

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM**

**EDUC 649 DL1: Critical Dialogue in Education  
1.5 Credits, Summer/Fall 2014**

**PROFESSORS:**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

- A. Prerequisite: Admission into the MEd Curriculum **and** Instruction concentration in Transformative Teaching program.
- B. Offers opportunity to develop critical dialogue and peer feedback skills focused on professional practice.

**DELIVERY METHOD:**

This course will be delivered online using synchronous and asynchronous formats via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course materials will be available on July 28<sup>th</sup>.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

- **Course Participation:** Active and consistent participation in the course as described in the individual course syllabus is extremely important for online courses. Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Online courses will, at a minimum, have weekly requirements for student participation that can be documented by any or all of the following methods:
    - Submission/completion of assignments as specified by the professors
    - Communication with the professors
    - Active, meaningful, and respectful communication with peers
- Expect to log in to this course **at least 3 times a week** to read announcements, participate in the discussions, and work on course materials. Students must also regularly check their GMU email for communications from the instructors. Remember, this course is **not** self-paced. There are **specific deadlines** and **due dates** listed in the **CLASS SCHEDULE** section of this syllabus to which you are expected to adhere. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

- **Written Assignments:** All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. (Formal assignments do not include Blackboard discussions, class/course feedback, in-class reflections or journaling) The American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA) style guide should be followed for formal written assignments. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the Mason library web guide at <http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/>. Students may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support. Students will do the following:
  - Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
  - Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
  - Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
  - Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
- **Course Week:** Because our online courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will **start** on Wednesday and **finish** on Tuesday. Synchronous meetings will be arranged as needed.
- **Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students are expected to seek assistance if they are struggling with technical components of the course.
- **Technical Issues:** Students should expect that they could experience some technical difficulties at some point in the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly.
- **Mentoring/Advising:** If you would like to schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues, and you are unable to come to the Mason campus, we can meet via telephone or web conference. Send an email to your instructors to schedule your one-on-one session and include your preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- **Netiquette:** Our goal is to be **collaborative**, not combative. Experience shows that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be misconstrued. We suggest that you always re-read your responses carefully before you post them to encourage others from taking them as personal attacks. **Be positive in your approach to others and diplomatic with your words.** We will do the same. Remember, you are not competing with each other but sharing information and learning from one another as well as from the instructors.

### **LEARNER OBJECTIVES:**

**This course is designed to enable students to:**

1. Develop as researchers and reflective practitioners.
2. Develop an understanding of the ways that dialogue and discourse reproduce (or resist) social and political inequality, power abuse and/or domination.

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:**

This course fits with the core values of the College of Education and Human Development, which include collaboration, research based practice, innovation, ethical leadership, and social justice.

This course is designed to meet the following professional teaching standards:

- GMU Dispositions for a Career Educator I, IV, and V
  - Commitment to the Profession
  - Commitment to Being a Member of a Learning Community
  - Commitment to Democratic Values and Social Justice
- Teachers College Columbia Teacher Expectations II, III and IV
  - Learner-Centered Educators
  - Effective Collaborators
  - Advocates of Social Justice and Diversity
- NBPTS Propositions 1 and 5
  - Teachers are Committed to Student and Their Learning
  - Teachers are Members of Learning Communities

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Boler, M. (2004). *Democratic dialogue in education: Troubling speech, disturbing silence*. Peter Lang. [Editor’s Introduction, Introduction and pgs. 3-32]

Bolton, G. (2010). *Reflective practice: Writing and professional development* (3rd edition). Los Angeles: Sage. [Chapter 6]

Wink, J. (2011). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world* (4th ed.). NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. [Chapters 3, 4 & 5]

\*Please Note: Additional articles, chapters, PowerPoint presentations, and media will be posted on Blackboard as needed.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

**1. Assignment descriptions**

- Course Participation (Assesses objectives 1 and 2)
- Community-School Connections Project – PBA (Assesses objectives 1 and 2)

**2. Assignment weighting**

Course Participation	
Session 1: Blackboard Discussion – Equity Audit	10 points
Session 2: Blackboard Collaborate Session – Equity Audit	10 points
Session 3: Posted Draft Interview Questions & Feedback	10 points
Session 4: Blackboard Discussion –Boler Text	10 points
Session 5: Posted Interview Data & Collaborate Coding Session	10 points
Session 6: Community-School Connections Project Upload & Sharing	50 points

### 3. Grading policies (and grading scale appropriate for UG or GR level)

#### Grade Distribution

95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
75-79	C
74 and below	F

### 4. Selected performance-based assessment (PBA)

The Community-School Connections Project is designed to support you to develop as researchers, reflective practitioners, and critical educators as we consider connections between the community in which your students live and your classroom. The project will engage you in the process of critical pedagogy as you *name, reflect critically* on, and begin to think about how to *act* in ways that offer empowering learning experiences for you and for your students. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to gain new knowledge about the relationship between the school and the community in which your students live. You will learn how to obtain such information by engaging in a skilled dialogue with a community member. Embedded in this project are multiple opportunities to learn about and practice self-reflection and critical discourse analysis. The eight main components of this project are:

1. Identify a topic
2. Develop interview questions
3. Identify a community member (participant)
4. Write the first reflective memo in preparation for the interview
5. Interview the participant
6. Write notes on the interview
7. Write the second reflective memo on the entire process
8. Compile documents and reflect

In the following paragraphs you will receive further detailed instruction on each step of the process. It is important that you carefully follow the steps as they teach fundamental skills for data collection.

#### A. Identify a topic

Draw on your experience as a classroom teacher and the information you obtained or were unable to obtain from the Equity Audit as you go through the questions below:

- What are some equity issues that intrigue you as a classroom teacher?
- What are some equity issues/problems you have faced that may be connected to the community in which the children live?

Using these questions create a list of topics that are of interest to you. Combine topics if appropriate to create a short list of 3 important topics. Keep this list of topics and include them in your final report.

**B. Develop interview questions (To be completed and posted by August 13, 2014)**

Applying the principles of respect, reciprocity and responsiveness, construct a set of 5-6 interview questions. Develop the questions using the guidelines provided on the handout **Interviewing as a Research Skill**. You will get feedback from colleagues in a Blackboard discussion thread. However, it would be useful to also pair up with a colleague to practice interviewing and to try out your interview questions. Take notes and after the interview is completed, have a conversation discussing the interview process and the specific questions. Modify your questions, if needed, based on your interviewing experience. (Remember that questions may be modified as you conduct the interview). Keep this list of questions and include them in your final report.

**C. Identify a community member (participant)**

Identify a community member who could provide more insight into the equity issue you identified. The interviewee must be a person from an underrepresented group and who can serve as a well-respected community informant. For example, a member of a community advocacy group, a religious leader in the community, a librarian, a football/soccer coach, an aftercare teacher. Check with your mentor if you are unsure. Contact this person and introduce yourself, explain the purpose of your project, and make an appointment to interview this person. Document this process to include in your final report.

**D. Write a reflective memo in preparation for the interview (1-2 pages double spaced)**

Reflect on the following questions in your memo:

- What was the participant's response to my request?
- What are my initial thoughts about the participant based on my brief interaction?
- What are my thoughts and feelings about the interview process?
- What are some socio-cultural and moral dilemmas inherent in the topic identified, of which I should be aware?

**E. Interview the participant**

Begin the interview by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of your assignment. **Inform the interviewee that his/her name or identification will not be revealed in your report and the information will not be published.** Use the interview questions you began to develop in class to begin the dialogue. Please feel free to ask additional questions as necessary. You may use a tape recorder with the participant's permission if you feel it will help you. However, this is not a requirement. Take detailed notes during the interview. Thank the participant at the end of the interview.

**F. Write notes on the interview (4-6 pages double spaced)**

Type your notes as soon as you can. It is important that you not procrastinate as you will lose valuable data. Describe in detail each of the issues discussed by the community member. **It is very important that you write in complete sentences.** Provide a few (3-5) direct quotes that capture the participants' perspective in their own language. At the end of your notes identify two important issues from the participant's perspective. **Do not include any analytic or reflective memos with these notes. Save such memos separately and include them in your second reflective memo.**

**G. Write a reflective memo on the entire interview process (1-2 pages double spaced)**

Address the following questions in your second reflective memo:

- How did my initial thoughts affect the interview process?
- What are some differences in perspectives between the participant and me?
- Which part of the interview process was most difficult for me? Why?
- What new understandings and insights did I gain about this equity issue?

**H. Compile, reflect, and share**

Compile information from the documents created in steps A through G and add an introduction, and preliminary conclusions to the report. The final compilation of the Community-School Connections Project must include the following:

<b>Introduction:</b> Briefly introduce the research topic and the community member. (5-7 sentences)	5 points
Interview questions	5 points
First reflective memo (1-2 pages)	10 points
Notes from the interview (4-6 pages)	10 points
Second reflective memo (1-2 pages)	10 points
<b>Preliminary conclusion</b> (5-7 sentences)	5 points
Sub total:	<hr/> 45 points
Sharing with cohort (see Blackboard instructions)	5 points
Total:	<hr/> 50 points

**TASKSTREAM REQUIREMENTS**

Every student registered for any Transformative Teaching course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit this assessment, *The Community-School Connections Project*, to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of your performance-based assessment will also be provided using TaskStream. Failure to submit the assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed upon completion of the required TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

## **GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

## **PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

## **CORE VALUES COMMITMENT**

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].**

**PROPOSED CLASS SCHEDULE:**

Sessions	Readings/Assignments
1 July 30-Aug. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bolton text, chapter 6</li> <li>Blackboard discussion: Equity Audit</li> </ul>
2 Aug. 6-Aug. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch online video: Identify strengths-based perspectives/attitudes</li> <li>Begin to conduct Equity Audit – gather all of the information you can</li> <li>Blackboard Collaborate session – share what you learned &amp; begin to shape the Community-School Connections Project: Identify a focus for the project &amp; a community member to interview.</li> </ul>
3 Aug. 13-Aug. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post draft interview questions for feedback in Blackboard (mock interview)</li> </ul>
4 Aug. 20-Aug. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blackboard discussion using the Boler text</li> </ul>
5 Sept. 3-Sept. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from interviews due: post in Blackboard</li> <li>Blackboard Collaborate session to code the data</li> </ul>
6 Sept 10-Sept. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-School Connections Project due in TaskStream</li> </ul>

**ASSESSMENT RUBRIC(S):**

The PBA will be assessed according to the professional standards and the specific assignment guidelines using the following rubric:

**Critical Dialogue in Education**  
*Assignment rubric*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CRITERIA	<b>Beginning (Does not meet standards) 1</b>	<b>Developing (Meets standards) 2</b>	<b>Accomplished (Exceeds standards) 3</b>	<b>Exemplary (Exceeds standards) 4</b>
<b>Imagination and Creativity (GMU I, TC II)</b>	Beginning to take risks beyond what is familiar	Generates multiple possibilities before attempting to	Creative problem-solving technique includes multiple possibilities, research, divergent	Metacognitive and innovative thinking and practice derived from creative problem solving that

		solve problems creatively	and convergent thinking, and tenacity	sparks more questions, possibilities, and creativity for self and students. Overcomes social and material obstacles
<b>Multiple Perspectives (GMU V, TC IV, NBPTS 1)</b>	Budding understanding of how own perspective affects teaching and relationships with children, families, pedagogy, and colleagues	Understands own perspective and how it affects teaching and relationships with children, families, pedagogy, and colleagues	Understands how own perspective affects teaching and relationships with children, families, pedagogy, and colleagues. Respects difference and avoids deficit thinking. Distinguishes between assumptions and facts	Metacognitively understands the origins of own perspective, questions self about perspectives, actively seeks understanding of others' cultural knowledge and views, respects difference. Avoids deficit thinking. Distinguishes between assumptions and facts
<b>Communication Skills (GMU IV, TC III, NBPTS 5)</b>	Expresses ideas and feelings somewhat clearly and demonstrates minimal sensitivity to alternative perspectives	Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates sensitivity to alternative perspectives	Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates sensitivity and responsiveness to alternative perspectives	Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates sensitivity and responsiveness to alternative perspectives; demonstrates use of skilled dialogue techniques to facilitate communication
<b>Elements of the Project</b>	Not all of the elements of the project are addressed	All elements of the project are minimally addressed	All elements of the project are adequately addressed (i.e., rich interview notes were taken, memos were reflective)	All elements of the project are thoroughly addressed and conclusions are clearly grounded in the data gathered

Comments