

**Navigating Identity and COVID-Related Stress for Educators:
Building Racial Literacy and Pandemic Agility**
EDUC 545-012 FALL 2020
The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education

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Time. Wednesdays 2:45pm-4:45pm EST (synchronous attendance is required)

As educators develop and enact humanizing pedagogies to support students and communities through COVID-19 and the civil strife resulting from 400+ years of structural racism and state-sanctioned police brutality against Black and Indigenous peoples in the United States, how do we identify, reckon with, and fruitfully process our own identity-based stress and trauma? How can we see and address individual, group, and collective trauma? How do we help our students, families, and colleagues build their own inner-resources to traverse a complex and coarse world? How do we build forward—individually, organizationally, structurally, and nationally—in ways that facilitate true equity and healing? That imagine beyond this time of divisiveness and governmental abuse?

Through engaging and hybridizing concepts including identity-based stress and racial literacy, trauma-informed care and post-traumatic growth, radical compassion and radical self-care, storying and re-storying experience, emergent and relational growth strategies, and the emotional imagination, we will build a set of frames, ideas, and stress-navigation skills that carry us—and those we work with, support, and educate—forward in grounded and agentic ways that can help us heal ourselves and to contribute to the healing of the world around us through understanding and being intentional about our own spheres of influence. Course discussions and engagement in relational introspective exercises provide opportunities to cultivate critical working understandings of personal, social, organizational, and educational possibilities writ large with a focus on their creative intersections.

The course is structured as an intensive group process seminar as a way to actively and deeply engage students, as a supportive and caring inquiry community, in compassionate and critical examination of the complex relationships between society, ideology, axiology, epistemology, and pedagogy – to understand and appreciate the possibilities, realities, and limitations of education and schooling in the United States right now given the radical flux of broader sociopolitical and socioeconomic realities locally, nationally, and internationally. We will examine this flux in relation to the inequities of COVID-19 and the history of settler colonialism and structural racism in this country. We'll become thought partners who ask critical questions together such as: What kinds of new leadership, practice, learning, and connection does COVID-19 and this moment of civil unrest and engagement make possible? How am I feeling, thinking, framing myself and the world right now and why? What hierarchies and value systems have shaped me and how? What are undiscovered resources within and around me that can foment and support the cultivation of my resiliency and healing? How do I build my own wellness team to move forward in ways that heal as a verb?

As an action-oriented and reflexive inquiry community, we will work to develop holistic, authentic, healthy, and equitable paths forward. These paths support assets-based adaptation, critical intersectional inclusivity, radical compassion for others and radical self-care, and equitable and responsive educational practices. The course locates educator and student well-being as central to all kinds of learning, it examines the cultivation of relational trust in and beyond our group; it explores trauma-informed pedagogies which include radical compassion and self-care, brave space pedagogy, and inquiry-based practice as an ethical stance, wherein everyone's values, knowledges, insights, feelings, and experiences are affirmed and actively foregrounded as vital to learning and growth in (and beyond) this time of chaos and collective-thought-mediated-by-social-identities-vulnerability. We will create new ways of thinking, being, and doing together as the central and embodied inquiry of the course. To do this, we will engage a number of frameworks and ideas, including flux pedagogy, which is a heuristic for post-traumatic growth, dialectics of mutual influence, and reciprocal transformation.

Flux pedagogy is a dynamic framework created in/for this moment of radical flux to help educators adapt a mindset and cultivate skills and frames that support their ability to co-create the conditions for integrating relational and critical pedagogies into a grounded and transformative education approach. In this course we'll examine aspects of flux pedagogy as a way to conceptualize the building of our own pedagogies of transformation, connection, healing, collectivism, and support. Creating the conditions for flux pedagogy requires learning agility and taking an equity and justice-focused learner stance which includes: 1) Inquiry as Stance; 2) Trauma-informed Care; 3) Radical Compassion and Radical Self-Care; 4) Responsive and Humanizing Pedagogy; 5) Critical Pedagogy; 6) Racial Literacy; and 7) Brave Space Pedagogy. In this course, each dimension of flux pedagogy is discussed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current movement for structural racial equality in society and schooling in the United States. Flux pedagogy is shared as an organizing heuristic for equitable, responsive, and agile pedagogy in this moment of radical flux. A central goal of the course is to engage in becoming a brave space online community of practice during this extended time of suffering where everyone needs more affirming and justice-generating professional spaces.

Horizontals across our learning include: storytelling and re-storying as agentic self- and group development; cultivating an inquiry stance and inner-resources for calm meaning-making; reflexivity in self-development; compassionate active listening (including to self-talk); critical organizational and community development; positionality and subjectivity in teaching, learning, and leading; contexts and issues of equity and critical intersectional inclusivity; working from a resource rather than deficit orientation, and compassionate accountability.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CLASS SESSIONS, ATTENDANCE, AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

This is a group process seminar, which means the process is the product; it is everything. In this course, we are *all* teachers and learners. In order to create a classroom community, it's vital that each of you is here, physically, intellectually, and emotionally (as life permits in a mercurial pandemic) during each class session. If circumstances make it necessary to miss class, arrive late, or leave early, contact me (knowing that I understand things are far from normal in the world and in your life). Needing support and reaching out for it is a sign of strength to be respected!

CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN INQUIRY COMMUNITY

It is crucial that we all take responsibility for creating an inquiry community in which open and respectful dialogue can occur. This does not mean that we should choose not to challenge each other on important issues because, when done respectfully, this can be a powerful learning tool (we will discuss [pedagogies of discomfort](#) as a generative approach). Rather, it means that the seminar is a place to discuss our differing perspectives without being judged or shamed. For this to happen, we each need to work hard to remain respectfully tentative about others' opinions (and critically self-reflective on our own), realizing that we all hold dear certain points of view and have unique perspectives on the world. This will be discussed in-depth as we create brave space norms in class.

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE READINGS/VIDEOS

Complete readings/videos *before* each class meeting. Being critically engaged does not mean that you should necessarily agree with these materials. Disagreement and critique are encouraged, as they can be instructive. Be thoughtful about your critiques, and when you disagree with points of a given reading, challenge yourself to find what's useful in it. We will discuss this further in class.

Safe Spaces	Brave Spaces
Prioritize notions of universal politeness	Prioritize honesty and authenticity for all
Place primacy on a socially- and positionally-constructed ideas of comfort when discussing difficult issues, invisible rules	Acknowledge discomfort is inevitable in discussing difficult issues and invites it into the space as a constructive process and experience with ground rules
Can lead to defensiveness, lack of authenticity and reflexivity, and deflection	Value risk-taking, vulnerability, authentic learning and being challenged to reflect and change
Narrowly define safety, usually stemming from a dominant white cis-male middle class ableist perspective that is imposed as a normative backdrop	Contend that safety means different things to different people/groups and attend to the ways that individuals see and experience safety in order to reach shared understanding and group norms
Tend not to prepare participants for engaging in difficult conversations, reinforce "taboo topics" and marginalization of BIPOC	Prepare groups for difficult conversations, develop understandings of critical dialogic engagement as necessary professional development

(Adapted from [Ravitch & Carl, 2019](#))

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

EDUCATOR IDENTITY MEMO (OCTOBER 28)

This memo is to help you, during this pandemic and time of civic unrest and change, which brings with it a sense of identity flux, to critically consider the role and possible impacts of your identity and positionality as a leader, practitioner, person. This intentional approach to reflexivity is vital to ethical practice. Memos are a vital tool for your own sense-making and thought development more than a piece of writing for someone else; they are a way to record what you're thinking about and to help you examine and clarify your thoughts with intention and focus. Memos may include observations and reflections, commentary on things you've read, questions about your praxis in/and the world right now, emergent relational and ethical dilemmas, critical events during this time for you, decisions you need to make or are concerned about, and/or documenting of how your practice is changing in this moment. See Ravitch & Carl (2020) for more on memos. 10ish pages.

CULTIVATING INNER-RESOURCES MEMO (DECEMBER 16)

As a final assignment you'll integrate all you've learned in the course with the sense you are making of these ideas in relation to your own life and your educational practice during and beyond these twin pandemics. This memo focuses on inner-resources that you identify, desire to cultivate, and your sense of how these inner-resources relate to a broader self-care plan as an educator and person working and living through a pandemic and time of social and political turmoil. We will discuss this during the class, it's meant to be open to your creative ideas and thoughtful exploration! See Ravitch & Carl (2020) for more on reflexive memos. 10-12 pages, videos, other ideas, let's discuss.

[A Note on Learning in a Pandemic](#)

No one signed up for this.

Not for the sickness, not for the social distancing, not for the sudden end of our collective lives and collaboration together on campus.

Not for an online class, not for teaching remotely, not for learning from home, not for learning new technologies under duress, not for limited access to learning materials.

The humane option is the best option.

We will prioritize kindness and supporting each other as humans.

We will prioritize simple solutions that make sense for the most.

We will prioritize sharing resources and communicating clearly.

Don't try to do the same thing online.

Some assignments are no longer possible.

Some expectations are no longer reasonable.

Some objectives are no longer valuable.

Foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation.

Accessible asynchronous content for diverse access, time zones, and contexts.

Optional synchronous discussion to learn together and combat isolation.

Remain flexible and adjust to the situation.

No one knows where this is going and what we'll need to adapt.

Everyone needs support and understanding in this unprecedented moment.

Course Topics and Timeline

Session One: September 2

[Becoming a Community of Care and Growth during COVID-19, Trumpism, Carcerality](#)

Radical Flux and [Flux Pedagogy](#)

Radical [Growth Mindset](#) and Pandemic Agility

Roy, A. (2020). [The pandemic is a portal](#). *Financial Times*. April 3, 2020.

Ravitch, S.M. (2020). [Why teaching through crisis requires a radical new mindset: Introducing Flux Pedagogy](#). *Harvard Business Publishing: Education*. August 12, 2020.

Adrienne Maree Brown (2017). [Compassionate Communities. Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#). *Compassionate Communities*.

Baker, A. (2020) [An Activist-Therapist's 15 Affirmations for Hope Amidst COVID-19](#). *Medium*.

Dweck, C. (2016). [What Having a “Growth Mindset” Actually Means](#). *Harvard Business Review*.

Dweck, C. (n.d.). [A Summary of Growth and Fixed Mindsets](#). *Fs blog*.

Session Two: September 9

[Inquiry as Stance](#)

Epistemology/ies and Axiology/ies

Chilisa, B. (2020). [Indigenous Research Methodologies](#). *Situating Knowledge Systems*. (Canvas)

de Lima, C. (2020). [Epistemic hegemony: The Western straitjacket and post-colonial scars in academic publishing – Interview with Orion Noda by Carolina de Lima](#). *Revista Mundorama. Divulgação Científica em Relações Internacionais*.

Seawright, G. (2014) [Settler Traditions of Place: Making Explicit the Epistemological Legacy of White Supremacy and Settler Colonialism for Place-Based Education](#). *Education Studies*, 50 (6).

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. L. (1999). [Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities](#). *AERA*. Vol. 24(1): 249-305.

Ravitch, S.M. (2014). [“The Transformative Power of Taking an Inquiry Stance on Practice: Practitioner Research as Narrative and Counter-Narrative.”](#) *Perspectives on Urban Education*. Volume 11(1): 5-10. Winter 2014.

Session Three: September 16

Trauma-informed Care

Radical Compassion and Radical Self-Care

Monahan, J. (2020). [Trauma-informed approaches for individual, organizational resilience during COVID-19](#). *Berkeley Conversations*.

Collins, B. R. (2020) [Yes, You Can Do Trauma-Informed Teaching Remotely \(and you really, really should\)](#). *Education Week*.

Wang Yuen, N. (2020). [Anti-Asian Racism Is Taking a Mental and Emotional Toll on Me: It's Exhausting](#). *Self*.

Kleinman, B. & Russ, E. (2020). [Systemic racism can leave Black people suffering from symptoms similar to PTSD](#). *Courier Journal*.

Lorde, A. (1984). ["The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"](#). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.

Imad, M. (2020). [Trauma Informed Teaching and Learning](#). *YouTube*. April 13, 2020. 57 minutes.

Session Four: September 23

Social Identity/ies, Racial Identity/ies, Intersectionality

Cheeks, M. (2018). [How Black Women Describe Navigating Race and Gender in the Workplace](#). *Harvard Business Review*.

Coaston, J. (2019) [The intersectionality wars](#). Crenshaw on Vox.

Y.W. Boston (2017). [What is intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me?](#) *YW Boston*.

Reid, G. (2020) [LGBTQ Inequality and Vulnerability in the Pandemic](#). *Foreign Policy in Focus*.

Casey, T. (2020). [How The Black Lives Matter Protests Complement Pride Month](#). *TriplePundit*.

UN Women (2020). [Intersectional feminism: What it means and why it matters right now](#). *Medium.com/@UN Women*.

Dr. Howard Stevenson. (2015). Teaching Tolerance, ["Hearing the Lion's story: Racial stress can silence children. Storytelling can awaken their voices."](#)

Pak, K. & Ravitch, S.M. (2021). "Critical Intersectional Inclusivity." In Pak, K. & Ravitch, S.M. (in review) *Critical Leadership Praxis*. (2021). Teachers College Press. (Canvas)

Session Five: September 30

Structural Racism and Systemic Oppression

Whiteness as a System of Dominance and Set of Toxic Entitlements

Imposing Western Epistemologies and Decolonization

Institute Staff (2016). [11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism](#). *The Aspen Institute*.

Abizeid, M. (2020). [Structural Racism and COVID-19: The Political Divide, Re-Opening the Society and Health Impacts on People of Color](#). *Berkeley News*.

Crenshaw, K. (2016). [The Urgency of Intersectionality](#). *TedWomen*.

DiAngelo, R. (2011). [White Fragility](#). *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3).

Dr. Howard Stevenson (2019). [How can we mindfully navigate everyday racism?](#) *TedRadioHour*

Ravitch, S.M. (2020) Flux Leadership. *Perspectives on Urban Education Special Edition*.

Chiu, A. (2020). [Time to ditch 'toxic positivity,' experts say: 'It's okay not to be okay.'](#) *The Washington Post*.

Black Lives Matter Principles: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/what-we-believe/>

Session Six: October 7

Racial Literacy, Racial Socialization, and Racialized Stress

Navigating and RECASTing Identity-Related Stress

Howard Stevenson's CLCBE Model

Stevenson, H. C. (2014) *Promoting racial literacy in schools: Differences that make a difference*. Teachers College Press.

Anderson, R. & Stevenson, H. (2019). [RECASTing racial stress and trauma: Theorizing the healing potential of racial socialization in families](#). *American Psychologist*. 74. 63-75.

Dr. Howard Stevenson (2018). [How to resolve racially stressful situations](#). *TedTalk*.

Session Seven: October 14

De-centering Whiteness and Countering Deficit Orientations Decolonizing and Indigenous Practices

O'Sullivan, S. (2019). [Decolonizing the Classroom: A Conversation with Girish Daswani.](#)

Stein, S., Andreotti, V. Suša, R., Ahenakew, C. & Mario de Souza, L. (2020). [Who decides? in whose name? for whose benefit? decoloniality and its discontents.](#) *On_Education*.

DiAngelo, R. (2012). [Nothing to add: The role of White silence in racial discussions.](#) *Journal of Understanding & Dismantling Privilege*, 2(2), 1-17.

Carales, V.D. & López, R.M. (2020) [Challenging Deficit Views of Latinx Students: A Strength-based Perspective.](#) *Volume 2020, Issue190. Emerging Issues for Latinx Students.* Summer 2020.

Flores, N. & Rosa, J. (2015). [Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education.](#) *Harvard Educational Review*. 85:2, 149-171.

Cheng, K. (2020). [Ask Kai: Advice for the Apocalypse.](#) <https://kaichengthom.com/journalism/>

Session Eight: October 21

Structural and Organizational Racism and Emotional Labor

Suico, T. (2020). [Emotional Labor and Women of Color in the Workplace: A Reality Check](#) *Portland.*

Weiss, S. (2019). [50 Ways People Expect Constant Emotional Labor from Women and Femmes.](#) *Everydayfeminism.com.*

Evans, L. & Moore, W. (2015) [Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor, and Micro-Resistance.](#) *Social Problems*, 62 (3).

Kelly, Bridget & Gardner, Paige & Stone, Joakina & Hixson, Ashley & Dissassa, Di-Tu. (2019). [Hidden in plain sight: Uncovering the emotional labor of Black women students at historically White colleges and universities.](#) *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education.*

Lakhani, K. (2017). [Workplace Discrimination Against Muslims.](#) *Onlabor: Workers, Unions, Politics.*

Session Nine: October 28

The Emotional Imagination

Storytelling and Re-storying

Cultivating Inner-Resources: [The Space between Stimulus and Response](#)

EDUCATOR IDENTITY MEMO DUE

Solórzano, D. G. & Yosso, T. J. (2002). [Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research](#). *Qualitative inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.

Love, B. L. (2017). [A ratchet lens: Black queer youth, agency, hip hop, and the Black ratchet imagination](#). *Educational Researcher*, 46(9), 539-547.

Ravitch, S. M. & Garrett, J. M. (forthcoming). "Written on the mind: Emotional imagination, Re-storying learner identity, and the formation of critical pedagogies." In L. Colket, T. Penny Light, & M. A. Carswell (Eds.), *Sharing our stories: Exploring the complexities of learning and teaching*. DIO Press. (Canvas)

Ravitch, S.M. (2020). [Sage MethodSpace](#) Methodologist-In-Residence Blogposts March 2020

- ◇ [The Space between stimulus and response](#).
- ◇ [Storytelling, relational inquiry, and truth-listening](#).
- ◇ [From individualism to collective truth-listening](#).

Session Ten: November 4

[Communication Norms](#), [Group Dynamics](#), and [Power](#)

Brave Space Norming

Arao, B. & Clemens, K. (2013). [From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice](#).

Rogers, C. R. (2017). [A Celebration of #LetUsBreathe's Brave Space Agreements: Seeding Abolition as Pedagogy into the Educator's Vocabulary](#). *Medium*.

Colón, K. R. (2016, August 07). [At Freedom Square, the revolution lives in brave relationships](#). Retrieved July 04, 2020. *Truthout*.

DiAngelo, R. & Sensoy, O. (2014). [Calling in: Ways of speaking, thinking, seeing: Cultivating humility, curiosity, and vision in service of anti-racist practice](#). *Journal of Understanding & Dismantling Privilege*, 4(2).

Stanlick, S. (2015). [Getting "Real" about Transformation: The Role of Brave Spaces in Creating Disorientation and Transformation](#). *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. The SLCE Future Directions Project. Fall. 117-121.

Session Eleven: November 11

[Black Lives Matter](#), [Say Her Name](#), and the [Carceral State](#) [The Criminalization of Humans and Immigration](#) [New Tools for a New House](#)

Gottschalk, M. (2015). [The problem of mass incarceration is a problem of high inequality](#). *The Atlantic*.

Crenshaw, K. (2020). [Kimberlé Crenshaw shares importance of the Say Her Name movement](#). *Today.com*.

Annamma, S. (2016) [Disrupting the carceral state through education journey mapping](#). *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29:9, 1210-1230.

[Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education](#). (Summer 2020) Special Twin Pandemic Issue. New Tools for a New House: Transformations for Justice and Peace in and beyond COVID-19.

Melanated Educators Collective & the Racial Justice Organizing Committee (2020). [10 demands for radical education transformation](#). Philadelphia, PA: Authors.

Session Twelve: November 18

Post-traumatic growth

Zaki, J. (2020). [How the trauma of the pandemic can inspire personal growth](#). *Washington Post*.

[Richard G. Tedeschi](#) (2020). [Growth after Trauma](#). *Harvard Business Review*. July-August 2020 Issue.

Behel, J. & Coleman, J. A. (2020). [Covid-19 could cause a mental health crisis. It can also spark post-traumatic growth](#). *STAT*.

Borden, T. (2020). [Black Lives Matter is a case study in a new kind of leadership — Here's how the movement grew to international prominence in just 7 years](#). *Business Insider*.

Eren, N. S. & Ravitch, S.M. (2021) Trauma-informed leadership: Balancing radical love and accountability. In Pak, K. & Ravitch, S.M. (2021) *Critical Leadership Praxis*. Teachers College Press. (Canvas)

Van Gelder, S. (2016). [The Radical Work of Healing: Fania and Angela Davis on a New Kind of Civil Rights Activism](#). Life after Oil: The Solutions we Love. Yes! Solutions Journalism Interview.

Session Thirteen: December 2

What does COVID-19 make possible?

Brown, A. M. (2020). [unthinkable thoughts: call out culture in the age of covid-19](#). *AMB Blog*.

Simmons, D. (2020) [Why COVID-19 is Our Equity Check](#). *Educational Leadership*.

Morris, S.M. (2020) [A Pedagogy of Transformation for Times of Crisis](#). *OEB Insights*.

Merrill, S. (2020). [Teaching through a Pandemic: A Mindset for this Moment](#). *Edutopia*.

Session Fourteen: December 9

TBA: We decide together!

BOOKS

- ◇ Brown, A. M. (2017). [Emergent strategy: Shaping change shaping worlds](#). AK Press.
- ◇ Richo, D. (2019). [Triggers: How we can stop reacting and start healing](#). Shambhala.
- ◇ Stevenson, H. C. (2014) [Promoting racial literacy in schools: Differences that make a difference](#). Teachers College Press.

HEARD: Penn GSE's Hub for Equity, Anti-Oppression, Research, and Development [Resources](#)



Street Art, South Street, Philadelphia. @2020

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- ◇ Email assignments (not through Canvas). Email assignments by midnight on the due date. Extensions must be approved 48 hours in advance.
- ◇ Double-spaced, 12-point font, standard 1" margins, page numbers on all papers. As with all graduate-level work, carefully proofread and edit your writing.
- ◇ Please read feedback on writing carefully, integrating necessary changes in future papers.
- ◇ Follow [APA Guidelines](#) including headings, in-text citations, and references.

GRADING RUBRIC

ASSIGNMENT	% OF GRADE
Class Attendance and Participation	30%
Educator Identity Memo	30%
Cultivating Inner-Resources Memo	30%
Wellness	10%



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