

**Northwestern University**  
**School of Education and Social Policy**  
**MS ED 402: Social Contexts of Education**  
**Annenberg 345**  
**Winter 2021**  
**Wednesdays, 1/13 - 3/10, 6:00p.m. - 9:00p.m.**

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**Course Description**

This course focuses on the social and contextual influences of education, from a learning, teaching, research and policy perspective. We will examine the role of race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, and identity in the ways individuals and groups influence and are influenced by our education system. In this class you will be asked to deeply evaluate your own beliefs, thoughts and assumptions about the influence of these socio-cultural factors and consider their implications for your own professional and personal development.

**Remote Learning**

Since we will be remote, please be prepared to join us on Zoom each week. While we will strive to emulate the class as though we were in person, we will adapt accordingly to your needs. Some assignments and reading will be adjusted as we move through the quarter together. We will adjust to what works best for all of you, as we are in this together.

**Guiding Commitments and Course Goals**

**VISION: Developing educators to engage in transformative teaching and learning**

Advance equity and social justice

- To understand the philosophical and historical underpinnings of schooling in America.
- To understand the dynamic role of social forces (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability) on education.
- To develop an understanding of the levels of racism and oppression ranging from internalized and individual to structural and systemic

Foster subject matter sensemaking

- To develop skills in creating safe, respectful learning environments in classrooms and schools.
- To understand how the teacher supports the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of individual students.
- To develop skills of teaching-as-researching.

Understanding learning and human development

- To develop practices of self-reflection, systems analysis, and dialogue.
- To understand the social ecology, culture, and climate of a classroom, school, and community.
- To explore teacher identity and its impact on students, as well as the impact students have on teacher identity.

Engage within and across communities

- To develop practices of the collegial community within and beyond the school.
- To develop voice and social capacity as a public intellectual.
- To attend an experiential event and reflect/write about it

### **Required Texts**

- Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000.
- Coates, T. *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015.
- Moraga, C., Anzaldúa, G. *This Bridge Called My Back*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2015 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- Articles will be posted on Canvas and linked in this syllabus if available.

*You may use different editions, including Kindle/Nook.*

### **Course Schedule and Topics**

#### **Ongoing assignments:**

- Focus papers due Wednesdays before class TBD
- Canvas posts due Wednesdays before class
- Home Group projects--presented Session 8 (March 3)
- Racial Autobiography--presented Session 9 (March 10)

**Before** January 13 , please read ["The Lesson"](#) and complete the assignment on [Place Based Learning](#)

#### **Session 1 January 13: How is where I learn what I learn?**

- Introduction to the course
- Getting to know each other; Recollections process
- Introduction to Descriptive Inquiry Processes
- Toni Cade Bambara: "The Lesson"
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 1C, 1L, 2B, 2N, 3K, 4E, 5M, 5P, 6A, 6Q, 8A

#### **Canvas Post #1 Due: before class, Wednesday, January 20**

#### **Conversations, emotions, vulnerability**

**Read:** Narayan, U. Working together across differences: Some considerations on emotions and political practice. *Hypatia* V. 3 N. 2 Summer 1988. Hooks, Teaching to Transgress.

Choose a sentence from this text that you find particularly thought-provoking, challenging, maybe that raises new questions for you, and write about it. If you see any connections between themes that emerged in our first class or other experiences in your own life, you might start exploring those here. End with questions the reading and/or class discussion has left you interested in pursuing. Please bear in

mind that assignments for this class provide space for reflection, exploration, and questions – they are not about making an argument or an analysis. Considerations about dialogue in “Working together across difference” will be important foundations as we think about being in dialogue with texts, with experiences, and with one another.

**Read and be prepared to talk about:** Moraga, C., Anzaldúa, G. *This Bridge Called My Back*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2015 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)

(If you don't have a physical copy yet, you may use [this](#) e-copy for now)

This week, spend an hour and a half with this book. Explore, flip through, pause, read, skim, take notes for yourself, reflect, talk about it with someone, notice feelings and memories and questions that come up for you, and record them (audio, video, drawing, or writing).

You will probably feel that this book was written *to you*, or that it was NOT written *to you*. Either way, what does that mean to you? What are the opportunities here for you?

How does your engagement with this text shape your learning goals for this class? What do these words, these stories and poems and essays and images, make you want to experience? To learn? To change within yourself?

## **Session 2 Wednesday, January 20: How does my identity affect my learning and my teaching?**

- Reflecting on the readings
- Introduction to Home Groups
- Current issues facing students, teachers, schools, and communities
- Select Home Group focus reading
- Teacher-as-researcher framework
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 1E, 1K, 2D, 3F, 4B, 4C, 5C, 5K, 5O, 6G, 7E, 7I, 8B, 8G, 9E, 9S

## **Focus Paper #1 Due: before class, Wednesday, January 27**

### **The Myth of Meritocracy**

#### **Read:**

Alexander, M. *The New Jim Crow* (selections). New York: The New Press, 2010.

Coates, T. *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015.

Why the Myth of Meritocracy Hurts Kids of Color

In the U.S. we learn a story of equal opportunity for all. Why do we believe this story? Alexander and Coates offer counter-narratives that challenge this story and tell a very different story. What's a piece of the story each of them tells that you find compelling? How does it help you to discern the story you have been told (implicitly or explicitly) about achievement and opportunity in America? How did you learn this story?

### **Canvas Post #2 Due: before class, Wednesday, January 27**

Choose an article, opinion piece, blog post, podcast, or video addressing a current story focusing on race, gender, sexual orientation, or class, to share with your classmates. Explain what new perspective this text provides you as you reflect on identity and relationships at national and local levels.

### **Session 3 Wednesday, January 27**

#### **How has American education history played out for different groups?**

- Home Groups
- History and Issues in American Education discussion
- Equity, Democracy, Neoliberalism
- *13th*
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 1C (D), 1F (D), 2B (D), 2D (D), 2J (D), 2M (D), 4P (D), 5L (D), 6B (D), 7C (D), 7L (I), 8E (I), 9G (D), 9Q (D)

### **Reading for Wednesday, February 3:**

Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Ch. 1). Bloomsbury Academic, 2000.

### **Focus Paper #2 Due: before class, Wednesday, February 3**

#### ***Pedagogy of the Oppressed***

#### ***Reading: Please read the Introduction and Chapter 1***

The pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity, presents itself as a pedagogy of humankind. Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization. This is why, as we affirmed earlier, the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors. It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education.

***Reading Guide:*** This is difficult reading, full of philosophical terms and rigorous social analysis. You have to stretch your mind to register the importance of what Freire is saying. Bear in mind as you read that Freire's main emphasis is on *humanization*: the priority of each individual's fundamental worth. This applies to *everyone*. At all moments, Freire challenges us to be conscious of the things, large or small, visible or invisible, that threaten a person's worth. Freire is writing out of the context of the life he lived in Brazil, where poor people participated in their own oppression through "a culture of silence," unable to pull themselves out of poverty and despair because they lacked critical awareness of their situation. Throughout his life, Freire worked to educate people for this awareness – in a literacy program often compared to Highlander's (Myles Horton) Citizenship Schools that helped millions of African Americans pass the test that barred them from voting.

The educational goal Freire outlines is to help each person become a Subject, who acts on and transforms his or her world. "This *world* to which [s/he] relates is not a static and

closed order, a *given* reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked on and solved.” To the extent that schooling and culture push us all to conform to an “objective” view of the world that we did not participate in creating, we are all oppressed. And most of us resist putting that view aside and struggling to create our own reality, because that is very hard and entails a great deal of responsibility: thus we participate in our own oppression.

But there is a socio-economic dimension to Freire’s terms too, which force us into uncomfortable (and, it can feel like, oversimplified) categories of oppressor and oppressed. We are hoping that your reading, reflection, and writing will help you to experience this discomfort as productive tension.

**Writing:** Instead of writing a coherent paper, for this week, keep a running list as you read, of a few key words, concepts, or perspectives that challenge or unsettle you. Reflect on what experiences, beliefs, and reactions in you might be getting in the way of your understanding of these ideas, and jot down these reflections. Your questions will shape our work together in class next week.

### **Canvas Post #3 Due: before class, Wednesday, February 3**

After watching the film 13th as a class, please post some reactions/thoughts you had to the film. Additionally, please reflect on these questions.

1. In what ways does the Prison Industrial Complex, as described in 13th, intersect with the U.S. education system?
2. In what ways does a School-to-prison Pipeline benefit those with a vested interest in maintaining the prison system?
3. What effects might mass incarceration have on Black students and their learning experiences and outcomes in the U.S.?
4. How does the film connect to Freire's book (reading for this week)?

### **Session 4 Wednesday, February 3: What is the relationship between schools and social change?**

- History and Issues in American Education discussion
- Progressive education, critical pedagogy, politics and education
- Home Groups explained
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 1L, 2N, 3K, 3L, 4K, 5L, 6J, 6O, 8D, 8L, 9E

### **Reading for next class, Wednesday, February 10:**

Coates, Case for Reparations

Baldwin, James. “A Talk to Teachers”

Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Ch. 2). Bloomsbury Academic, 2000.

### **Focus Paper #3 Due: Wednesday, February 10**

Continue tracking your Freire reading (chapter 1 and 2)

### **Canvas Post #4 Due: Wednesday, February 10**

Regarding the Coates reading this week: When people discuss reparations, it is often in reference to slavery. What other damaging policies does Coates highlight as the basis for his

case? Why is he focusing his discussion on post-slavery offenses? What other connections can you make between Coates, Freire, *13th*, and other reading/discussion from class?

**Session 5 Wednesday, February 10: How does power play out in schools?**

- Critical Pedagogy discussion
- Systems analysis and multicultural education
- Racial identity development theory
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 2A, 2C, 3C, 4A, 4B, 5M, 6C, 7L, 8L, 9O, 9P

**Reading for Wednesday, February 17:**

Shulman, E. "Reflection Is Action: The Struggle for White Educators to Balance Internal and External Anti-racist Efforts"

Campbell, M. and Michael Kucera. "From the Inside Out: A Letter to Anti-Racist Leaders"

View video of Marcus Campbell and R. DiAngelo -- linked in Canvas

**Focus Paper #5 Due: before class, Wednesday, February 17  
tbd**

**Canvas Post #5 Due: before class, Wednesday, February 17**

This week's readings focus on the dynamics that can result from the anti-racist work done in schools and further delves into power and structural systems. Explain what you are understanding about stereotype threat (Steele), white fragility (DiAngelo), and the personal ways this shows up in schools (Shulman)?

**Session 6 Wednesday, February 17: How do groups resist dominant narratives?**

- Dominant culture and power
- White Fragility
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 1A, 2F, 2H, 3Q, 4B, 4D, 4I, 5C, 6J, 7R, 8N, 9P

**Reading for February 24:**

Warren, C. ["The utility of empathy for white female teachers' culturally responsive interactions with Black male students"](#)

**Focus Paper #7 TBD**

**Canvas Post #7 TBD**

**Session 7 February 24**

- See articles in Canvas
- Post-Trump
- Home Group Lessons

**Session 8 March 3**

- Experiential Education Events due -- post in Canvas

- **Home group presentations**

**Session 9 March 10: What are the possibilities for democratic education today?**

- Anti-racist education practice in schools and in communities
- **Racial Autobiography due**
- Class assessment
- IPTS Standards Addressed: 1L, 2D, 2K, 4B, 4C, 7L, 8A, 8E, 9F

**Experiential Education Assignment:**

Once during the quarter, you will attend an experiential education event in Chicago and write about it in a discussion post. Event options such as Chicago or Evanston school board meetings, community education forums, and conferences, lectures, films are acceptable. If you come across an event that you would like to list or to attend and are unsure about it, please email us the information. **You can do this online, of course, as we are remote.**

The post should offer a reflection on the event you attended: What new insight did you gain about schooling, i.e., what it's like to be a CPS student/teacher/board member; what kind of relationships in schools and in educational decision-making processes foster real learning; how do power structures affect learning? How were race, class, gender differences framed in the event? What connections can you draw with readings, lectures, and discussions we have held in the class? What creative ideas or astute analysis about education did you encounter in the event? How, specifically, does this experience affect your goals as a teacher or whatever field you are going into?

**Racial Autobiography Assignment**

As antiracist multicultural educators it is important for us to consciously explore how we come to see the world as we do. This paper gives you the chance to examine your experiences, beliefs, and perspectives in relation to the readings and discussions we engage in this class. Please write a 2-3 pp single-spaced paper, in which you consider the major influences that shape your understanding of race, diversity, and difference. You might consider your earliest experience, your most recent, and anything you would like to include in between. You will have five minutes to share your racial autobiography at the last class.

**MS ED 402: Social Contexts of Schooling Assignments and Grading**

*Additional guidelines for all assignments will be provided*

**Class Participation**

Your attendance and participation in each class session will be part of your final grade.

**Student Attendance Policy**

Active attendance and participation in class is required. If you must miss a class session for any reason, please contact the instructor in advance. When missing a class, you should expect to make up the missed instructional minutes by completing any missed assignments or engaging in alternate activities as assigned by the instructor. Absences or

tardiness may result in a lower course grade. With three or more absences, you may be unable to complete the class.

**Focus Papers**

You will organize your responses to your readings in weekly Focus Papers. These are one-page, single-spaced close reflections on the texts in relation to your own experiences.

**Weekly Discussion Posts**

Each week, you are responsible for posting a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board. Responses to other posts are also required.

**Home Group Project** Deadline: tbd

In small groups, you will explore how institutions and societal processes impact education, with a particular focus on the relationship between race and power. Your group will use selections from *This Bridge Called My Back* as a foundation, and make connections with course readings, conversations, and current events. Each group will share with the class collective learning on their inquiry. Presentation guidelines will be provided.

# Northwestern University

## Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education

### **Mission**

Our mission is to prepare knowledgeable, reflective, and innovative teachers who will lead and inspire students.

### **Vision**

The Teacher Education Program at Northwestern University is guided by a conceptual framework for teacher education, organized around a vision of learning, learners and teaching. The conceptual framework focuses on

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.

A vision of learners 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.

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.

### **Dispositions**

*CAEP defines dispositions as “habits of professional action and moral commitment to teaching.”* The Northwestern teacher preparation programs will help candidates acquire the following dispositions to the level of proficiency:

1. *to reflect on one’s own practice and make changes as appropriate.*
2. *to support students as individuals.*
3. *to collaborate with all stakeholders.*
4. *to engage all students.*
5. *to incorporate innovations in teaching, including the use of new technologies.*
6. *to conduct oneself professionally, responsibly, and ethically.*

### **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](mailto:ssd@northwestern.edu). SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent web-site which is viewable at: <http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/>.

### **ILLINOIS PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS (2013)**

*Applications of IPTS standards are listed in the Course Schedule and Topics, with reference to the level at which they are being used (introducing (I), developing (D), mastery (M), or review (R)).*

Standard 1 - Teaching Diverse Students – The competent teacher understands the diverse characteristics and abilities of each student and how individuals develop and learn within the context of their social, economic, cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences. The teacher uses these experiences to create instructional opportunities that maximize student learning.

Standard 2 - Content Area and Pedagogical Knowledge – The competent teacher has in-depth understanding of content area knowledge that includes central concepts, methods of inquiry, structures of the disciplines, and content area literacy. The teacher creates meaningful learning experiences for each student based upon interactions among content area and pedagogical knowledge, and evidence-based practice.

Standard 3 - Planning for Differentiated Instruction – The competent teacher plans and designs instruction based on content area knowledge, diverse student characteristics, student performance data, curriculum goals, and the community context. The teacher plans for ongoing student growth and achievement.

Standard 4 - Learning Environment – The competent teacher structures a safe and healthy learning environment that facilitates cultural and linguistic responsiveness, emotional well-being, self-efficacy, positive social interaction, mutual respect, active engagement, academic risk-taking, self-motivation, and personal goal-setting.

Standard 5 - Instructional Delivery – The competent teacher differentiates instruction by using a variety of strategies that support critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and continuous growth and learning. This teacher understands that the classroom is a dynamic environment requiring ongoing modification of instruction to enhance learning for each student.

Standard 6 - Reading, Writing, and Oral Communication – The competent teacher has foundational knowledge of reading, writing, and oral communication within the content area and recognizes and addresses student reading, writing, and oral communication needs to facilitate the acquisition of content knowledge.

Standard 7 - Assessment – The competent teacher understands and uses appropriate formative and summative assessments for determining student needs, monitoring student progress, measuring student growth, and evaluating student outcomes. The teacher makes decisions driven by data about curricular and instructional effectiveness and adjusts practices to meet the needs of each student.

Standard 8 - Collaborative Relationships – The competent teacher builds and maintains collaborative relationships to foster cognitive, linguistic, physical, and social and emotional development. This teacher works as a team member with professional colleagues, students, parents or guardians, and community members.

Standard 9 - Professionalism, Leadership, and Advocacy – The competent teacher is an ethical and reflective practitioner who exhibits professionalism; provides leadership in the learning community; and advocates for students, parents or guardians, and the profession.