

Social Justice Education (4 cr./3 cr.)

INTS 436/595

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Office Hours: by appointment

Participants of this fully experiential learning community will examine educational policy, practice, and materials using a variety of lenses informed by social justice theory and praxis. Drawing on critical theories and multicultural education as theoretical frameworks, participants collaboratively and actively investigate ways in which racism, sexism, economic injustice, heterosexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination influence schools and educational access and opportunity for youth. We will consider and practice what individuals and communities can do to ensure that all students have equitable educational opportunities.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop deeper understandings of the ways in which social inequities influence social and educational access and outcomes for the full diversity of youth in U.S. schools (**NCC Competencies: Valuing, Global Understanding**);
2. Strengthen abilities to critically analyze contemporary social and educational policies and practices as they relate to these inequities (**NCC Competencies: Critical Thinking, Effective Citizenship**); and
3. Create curricula and practice pedagogical strategies for teaching students, colleagues, and others about social justice and human rights issues in both formal and informal educational settings (**NCC Competency: Communication**).

Required Texts

Online subscription to *Rethinking Schools* – PDF plus App version (or any version that *includes access to online archives*)

plus articles to be distributed.

Learning Activities (Assignments)

Attendance, Participation, and Learning Journals (10 points)

I have created Journals for each student on Blackboard. Each week, by 1 pm the day of class, you will write a *short* journal entry, perhaps 250 to 300 words. At the very least these entries should (a) review the main points of each reading and how they overlap or conflict, and (b) include practitioner reflections about how the readings informed you as a future teacher or activist or social justice advocate of some other sort. You should write *one reflection or each week, not one reflection for each reading*, but each reflection should refer to each reading for that week.

Note that the reflections should not be about whether or not you “like” the readings. It is your opportunity to note concepts and ideas that you can apply in your assignments and your opportunity to demonstrate to me that you have done the readings thoughtfully.

I will look at a portion of the reflections each week. By the end of the semester you should have done journals for at least 10 weeks, giving you a break for a couple weeks that you can choose.

Learning Activity 2: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum (30 points, due midnight 2/28)

Building on class discussion about concepts including the hidden and null curricula, you will compose a 1,500 (undergrads) or 2,500 (grads) word-or-so essay identifying and critically analyzing an example of the hidden or null curriculum at an institution of education of your choice. You can choose any example of the hidden curriculum as long as you can demonstrate how it contributes to inequitable conditions for an already-marginalized group of students, staff, or faculty members as defined by race, gender identity and/or expression, religion, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic class.

Begin by describing the example of the hidden or null curriculum in detail. Describe how or why it is “hidden” and how it is related to institutional culture or tradition. Then—and this should comprise **the bulk of your essay**—*analyze* your example. Be as specific as possible. What are the equity implications of this example of the hidden or null curriculum? Who does it help or protect? Who does it repress? Remember that the hidden and null curricula often are subtle and that repression sometimes (but not always) is unintentional. You do not have to choose to analyze an enormous example of obvious oppression. Rather, I encourage you to choose something more implicit, more “hidden.”

The purpose of this essay is to practice seeing and analyzing the conditions that we are conditioned not to see even as they reproduce injustice. Note that citing a lot scholarly sources outside of class readings is not required for this assignment, but you should do so if it helps you deepen your analysis. What I am looking for, more than anything, is for you to dig beneath obvious surface-level observations in order to uncover implicit inequities and then to analyze those inequities as deeply and complexly as possible.

Remember that the hidden curriculum is not the set of conditions, but rather the message that is being sent by the set of conditions. Your analysis should focus on the implications of that message.

These essays will be assessed based on the extent to which you:

- A. choose and thoroughly describe an example of the hidden curriculum that negatively affects students, educators, and/or families *from an already-marginalized community at a specific institution of education*;
- B. deeply and complexly analyze the example you've chosen, focusing specifically on its *implications for marginalized communities*;
- C. draw on concepts discussed in class and in our readings in order to deepen your analysis;
- D. incorporate documentary evidence (e.g., photographs, excerpts from institutional documents, excerpts from interviews of campus leaders), where appropriate, to support your analysis;
- E. compose a well-written, well-organized, essay *with a clear purpose or thesis statement*.

Learning Activity 3: Group Case Study Analysis (30 points, due 4/4)

You may choose to complete this assignment on your own or in groups.

You will engage concepts covered and discussed in class in order to analyze a real-life case study related to a social justice concern in school. Individuals or groups will choose from the case studies in *Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education*, completing this assignment based on ***one of the case studies we did not discuss in class***.

Individuals and groups will turn in the following:

- a. a brief summary (roughly 300-400 words) of your process for working through the case using the case study analysis model (this can be in outline form)
- b. a short essay (roughly 1,000 words) describing and justifying a set of short- and long-term solutions to the problem posed by the case

These analyses will be assessed on the extent to which individuals or groups:

1. demonstrate a complex, thoughtful process for examining the case, the stakeholders, and the challenges and opportunities inherent in the situation described by the case;
2. identify and justify short-term solutions that address the immediate concerns presented by the case, ***considering the power dynamics involved and maximizing social justice***;
3. identify and justify long-term solutions that ***address the underlying power dynamics and aim at systemic change***; and
4. compose well-written, well-organized summaries and essays.

Learning Activity 4: Creating a Socially Just School Project Presentation (30 points)

You may work individually or in a group on this assignment.

You will choose a project based on your own interests related to social justice education—something related to creating an equitable and just classroom, school, or educational organization. Options include, but aren't limited to:

- a) the development of ***original and substantial*** curriculum materials to teach a particular of age group of students about an issue related to equity and diversity (such as racial bias, homophobia, or poverty)—not just a lesson plan, but a full unit plan and related materials that you map onto components of social justice education discussed in class;
- b) the creation of informational materials to raise awareness about a particular educational injustice that reflect a critical social justice view;
- c) the crafting of a plan for organizing activism in support of more just schooling around a specific equity concern...

We will share these projects during the last two days of class. You will bring them on the day you are scheduled to present along with: (1) a 2-page summary of your process for creating your project (how you informed yourself sufficiently to create something that is sound and meaningful, how your project reflects a *critical social justice* approach), and (2) a list of references—readings you used to develop your project using a critical social justice perspective. Be sure to be mindful of audience. For whom, in what context and age group, are you creating your project?

You will have 10-15 minutes to present your project. Please be sure to incorporate interactive elements. If you have created curricula or a workshop plan, engage your classmates in one of the activities.

This assignment will be assessed based on the extent to which you:

1. demonstrate an understanding of key concepts discussed in class as they are reflected in your project;

2. demonstrate a *critical* and *transformative* approach to social justice education that reaches beyond “celebrating diversity” and “human relations” and other *conservative* or *liberal* approaches; and
3. demonstrate effort at preparing to create the project based on complex knowledge about social justice (as evidenced by your 2-pager).

Tentative Schedule

Note: All readings other than those drawn from *Rethinking Schools* are posted on Blackboard.

1/24	Introductions and Concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of class • introduction of each other • exploration of basic concepts: equity, social justice, diversity 	
1/31	What is “Social Justice Education?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purpose of education – critical, liberal, conservative lenses • conceptualizing social justice education – equity literacy lens • approaches to social justice education 	
2/7	The Hidden Curriculum / The Case Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit and explicit inequities • “equity” ideologies (will revisit during SES conversations) 	
2/14	No Class	
2/21	Racism and Racial Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-aggressions 	
2/28	More Racism and Racial Justice ***Hidden Curriculum essay due, midnight	
3/7	Gender, Sexism, Transphobia in Schools	
3/14	SPRING BREAK	
3/21	Economic Injustice and Economic Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How out-of-school barriers inform in-school experiences and outcomes 	
3/28	More Class and Poverty	
4/4	Heterosexism, Heteronormativity, and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defining sexual orientation, heterosexism, and heteronormativity • heterosexism and anti-heterosexism in schools • teaching about homophobia in the classroom ***Case Study Analysis Due, midnight	
4/11	Teaching for Social Justice: Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approaches to curriculum development for social justice • engaging students in conversations about social justice 	
4/18	Teaching for Social Justice: Pedagogy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical pedagogies in action • teacher activism 	
4/25	Presentations	

5/2	Presentations	
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Class Policies

1. Please arrive at class on time. Two tardies will be considered an absence for the purpose of participation grading.
2. Please attend class. Each member of the Community is allowed one absence, no questions asked. Because the class is built around interaction and dialogue, attendance by each member of the Community is critical. So when you miss more than one class, your grade will be affected. An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. I reserve the right to request evidence when you will be absent for one of these reasons.
3. When you miss class, it is *your* responsibility to arrange to make up the day's work. You must approach me about the absence and inquire about ways of making it up.
4. Engaged and respectful dialogue is encouraged. Demeaning, intolerant, and/or disruptive behavior or responses at any time will affect your participation grade.
5. You are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time (defined as turning in all assignments in person at the beginning of class). Assignments submitted late will lose one letter grade for each day they are past due, including Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
6. In compliance with a University-wide initiative, I will correspond electronically with students only through their GMU assigned email accounts. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements; checking your email during University closings is especially important as I will alert you to schedule changes via email.
7. George Mason University has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental principles you must follow at all times are: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and 3) if you are uncertain about citation rules or assignment guidelines, ask me for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please let me know and also seek help from University resources. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, personal issues, and related concerns.
8. All papers must be typed, double spaced on 8.5" x 11" paper using 12 point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Multiple pages *must be stapled before class*. Additionally, all papers and other assignments should be documented properly in accordance with an accepted

citation manual (e.g. The Chicago Manual of Style, The APA Manual of Style, The MLA Style Manual).

GMU Student Resources

Center for Service and Leadership (Center for Leadership and Community Engagement):

The Center for Leadership and Community Engagement is a central contact point at George Mason University for information on experiential learning, service learning, and leadership development. The Center's webpage provides exciting and useful material including the Student Service Learning Handbook, information on writing learning objectives, instructions on completing a learning objectives contract, and lists of experiential learning opportunities.

New Century College On-Line Writing Guide—<http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg/index.html>

This on-line guide is tailored specifically to New Century College students.

GMU Writing Center: Robinson A116; 993-1200; writingcenter.gmu.edu

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Office of Disability Services: Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance, should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 222; 993-2474) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk to me to discuss reasonable accommodations.

<http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>

Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR) Center: Johnson Center 229; 993-8990; <http://www.media.gmu.edu>

New Century College Commitment to Diversity

New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.