INSTRUCTOR:
Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, Ph.D.
shg@northwestern.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Northwestern University Conceptual Framework:

As active participants in the field of education, our candidates will strive for improvement and innovation, based on inquiry that is grounded in reflection and investigation. The candidates will have

1) A **vision of learning** that includes:

   1.1 how students come to understand and think about subject matter;
   1.2 an emphasis on inquiry and reflection;
   1.3 the importance of collaboration and social interaction; and
   1.4 experiential activities that are relevant and engaging.

2) A **vision of the learner** that includes:

   2.1 the belief that every person is capable of learning;
   2.2 that development is shaped by social contexts; and
   2.3 equitable experiences for all.

3) A **vision of teaching** that includes:

   3.1 connecting theory and practice;
   3.2 inquiry, reflection, collaboration, and innovation;
   3.3 creating a climate of learning for all students; and
   3.4 acting professionally, responsibly, and ethically.
MSED 430 emphasizes several tenets of our Conceptual Framework, particularly: diversity as a resource (NUCF 2.1, 2.2, 2.3); understanding student thinking about the subject matter (NUCF 1.1); authentic experience (NUCF 1.4); learning as a social practice (NUCF 1.3, 2.2). Connecting theory to practice (3.1).

Each class session features interpretive discussion, that is, discussion about the meaning of texts. Individual perspective, history, and interests are drawn out in discussion and are indispensable to its success (diversity as a resource; NUCF 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). In focusing upon discussion, the course places emphasis upon understanding student thinking about the subject matter (NUCF 1.1). Students prepare for each interpretive discussion and write questions they have about the meaning of texts. Thus, the course emphasizes learning through research and reflection (NUCF 1.2) and authentic experience (NUCF 1.4). The focus on question development and discussion help students to understand learning as a social practice (NUCF 1.3). Discussion of texts in relation to experiences leading discussion in field settings helps students connect theory to practice (3.1).

In focusing upon these tenets of the NUCF, the course should help you to develop the dispositions implied by them. At the same time, work in the course addresses the following Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (which are cross-referenced with the tenets of the NUCF):

**#1: Content Knowledge:**
The competent teacher understands the central concepts, methods of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines and creates learning experiences that make the content meaningful to all students.

**#3 Diversity:**
The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

**#5 Learning Environment:**
The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

**#7 Communication:**
The teacher uses knowledge of effective written, verbal, nonverbal, and visual communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

**#9 Collaborative Relationships:**
The teacher understands the role of the community in education and develops and maintains collaborative relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community to support student learning and well being.

**#10 Reflection and Professional Growth:**
The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates how choices and actions affect students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community and actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally.

In addition, course experiences help students to meet the following IPT Language Arts and technology standards:
**Language Arts 1: Literacy Techniques and Strategies:** All teachers must know a broad range of literacy techniques and strategies for every aspect of communication and must be able to develop each student’s ability to read, write, speak, and listen to his or her potential within the demands of the discipline.

**Language Arts 2: Model English Language Arts Skills:** All teachers should model effective reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills during their direct and indirect instructional activities. The most important communicator in the classroom is the teacher, who should model English language arts skills.

**Technology 2: Personal and Professional Use of Technology:** The competent teacher will apply tools for enhancing personal professional growth and productivity; will use technology in communicating, collaborating, conducting research, and solving problems and will promote equitable, ethical, and legal use of computer/technology resources.

**OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE:**

The overall objective of the course is to introduce an approach to teaching and learning that I call “Interpretive Discussion,” which is similar to what the Great Books Foundation calls Shared Inquiry®. It is an approach that is useful in most settings where learning and teaching take place. You will find that interpretive discussion is used in courses that you take in the MSED Program—and elsewhere. My hope is that you will make use of it in your classroom. The course has four specific objectives. You should become able to:

1) Develop genuine questions about the meaning of texts;

2) Cultivate shared questions in group discussions and in so doing, cultivate thinking, reading, speaking and listening skills;

3) Work with others in pursuing resolution of shared questions;

4) Prepare for, lead, and reflect upon interpretive discussions, and help others in so doing.
   (note: explained further below)

In meeting these objectives, you will come to understand discussion leading and listening patterns that help a group come to a shared point of doubt about the meaning of the text and make progress toward resolution.

In the course, we will be engaged in building communities of learners. As members of such communities, we question and refine questions through discussion with others. The approach may be used in K-12 and in workplace settings where a variety of disciplines and topics are pursued. As part of the course, I am asking you to try it in field situations.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Attend all classes, and for the duration of each class. As the course only meets six times, absence is not permitted;

2) Complete all readings on time—before the class for which they are assigned;

3) Bring the written work assigned for each class to the session. IT MUST BE TYPED;

4) Participate actively in the class discussions, as speaking and listening skills are to be cultivated;

5) Prepare for, co-lead, and reflect upon an interpretive discussion as directed (see course schedule). Each of you will prepare for, lead or co-lead, and reflect upon three discussions, one in class and two in the field. The field discussions should be videotaped, if possible, as we will be analyzing them in class. You will work with me and with others prepare for the discussions.

6) Reflect (in class) upon discussion leading experiences.

GRADING:

Course requirements are listed above. Serious, careful work submitted on time is necessary for success in this course. Those who attend all classes, complete all assignments in a careful, timely manner and participate actively are candidates for A’s and B’s.
CANVAS:

“Canvas” is a software package that we will make use of in the course. Canvas allows students to continue reflections that are begun in class and to communicate about clusters of questions and topics raised in our conversations. It also facilitates the development of clusters of questions. To access Canvas, go to https://canvas.northwestern.edu/. From there you may log on with your net ID and password in order to access your current classes. Readings for weeks 3, 4, and 5 will be posted on Canvas.

Note: Work on Google Docs may supplement the work on Canvas.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required:


Documents on discussion (handed out in class/posted on Canvas)

Texts selected for interpretive discussion by class members

Recommended:


Haroutunian-Gordon, Sophie. (2009) *Learning to Teach Through Discussion: The Art of Turning the Soul* New Haven, CT: Yale Press. (recommended for all, particularly for those planning to teach elementary school)

PLEASE BRING TEXT(S) TO CLASS ON DAYS WHEN THEY WILL BE DISCUSSED. USE CLOTH OR HARDBOUND EDITION OF REQUIRED TEXT.
DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

SESSION I: Wednesday, June 24, 2015

Introduction to Interpretive Discussion

Objectives:
1) To identify the needs and interests of the group;
2) To introduce the course, including the syllabus and the three phases of interpretive discussion;
3) To engage in an interpretive discussion;
4) To explore a “cluster” of questions;
5) To view an interpretive discussion and begin to reflect upon it.

Materials and Activities:
12-1:00 PM Introductions; review of syllabus; Interpretive Discussion I: “Schoolmaster”

1:15-4:00 PM Exploring a Cluster of Questions: “Schoolmaster”; View and reflect upon discussion of “Schoolmaster” Discussion, high school class

Handouts: “Schoolmaster”; Cluster of Questions for “Schoolmaster,” Other

SESSION II: Wednesday, July 1, 2015 (University 312)

Preparing to Lead Interpretive Discussion

How does one prepare to lead an interpretive discussion?

Objectives:
1) To engage in interpretive discussion of SHG, Interpretive Discussion: Engaging Students in Text-Based Conversations (ID)

2) To prepare to lead an interpretive discussion;

Materials and Activities:
12—1:15 PM: Discussion SHG, ID Introduction and Chapters 1,2,and 3, Appendixes A,B,E.F

1:30—3:45 PM: Watch “Donald Duck in Mathmagic Land” and prepare clusters of questions (co-leaders, helpers, SHG)

3:45-4:00 PM—Sign up for discussion co-leading and “helping.”

{NUCF 1.1,1.2, 1.3,2.2, 3.1; Disp. 1,2,3, 4; IPTS 1,3, 5, 9, 10, Las 1,2; Tech.2}
Assignments:

(All assignments are to be completed before class and, if written, should be typed. NO LATE PAPERS, PLEASE.)

1) Read: SHG — ID, see above

As you read through the text for the first time, mark places to focus on closely when you read for the second time—places you feel you don't understand, ideas and formulations about which you have questions, places you find of particular interest. Write down questions and observations as they occur to you.

Now, re-read. When you have finished the second reading, review your questions and comments and select two interpretive questions that are of particular interest to you;

2) Pick out two of these observations/questions and bring them to class, typed. Questions should meet the criteria of clarity as specified in Appendix A and discussed, Chapter 3.

Note well: Please DO NOT try to write questions only after you finish reading. To do so may render the process mechanical. Your aim is to discover the genuine questions you have about this text, and writing questions and comments as you read is more likely to draw out your natural questions.

3) Co-leaders of Text I discussion: Bring copies of text to class/ send link/post on Canvas.

SESSION III: Wednesday, July 8, 2015 (Annenberg 347)

Leading Interpretive Discussion I; Co-leading I

How does the leader help a group to form a deepest point of doubt (DPD) through the act of interpretation? How does the leader form a cluster of questions that meets the criteria of clarity?

Objectives:

1) To engage in interpretive discussion with Student co-leading pair I (text I-- to be identified and posted on Canvas previously)

2) To reflect upon the discussion in light of preparation (cluster of questions) and SHG ID, Chapter 4

3) To refine clusters of questions for “Donald in Mathmagic Land.”

Materials and Activities:

1) 12—1:15 PM: Discussion of Text I—Co-leader pair #1

2) 1:30-2:30—Reflection on discussion and SHG ID, Chapter 4
3) 2:45-4:00 PM: Reflection upon discussion clusters for “Donald in Mathmagic Land” (work in co-leading pairs with helpers).

(Note: Leading of “Donald” discussions will begin after July 9)

{NUCF 1.1,1.2, 1.3,2.2, 3.1; Disp. 1,2,3, 4; IPTS 1,3, 5, 9, 10, Las 1,2; Tech 2}

Assignments:

(All assignments are to be completed before class and, if written, should be typed. NO LATE PAPERS, PLEASE.)

1) Read SHG ID, Chapter 4—A Discussion of “Schoolmaster.”

2) Read Text I;

   As you read through the texts for the first time, mark places to focus on closely when you read for the second time--places you feel you don't understand, ideas and formulations about which you have questions, places you find of particular interest. Write down questions and observations as they occur to you.

   Now, re-read. When you have finished the second reading, review your questions and comments and select two interpretive questions that are of particular interest to you.

3) Pick out two of these observations/questions for each text (Text I and SHG ID, Chapter 4) and bring them to class, typed. Bring 3 copies of Text I questions (one for shg, one for each co-leader). Questions should meet the criteria of clarity as specified in Appendix A and Chapter 2.

   Note well: Please DO NOT try to write questions only after you finish reading. To do so may render the process mechanical. Your aim is to discover the genuine questions you have about this text, and writing questions and comments as you read is more likely to draw out your natural questions.

4) Bring questions/ revised cluster for “Donald in Mathmagic Land” (work with your co-leader to develop and revise the cluster). Bring 7 copies to class—you will “help” each other revise further in class;

5) Co-leaders of Text I discussion: Post cluster and reflection in discussion on Canvas by Saturday, July 14.

6) Co-leaders of Text II discussion: Bring copies of text to class/ send link/post on Canvas.

{NUCF 1.1,1.2, 1.3,2.2, 3.1; Disp. 1,2,3,4,5,; IPTS 1,3, 5, 8, 9, 10, Las 1,2}
SESSION IV: Wednesday, July 15, 2015 (University 312)

Leading Interpretive Discussion II; Co-Leading II

Which discussion leading practices help a group come to a shared concern about the meaning of the text and make progress toward its resolution?

Objectives:

1) To discuss Text II—led by student co-leading pair II

2) To reflect upon the discussions in relation to discussion leading patterns, as seen in SHG ID, Chapter 5 — A Discussion of “Rats”

3) To reflect upon “Donald” field-based discussion D1;

4) To prepare for co-leading field discussion

Materials and Activities:

12-1:15 PM: Discuss Text II;

1:30-2:30: Reflect upon the discussion with particular emphasis on discussion leading patterns as seen in Discussion of “Rats”;

2:30-3:15 Reflect upon “Donald” Discussions; field based discussion D1

3:15-4:00 PM: Develop cluster of questions for field based discussions

Assignments:

(All assignments are to be completed before class and, if written, should be typed. NO LATE PAPERS, PLEASE.)

1) Read Text II (Blackboard; link), SHG ID Chapter 5 — Discussion of “Rats”

2) Write questions/make comments as you read;

3) Pick out two of these observations/questions for each text (Text II and SHG ID Chapter 5) . **Bring 3 copies of Text II questions** (one for shg, one for each co-leader) and bring them to class, typed. **Questions should meet the criteria of clarity as specified in “Criteria” in Appendix A and Chapter 2.**
Note well: Please DO NOT try to write questions only after you finish reading. To do so may render the process mechanical. Your aim is to discover the genuine questions you have about this text, and writing questions and comments as you read is more likely to draw out your natural questions.

4) Co-leaders for Text III: Bring copies or indicate the on-line site.

5) Co-Lead field discussions in the field of “Donald in Mathmagic Land” and write reflection

6) Post your reflection on field discussion D1, “Donald in Mathematic Land,” on Canvas; prepare to reflect upon it in class. Distribute final cluster.

7) Co-leaders of Text II: Post cluster and reflect on discussion on Canvas Saturday, July 19.

8) Co-leaders of Text III discussion: Bring copies of text to class/ send link/post on Canvas.

{NUCF 1.1,1.2, 1.3,2.2, 3.1; Disp. 1,2,3,4,5; IPTS 1,3, 5, 8, 9, 10, Las 1,2; Tech 2}

SESSION V: Wednesday, July 22, 2015 (University 312)

Leading Interpretive Discussion III; Co-leading III

How does the leader help a group to form a shared point of doubt (continued)? How do group members work together to make progress toward resolution?

Objectives:

1) To engage in interpretive discussion of Text III

2) To reflect upon the discussion in light of preparation (cluster of questions) and SHG ID, Chapter 6 – A Discussion of Toni Morrison’s Nobel Laureate Lecture

3) To reflect upon field discussions of “Donald in Mathmagic Lang” D2, especially with respect to progress made toward formation and resolution of shared DPD.

Materials and Activities:

12-1:15 PM: Discuss Text III;

1:30-2:30: Reflect upon the discussion with particular emphasis on discussion leading patterns as seen in Discussion of Toni Morrison’s Nobel Laureate Lecture;

2:30-3:00 Reflect upon “Donald” Discussions D2-- field based discussion; pass out final cluster.
3:00-4:00 PM: Develop cluster of questions for second field based discussion

Assignment

(All assignments are to be completed before class and, if written, should be typed. NO LATE PAPERS, PLEASE.)

1) Read Text II (Blackboard; link), SHG ID Chapter 6 —Discussion of Toni Morrison’s Nobel Laureate Lecture

2) Write questions/make comments as you read;

3) Pick out two of these observations/questions for each text (Text III and SHG ID Chapter 6). **Bring 3 copies of Text III questions** (one for shg, one for each co-leader) and bring them to class, typed. **Questions should meet the criteria of clarity as specified in “Criteria” in Appendix A and Chapter 2.**

   Note well: Please DO NOT try to write questions only after you finish reading. To do so may render the process mechanical. Your aim is to discover the genuine questions you have about this text, and writing questions and comments as you read is more likely to draw out your natural questions.

4) Co-Lead discussion in the field of “Donald in Mathmagic Land”—D2-- and write reflection

5) Post your reflection on Blackboard for “Donald in Mathematic Land,” –D2-- Canvas; prepare to reflect upon it in class . Distribute final cluster.

   {NUCF 1.1,1.2, 1.3,2.2, 3.1; Disp. 1,2,3,4,5,; IPTS 1,3, 5, 8, 9, 10, Las 1,2; Tech 2}

---

**Session VI: Wednesday, July 29, 2015**

**Reflecting Upon and Assessing Progress in Interpretive Discussion**

How well did co-leaders help students to form a shared point of doubt and make progress toward resolution in field discussions of texts I, II, III?

How does one assess progress in the development of interpretive discussion skills and habits of mind?

**Objectives:**
1) To reflect upon SHG ID, Chapter 7—Reflecting upon Three Interpretive Discussions and Conclusion.

2) To reflect upon “Donald” Discussion D3;

3) To reflect upon the field discussions of texts I, II, III—especially with respect to progress made toward formation and resolution of shared DPD.

4) To reflect upon the accomplishments and challenges of Interpretive Discussion

Materials and Activities:

12-1:15PM: Discuss Chapter 7 and Conclusion of SHG ID

1-1:30: Reflect upon “Donald” Discussions D3-- field based discussion; pass out final cluster

1:45-3:30: Reflect upon the discussions of texts I, II, III in the field

3:30 -4:00 Concluding reflection

Assignment

(All assignments are to be completed before class and, if written, should be typed. NO LATE PAPERS, PLEASE.)

1) SHG, ID, Chapter 7 and Conclusion;

2) Write questions/make comments as you read;

3) Pick out two of these observations/questions and bring them to class, typed. Questions should meet the criteria of clarity as specified in “Criteria” in Appendix A and Chapter 2;

Note well: Please DO NOT try to write questions only after you finish reading. To do so may render the process mechanical. Your aim is to discover the genuine questions you have about this text, and writing questions and comments as you read is more likely to draw out your natural questions.

4) Prepare 20 minute presentation with your co-leader in which you reflect upon your discussion leading experience in the field with Text I, or II, or III. Present excerpts from the discussion, where appropriate.

5) Post an individual reflection and the final cluster for Text I, II, or III on Canvas

{NUCF 1.1,1.2, 1.3,2.2, 3.1; Disp. 1,2,3,4,5,; IPTS 1,3, 5, 8, 9, 10, Las 1,2; Tech}
Further Clarification of Assignments

I. Preparing to Co-lead Interpretive Discussions

To begin with, write questions about the meaning of the text as you read (described above several times above) When you are preparing to co-lead a class discussion with a peer, you will:

A) share interpretive questions with your co-leader to arrive at a shared point of doubt (SDPD);

B) together, develop a cluster of questions that explores resolution of that SDPD (meaning that you each work on all the questions together, although you might begin by each writing four follow-up questions);

C) work with the co-leader and shg to establish a schedule of revision so that at least three rounds of revision of the cluster take place.

NOTE: A “round” of revision is defined as follows for discussions to be led in class: i) co-leaders prepare cluster of questions—BQ and 8 follow-up interpretive questions; and submit to shg; ii) I read through the cluster and following the criteria for evaluation, raise questions about meaning of questions/make comments/suggestions in effort to help co-leaders clarify DPD and wording of all questions; iii) co-leaders revise cluster of questions in light of ii) and re-submit it to me, unless it is the “final round.” I will let you know when you have reached the “final round,” which may occur after you have led the discussion.

II. Leading Interpretive discussions led in the field:

“Donald” Discussions

With your co-leader, lead two interpretive discussions in a school setting, one of which will be “Donald in Mathmagic Land.” You should lead each discussion with a small group of people—between 6-15, if possible.

Texts I, II, III

The discussions of these texts will be led both in class and in the field.

You may lead a discussion on a topic related to the subject matter you plan to teach and for any length of time that makes sense in the setting. You will, however, need to use a text that has enough ambiguity so that you can write a cluster of questions about its meaning in preparation for discussion. If possible, the discussions should take place in a school setting.

Please work out the discussion leading project with your mentor(s) /peers/ work colleagues well in advance of the leading date. You will have some opportunity to develop a cluster of questions with your co-leaders/helper/shg in class. However, you will need to work on the cluster outside of class as well. Shg will approve your cluster before you lead the discussion.
III. Reflecting upon discussions led in the field:

In your presentations to our class, please reflect upon the following questions:

A) Did a shared point of doubt about the meaning of the text emerge in the discussion, and if so, what was it?

B) Did one or more ideas about resolution become formulated? What were they?

C) Were the candidates for resolution evaluated against textual evidence?

D) Did the discussants work together to form a shared point of doubt, identify possible resolutions and evaluate possibilities using textual evidence?

E) What useful moves did you make as discussion leaders?

F) What problems did you encounter in leading?

G) What questions do you have about discussion leading?

In responding to these questions, please give examples from the discussion itself so that we may follow your line of reasoning.

Each co-leader should post a reflection on Canvas. I will respond on Canvas, and I encourage others to do so as well.

Academic Integrity
Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide." All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/. If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office.

Accommodations for students with disabilities
In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent Web site that is viewable at: http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/

* Please note: Syllabus is subject to modification as needed.