a role in who we are, and how we see the world?</p> <p>Discussion Board Topics (Questions will be posted online, and will be amended as necessary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What principal role(s) do you see education playing in society? • What are – or should be – the goals of education? • Where – if at all – does the personal philosophy of education you wrote in week 1 align with or diverge from the role you see education playing in society?

Session Three (Feb 4-10)	
Social Class	<p><u>Reading(s)</u> 1. Haveman & Smeeding (2006) 2. Walpole (2003) Optional: The Century Foundation</p>
	<p><u>Fundamental Question(s)</u> In what ways does the social class we are a part of inform our teaching? In what ways does social class affect the learning of students in our classrooms? <u>Discussion Board Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there equal opportunity in the United States? • How might poverty affect your students academically and socially? • What are the implications of the disproportionately low enrollment of low SES students in higher education? What about in your particular discipline?
Session Four (Feb 11-17)	
Race/Culture	<p><u>Reading(s)</u> 1. Lynn (1998) 2. Selections from Ladson-Billings (1999)</p>
	<p><u>Fundamental Question(s)</u> In what ways does race, ethnic background, and culture inform our teaching? In what ways does race, ethnic background, and culture affect the learning of students in our classrooms? <u>Discussion Board Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the “master narrative”? • How do those from the dominant culture benefit from the status quo? • What are “multiple lenses” and why are they important? • How do our lenses color our views of the world, the classroom, and educational opportunities?
Session Five (Feb 18-24)	
Language	<p><u>Reading(s)</u> 1. Tatar (2005) 2. Friedenber (2002)</p>
	<p><u>Fundamental Question(s)</u> How does a student’s language impact their academic success? How does a student’ language impact their social experiences at a college? <u>Discussion Board Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate at least one substantive post to the readings, and two responses to your classmates’ postings • Please identify three ways in which English Language Learners (ELL’s) would struggle in your classes, and what you could do to assist these students in overcoming these struggles
Session Six (Feb 25-Mar 2)	
Gender	<p><u>Reading(s)</u> 1. Selections from Rich (1979) 2. Hall & Sandler (1982) 3. King (2000)</p>
	<p><u>Fundamental Question(s)</u> In what ways does our gender inform our teaching? In what ways does gender affect the learning of students in our classrooms? <u>Discussion Board Topics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does gender impact opportunities for educational, professional, and economic success? • Should, and if so how, might faculty members open doors for students who have been historically underrepresented in a particular field? • In what ways does Rich’s essay still ring true today? In what ways doesn’t it?

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Session Seven (Mar 3-9)	
Social Capital	<p>Reading(s) 1. Selections from R.D. Putnam (2000) 2. McKinney et al. (2006)</p> <p>Fundamental Question(s) What role, if any, does social capital play in education? How might a decrease in community connectedness affect your teaching and the success of your students?</p> <p>Discussion Board Topics (respond to these online)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate at least one substantive post to the readings, and two responses to your classmates' postings • Keep a time diary for the week that identifies everything you are doing. Please share the diary with me via email*, and describe the trends you see in it on the discussion board for and with your classmates. <p>*I will describe this in greater detail as we get closer to Week Seven. Time diaries will be held in strict confidentiality. If you would prefer to not provide me with a copy of your time diary, please notify me in advance and an alternate approach will be provided to you.</p>
Session Eight (Mar 10-16)	
Curriculum	<p>Reading(s) 1. Selections from Pinar (1995)</p> <p>These are amongst the most challenging readings in the course, so leave yourself a little extra time to read and think about them</p> <p>Fundamental Question(s) Is the content we teach “values-neutral” or does it represent a particular perspective?</p> <p>Discussion Board Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you think of the content you will be teaching, do you see it as values-neutral? • In what ways might a curriculum be something more than just content? • How, if at all, does the content you might normally teach in a course reflect the dominant values of society? • Of the themes Pinar describes, which aligns most closely with your experience as a learner? Which aligns most closely with your thinking as a teacher?
Session Nine (Mar 17-23)	
Media	<p>Reading(s) 1. Giroux (1997) 2. Apple (1992) Watch video clips available on the course website – please view after completing the readings</p> <p>Fundamental Question(s) In what ways do different forms of media re/represent the values and perspectives of the dominant group in society?</p> <p>Discussion Board Topics Posting 1: Generate at least one substantive post to the readings and videos, and two responses to your classmates' postings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting 2: Reflect upon the personal philosophy of education you identified and wrote about in weeks 1 and 2, respectively. In light of our readings and discussions, have your sense of your personal philosophy and the goals of education changed at all? If so, how?

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Session Nine (Mar 24-30)	
Disabilities	<p>Reading(s) 1. Scott (1997)</p> <p>Fundamental Question(s) What types of learning disabilities should I expect to see in my classrooms, how will they manifest themselves, and what accommodations would be appropriate?</p> <p>Discussion Board Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
Session Nine (Mar 31-Apr 6)	
Wrap-Up	<p>Given time, we may explore another topic that we mutually agree upon, or further investigate a topic we've already studied</p>

COURSE READINGS

- Apple, M. (1992). The text and cultural politics. *Educational Researcher*, 21(7), 4-11+19.
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- Friedenberg, J.E. (2002). The Linguistic Inaccessibility of US higher Education and the Inherent Inequity of US IEPs - An Argument for Multilingual Higher Education. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(2), 213-230.
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- Scott, S.S. (1997). Accommodating college students with learning disabilities: How much is enough? *Innovative Higher Education*, 22(2), 85-99.
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- Walpole, M. (2003). Socioeconomic status and college: How SES affects college experiences and outcomes. *Review of Higher Education*, 27(1), 45-73.

Course and syllabus developed by Matthew D. Laliberte