

NJMU



Social Justice Education and Curriculum Design

Course Description:

In this course, we will engage in a process of learning to teach in a ways that are socially just, anti-racist and responsive to the community in which we are situated. During the fall, we will examine who we are, where we come from and the impact this has on the way we make decisions in the classroom and broader society. In order to continue to get to know the community in which we will be teaching, students will develop relationships with various stakeholders in the Newark community to learn more about the current context of education. Building on these themes, you will engage in reflective curriculum planning in the spring. You will develop an integrated curricular unit that

considers principles of social justice education and community responsive curriculum that uses state standards, differentiated instructional strategies, and appropriate adaptations to meet a diverse range of learners, such as diverse learning styles, interests, special needs, and English Language Learners.

General Aim of the Course:

The aim of the course is to support you in developing as professionals who learn from the community in which you are teaching in order to prepare curriculum that is socially just, anti-racist and community responsive. You will develop the knowledge and skills to plan broad and detailed units and lessons that are appropriate and engaging for diverse students.

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Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Examine who you are and where you come from and how that impacts decisions you make as teachers.
- Learn how to navigate your school communities and develop relationships that lead toward greater insight into multiple perspectives on issues related to education and social justice.
- Understand the ways in which race operates in education and the role of self-reflection in anti-racist pedagogy.
- Unpack the context of educational reform in Newark by listening to key stakeholders and critically analyzing information from multiple sources.
- Recognize both strengths and challenges facing the Newark community and develop and implement an integrated unit linked to state standards using authentic learning and assessment strategies that are developmentally appropriate for diverse learners in inclusive and culturally responsive early childhood classrooms.
- Plan and implement an integrated curriculum project that is based on principles of social justice education and community responsive curriculum.
- Develop collaborative skills with school professionals in order to plan effectively for students learning with additional consideration of diverse family and cultural needs.
- Articulate, discuss, and question the challenges and rewards of culturally responsive and inclusive classrooms and curriculum with an eye to creating a classroom climate that nurtures all children and fosters democratic community.

Fall Assignments

Due at the beginning of class.
Late papers lose 10% of the grade a day.

1. Readings

Your informed participation will depend on thoughtful reading of all assigned articles. There will be specific and varied means of responding to them. All readings must be completed prior to class.

2. Racial Autobiography

Reflect on your life in 5-year segments, in which you look at the major influences and experiences that shape your understandings and beliefs about race, diversity and difference. See last page for more info.

3. Social Justice Professional Development

Over the course of the semester, you must complete at least 2 hours of professional development at local conferences, events, panels, trainings, community meetings etc. When you find out about an event that addresses issues covered in the course, please email me information for approval. You will post your reflection about this event on a class blog. More details on page 5.

4. Social Justice Curricular Project Topic

In the spring, you will plan a comprehensive, interdisciplinary curricular unit. By our last fall session, you should know the topic you plan to use so you can gather materials over break. By December 2nd, you will fill [out this form](#) indicating your topic.



Dr. Bree Picower is an Assistant Professor at Montclair State University in the College of Education and Human Development. Her first book, *Practice What You Teach: Social Justice Education in the Classroom and the Streets*, focuses on the continuum of development toward teacher activism. Her latest book, *What's Race Got To Do With It*, looks at the role that race plays in neoliberal school reform policies.

She is the co-editor of the annual *Planning to Change the World: A Planbook for Social Justice Teachers* published by the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) and the

Education for Liberation Network, and her recent scholarly articles have appeared in *Teachers College Record*, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, and *Race, Ethnicity and Education*.

She has taught in public elementary schools in Oakland, California and New York City and was a school coach for the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools. Currently, as a leader of NYCoRE and founding member of the national Teacher Activist Groups network, Bree works to create multiple spaces for educators to sharpen their political analysis and take action for educational justice.

Course Policies for Fall and Spring Semesters

Attendance Policy

Each session includes collaborative building of concepts and knowledge. It is crucial that you attend all sessions. In the event that an unavoidable absence occurs, you must inform me in advance. For any class missed, you must speak with three members of class and write a summary of what happened in your absence. You are responsible for making up and obtaining missed assignments, class work, handouts, and lecture notes. You must also email any assignments to me on their correct date- not the day you return to class. Class will always begin and end on time. Consistent late arrivals and early departures from class will count the same as an absence.

Participation

The sensitive nature of topics we discuss requires an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding needed to create trust. Students should be able and willing to answer questions, contribute positively to class discussions, listen openly to experiences and ideas of others. Participation takes many forms (i.e., verbal, listening, preparation, reflection) and some might feel more comfortable participating in certain ways. However, you not only have a responsibility for your own learning but are also expected to contribute to the learning of your peers. Successful participants make an honest effort to understand issues and viewpoints of others. Please let me know what I can do to foster/facilitate your complete participation.

Technology Use

You are expected to follow the norms set collectively by the class. Side conversations, rude, offensive, and potentially inappropriate comments will not be accepted during class. **Please do not use your cell phone for calls or texts during class.** It is inappropriate to complete personal tasks and assignments unrelated to the course during class time—this includes IM, facebook, checking email,



and **texting**. While I am not in the habit of "policing" your behavior in class, please note that I am very much aware of how you engage in class and the behaviors listed above will absolutely impact your participation grade.

Assignment Policy

Assignments are due by the beginning of class the day they are due- not after class, that night etc. Please staple all work. When indicated, papers that must be uploaded to blackboard must be uploaded by 9am the day of class. Any papers submitted after that time, or after class, will be considered late. Late papers lose 10% of a grade per day.

Assignment Rewrite Policy

It is expected that each assignment be of high quality. No late assignments will be accepted unless extreme circumstances prevent the completion of your work. Students may be asked to re-do any assignment of mediocre or poor quality. Additionally, students may choose to rework any graded assignment that has received a C or lower. In order for an assignment to be considered, **you must indicate changes made in bold and include the previously graded assignment.** Assignments not following this format will not be considered nor will papers that only include "technical" improvements and/or only reflect my edits; your own thinking must also be included. The reworked assignment is due two weeks after the original assignment is returned. The final grade for reworked assignments will be a combination of the two grades.

Course Communication

All communication regarding the course will be via Montclair State University email accounts and Blackboard. You are responsible for activating and checking your MSU account for any announcements pertaining to the course and for checking BB weekly for additional information pertaining to class assignments and requirements. I am happy to respond to email questions regarding the course or assignments. However, it is important that **you first check the syllabus and with your peers** to be sure that the answer to your question is one you cannot find on your own.

University Statements



Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is based on the principle that academic work be represented truthfully and accurately as to its sources upon which you have drawn in your assignment work. Academic dishonesty is knowingly violating this principle. Academic dishonesty includes submission of papers or other assignment work prepared in part or in their entirety by others, use of sources not adequately identified (including online sources), whether in quotation or paraphrasing, or assisting another in plagiarism or deception. For information about violations of this policy, please see: <http://www.montclair.edu/pages/deanstudents/regulations.html>

Disability Statement

Montclair State University is committed to ensuring that all students have full access curricular and extracurricular activities. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate fully in class please contact as soon as possible: Services for Students with Disabilities, Morehead Hall Room 117 and 118, Telephone 973.655.5431/5422 Fax 973.655.5308. Disability-related information is not shared without the permission of the student.

Due October 6th

- Read this syllabus carefully including assignments.
- Read short handout available from <http://edchange.org/handouts>:
 - 1) *Five Shifts of consciousness for multicultural educators.*
 - 2) *20 Things I can do to be a better Multicultural Educator.*
 - 3) *Shifts of Consciousness for well-intentioned White Folks.* There are many other good resources there, so feel free to read more!

Due November 10th

- For the first two readings below, click on the link, and then click the "download file" button.
 - [Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria](#): Beverly Daniel-Tatum.
 - [Teaching Learning Anti-racism by Derman Sparks](#)
 - [Teaching Outside One's Race](#) by bree picower

Due October 22nd

- Start working on your racial autobiography
- Today we are meeting with Stan Karp at the Education Law Center. Check out the website: <http://www.edlawcenter.org/>
 - Based on the website, The Prize book talk and the two articles, come prepared with at least two questions to ask Mr. Karp at our visit.
 - Reading 1: *Superhero School Reform Heading Your Way* • *Now Playing in Newark, NJ* By Stan Karp. http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/25_02/25_02_karp.shtml
 - Reading 2: *Charter Schools and the Future of Public Schools* By Stan Karp, http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/28_01/28_01_karp.shtml

Due December 8th

- PD blog posts due
- Racial Autobiography due
- Reading/ Assignment TBA
- [Fill out this form](#) indicating your topic and goals for spring's unit.
- Finish Poem and bring printout to class

January 15th and 16th

We will be participants in the Undoing Racism training at MSU. This unique 2-day workshop is offered by [The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond](#), a national, multiracial, anti-racist network from New Orleans dedicated to ending racism and other forms of institutional oppression. Workshop participants will engage in a comprehensive exploration of how racism shapes American institutions, often without our conscious understanding that it is doing so. The People's Institute analysis moves beyond a focus on the symptoms of racism to an understanding of what it is, where it comes from, how it functions, why it persists and how it can be undone. The workshop stresses learning from history, developing leadership, maintaining accountability to communities of color, creating networks, undoing internalized oppression, and understanding the role of organizational gate-keeping in perpetuating racism.

Cost is typically \$350 per person. However, the grant has provided funding so it will be free for you to attend. Please mark your calendar now as this is a powerful (and required) event. It will be held in Room 140 on the first floor of the MSU Business School from 9-6pm both days. Breakfast and lunch are provided.

Fall Assignment Sheets

Racial Autobiography Assignment

As part of our journey of antiracist, multicultural education, it is crucial to explore how it is that we have come to see the world as we do. Without lifting up our beliefs for examination, we are prone to making uncritical assumptions about others, or taking for granted the way we have been told things are. This assignment provides the opportunity to look at your life experiences, so that we may start examining our beliefs in order to consciously hold on to some, while deciding to let go of others.

Please write a 3-4-page racial/ethnic autobiography. Reflect on your life in 5-year segments, (you can think about it in terms of schooling: before school, elementary, middle, high, college...) in which you look at the major influences and experiences that shape your understandings and beliefs about race, diversity and difference. You need to refer to the stages discussed in the Daniel Tatum reading. Please address the following prompts, and add other relevant pieces of information.

- What was the first time you recall realizing that the world was not just like you/ When was the first time you remember being conscious of race?
- Describe the racial and ethnic composition of your schools, neighborhoods, and family?
- What were your family attitudes about your own race/ethnicity and the race/ ethnicity of others?
- How did family, friends, movies, or books influence your feelings about race?
- Include incidents that happened to you personally as well as historic events or experiences that made you aware of your own racial prejudice or of prejudice of the country.
- Reflect on activities you may have been involved in throughout your life that may have supported or worked against racism.
- You must conclude by discussing where you see yourself now in terms of your perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors regarding race, racism and your own racial identity.

Professional Development Assignment

Event Attendance

As part of your development as a professional, you will have the opportunity to attend at least 2 hours of professional development over the course of the semester. These events can include any opportunities that help you to learn more about issues of multicultural education, social justice education, social studies education or other events that are connected to the themes of this course.

Events may include:

- conferences,
- panels,
- speakers,
- protests,
- community meetings,

I will send occasional emails with announcements about events throughout the semester. However, you are responsible for seeking out events and getting approval for them from me. Please email me information about it at least 2 days in advance so that I may approve it for the hours. If you learn that many of you will be attending one event, please be sure to email the organizers of the event to be sure that



they can accommodate all of you. Please do not count events that you are required to attend for other courses or as part of your student teaching experiences. [I highly recommend attending an ALL session.](#)

“Blog” Reflections

To document your experiences, we will be creating a class discussion board in canvas in which you will post about your experiences. You will post a short reflection within 48 hours of attending an event. The final day that postings will be accepted is the last day of class.

Your blog posting should include the following information:

- Name of event
- Organizer and location of event
- Amount of hours of event
- Reflection
- Summarize event -what did you learn? How does it make you think as a future teacher? -how is it connected to the themes of the course?

The blog posting doesn't need to be a formal essay. Rather, it is a short reflection in which you informally share your experiences with your colleagues. Please read and post comments on each others blogs too.

Curriculum Topic

In the spring, the entire course is dedicated to learning the process of developing socially just, culturally relevant, community responsive curricular units. To learn the skills of comprehensive curriculum design, you will actually create and implement the unit in your classroom.

At our last fall session, we will talk in much more detail about this. By Dec.2nd, you will need to have decided upon the topic of the unit you will create. This should be decided based on:

- grade/developmental level
- student interest
- community needs
- conversations with mentor

[Due Dec. 2nd: Fill out this form](#)

Knowing your topic early will allow you to use the break to plan and gather materials. This will make your experience, as well as your students, a rewarding one.