EDF 777: Social Justice and School Reform
Fall Semester, 2015
On line, 3 credits

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Course Description:
EDF777, Social Justice in Educational Reform, is designed to provide educational leaders with opportunities to familiarize themselves with research and social justice leadership and reform efforts in schools (past, present, and future). The primary vehicle for exploring social justice in education reform will be through identification, exploration, observation, participation, analysis, and critical reflection of teaching and learning activities that define, support, and/or hinder social justice in policy and in schools. The structure of the course will include a survey of relevant literature (accessible via various media outlets) from multicultural and social justice thinkers and leaders with approaches toward creating more inclusive classrooms and schools.

This course is designed to develop leaders who will be conscious of the social, political, and institutional barriers to student success in order to advocate for educational equity toward creating broader educational access and success for all students. It is an exploration and analysis of the underlying issues within contemporary educational policies, practices, and theories designed to ground the day-to-day realities of the classroom within a larger philosophical, historical, anthropological, political, and sociological context. This perspective will allow one to begin to reflect upon the structures and practices of American education and provide a foundation from which to continue becoming reflective and critical educational practitioners and leaders. It is also an opportunity to investigate the role of schooling and education within a democracy.

Through classic and contemporary texts & media, this class will explore issues at multiple levels including overarching questions of multiculturalism, equity, the role of schooling, educational reform, and culturally relevant teaching and educational practices. You will become knowledgeable about the influences of gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, ability, inequalities, bias, and other areas of diversity impacting students’ schooling experiences. Additional goals of this course are to examine your own attitudes as well as the impact of larger educational policy and practice decisions.

Course Goals/Objectives - Through this course, students will:
1. become familiar with the research on social justice and educational reform as well as the various perspectives and direction on reform
2. acquire knowledge about historical, sociocultural, linguistic, school adjustment, and academic achievement factors impacting student achievement
3. examine one’s own “philosophic sets” regarding the need for social justice as a part of education reform
4. analyze problems, issues, and the behavior of individuals in school settings impacting social justice and educational reform
5. acquire a deeper multidisciplinary perspective from which to interpret, question, reflect upon, and engage with the underlying issues within contemporary educational theory and practice
6. link the theory of the texts with the lived reality of students in their schools and communities
7. make use of field observations in schools to highlight and reinforce the relationship between the theory and practice of education

**Required Readings:**
The course is structured to offer a variety of perspectives on social justice and their implications for school reform. The readings are comprised of a diverse collection of research studies, philosophical and analytical texts, autobiographical accounts, among others. Further, the readings serve a variety of audiences from academics to school administrators to practicing teachers. The purpose for the variety of voices and audiences is so that students may both explore and hone their own ideas, as well as to consider how they would reach out to other stakeholders in the interest of promoting social justice as a worthy and necessary goal of schooling in the US. Students should read not only for their own knowledge and understanding, but also for the ways in which they might use a particular text or set of ideas in a professional development session or policy discussion.

Each week readings, assignments, and activities will be posted on Blackboard (http://unco.blackboard.com/).

**Course Topics**
Specific Readings will be posted on Blackboard for each week.

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<th>Topics and guiding questions</th>
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<td>Social Justice: What is it and what does it mean in education? What issues inform and intersect in a discussion of social justice?</td>
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<td>Grounding Experience: Narratives and Ethnographies</td>
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<td>Week Three</td>
<td>Grounding Experience: Narratives and Ethnographies</td>
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<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Perspectives and perceptions of social justice: Race and Multiculturalism in the Common School Ideal</td>
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Assessments and Guidelines
Each week the readings and assignments will be posted on our Blackboard site. Below is a list of the major assignments. Further details, rubrics, and assessment criteria will be on Blackboard.

Weekly discussions, assignments, reflection papers, etc. (25%)

Each week the assignments will be posted along with the readings. The success of our class relies on your active participation via Facebook and/or the discussion board during our live Wimba sessions (or other online sessions), so please prepare thoughtful questions and comments related to the readings, videos, and other issues.

Educator Biography: Due Week Four (15%)

During weeks 1 through 3 you will identify, gain permission from, and shadow an educator who is particularly dedicated to social justice. Your time in the field should include a formal interview as well as your observation of a variety of activities relevant to the individual’s work. If you shadow a teacher, watch him/her in the classroom, at lunch time, at meetings, etc. If you shadow an administrator, watch him/her working with teachers and parents, leading meetings, attending school events, etc.

Take note of the following:
• How does this educator approach his/her daily work?
• What attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives tend to inform and influence his/her daily interactions and decisions?
• What goals does this educator have for the stakeholders with whom he/she works?
• What challenges related to social justice arise for this person? How does he/she respond?
• How does this educator embody the goals, attitudes, and priorities related to social justice?

Next, using a pseudonym (if desired by the educator), write this person’s biography. Use the questions above as a guide, but don’t limit yourself to that structure. Your overarching goal is to tell the story of one educator dedicated to social justice. What should we all know?

Once you have completed your draft, share it with the educator. Ask for his/her response, and include that at the end of your paper. You may need to make changes to the biography if the person disagrees with your characterization.

Social Justice Perspective Paper: Due Week Eight (25%)

The first half of the course is dedicated to examining various perspectives embedded in social justice: culture, gender, social class, and environment/community. Using Hytten & Bettenz (2011) “Understanding Education for Social Justice” as a reference, select one particular issue or perspective. Conduct a deeper literature review on the topic and respond to the following prompts:
• What are the key issues related to your topic and social justice? (Example: If I select gender, I would look at feminist perspectives, sexual orientation, and achievement in various subjects for boys and girls)

• What are the historical and philosophical foundations of that perspective? (Example: I would explore the historical roles of men and women in schools, how LGBT students are treated in schools, and how gender discrimination has played out in schools)

• What recommendations and priorities does this issue require? (Example: I would read and report on studies about various efforts toward gender equality, such as same-sex classrooms; I might also explore the goals of researchers who study LGBT students and their recommendations for teachers and teacher educators.)

Requirements for the paper include the following:
• Thoughtful and thorough explanation of the issue and interrelated school reforms
• Adequate references that extend beyond class reading to substantiate explanations and analysis
• Meaningful focus on action steps, attitudes, and beliefs
• Well edited, proper grammar and mechanics, appropriate vocabulary and syntax for graduate work
• 1500-1750 words, double spaced, size 12 font, APA format with references
• Professional and thoughtful voice

Social Justice and School Reform Presentation: Due Week Sixteen (25%)

A key component of social justice is engaging in related and informed action. To know is not enough. Your final project for this course is to create a presentation or workshop that you could give to fellow educators or to a community group. The guidelines and product will be individually determined between the student and the professor. Please be proactive and send your ideas and questions by week three.

General guidelines:
• The project must be research-based
• It must be designed for a particular audience (i.e. novice teachers, pre-service teachers, school principals, parents, etc.)
• It must demonstrate your knowledge, understanding, and synthesis of major ideas for the course
• Provide a set of practical and usable resources for the audience

Book Club: Project Due Week Fifteen (10%)

A part of engaging in graduate level work is developing your own sense of curiosity and desire to extend your learning with your peers. Below is a list of potential texts that may pique your curiosity. As a class we will select three to four books for small group book club. The club will read the text and engage in blackboard discussions that include the professor but are led by the club members.
By week fifteen, each Book Club will post a flyer or graphic organizer of the key ideas. The flyer should be useful to educators and communities, and it should foster discussion and others’ desire to know. Each club will share their work and have a chance to comment on others’.

Potential Books:

*Teaching 2030 What We Must Do for Our Students and Our Public Schools--Now and in the Future*
Barnett Berry and the Teacher Solutions 2030 Team

*The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future* by Linda Darling-Hammond

*Left Back: A Century of Battles over School Reform* by Diane Ravitch

*Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms* by Tyrone C. Howard

*Si Se Puedo!: Learning from a High School That Beats the Odds* by Ursula Casanova

*We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* by Gary Howard

*Global Crises, Social Justice, and Education* by Michael W. Apple

*Democratic Schools, Second Edition: Lessons in Powerful Education* by Michael W. Apple & Beane

*Walking the Road: Race, Diversity, and Social Justice in Teacher Education* by Marilyn Cochran-Smith

*Those Who Dared: Five Visionaries Who Changed American Education* by Carl Glickman

*When School Reform Goes Wrong* by Nell Noddings

**UNIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENTS**

**Students with Disabilities.** Any student requesting disability accommodation for this class must inform the instructor by giving appropriate notice. Student are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 to certify documentation of disability and to ensure appropriate accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

**Inclusivity Statement.** The College of Education and Behavioral Sciences (CEBS) supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, appreciated, and recognized as a source of strength. We expect that students, faculty, administrators and staff within CEBS will respect differences and demonstrate diligence in understanding how other peoples’ perspectives, behaviors, and worldviews may be different from their own.

**Academic Integrity.** The university takes an extremely serious view of violations of academic integrity. As members of the academic community, UNC’s administration, faculty, staff and students are dedicated to promoting an atmosphere
of honesty and are committed to maintaining the academic integrity essential to the education process. Inherent in this commitment is the belief that academic dishonesty in all forms violates the basic principles of integrity and impedes learning. Students are therefore responsible for conducting themselves in an academically honest manner. Instructors are encouraged to check written assignments for plagiarism. All instances of plagiarism/forgery including graduate course incidents are to be reported with evidence to STE Director, Director of the School where the student’s major is housed, CEBS Dean, and the Dean of Students. Incidents are also to be reported to the Dean of Graduate School. Although the faculty member retains the right to assign penalty for the initial offense, the minimal penalty for plagiarism and academic dishonesty is no credit for the assignment. Individual students and faculty members are responsible for identifying instances of academic dishonesty. Faculty members then recommend penalties to the department chair or college dean in keeping with the severity of the violation.

**Honor Code** All members of the University of Northern Colorado community are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold and promote five fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Respect, Fairness, and Responsibility. These core elements foster an atmosphere, inside and outside of the classroom, which serves as a foundation and guides the UNC community’s academic, professional, and personal growth. Endorsement of these core elements by students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees strengthens the integrity and value of our academic climate.

**Academic Contact Hour Policy.** The reasonable interpretation of this policy is that for every credit hour, a student should expect, on average, to do a minimum of two additional hours of work per week; e.g., preparation, homework, studying.

**Classroom Management Statement.** Membership in the academic community places a special obligation on all members to preserve an atmosphere conducive to a safe and positive learning environment. Part of that obligation implies the responsibility of each member of the UNC community to maintain an environment in which the behavior of any individual is not disruptive. It is the responsibility of each student to behave in a manner that does not interrupt nor disrupt the delivery of education by faculty members or receipt of education by students, within or outside the classroom. The determination of whether such interruption/disruption has occurred must be made by the faculty member at the time the behavior occurs. It becomes the responsibility of the individual faculty member to maintain and enforce the standards of behavior acceptable to preserving an atmosphere for teaching and learning in accordance with University regulations and the course syllabus. At minimum, a student will be warned if his/her behavior is considered by the faculty member to be disruptive. Serious disruptions, as determined by the faculty member, may result in immediate removal of the student from the instructional environment. Significant and/or continued violations of this policy may result in an administrative withdrawal of the student from the class. Additional responses by the faculty member to disruptive behavior may include a range of actions from discussing the behavior with the student to referral to the appropriate academic unit and/or the Office of Student Life for administrative review in an effort to implement corrective action up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University.

**UNC Policies** - UNC’s policies and recommendations for academic misconduct will be followed. For additional information, please see the Dean of Student’s website, Student Code of Conduct link [http://www.unco.edu/dos/Conduct/codeofconduct.html](http://www.unco.edu/dos/Conduct/codeofconduct.html)

**UNC Emergency Response Plan:** [www.unco.edu/finadmin/ERPindex.html](http://www.unco.edu/finadmin/ERPindex.html)