

4010 Laboratory

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Hours: Variable

This 2-credit laboratory is a companion to the 4010 course and is intended to help beginning teachers develop a toolkit for getting to know the communities in which they will teach. The lab experiences are designed to develop habits of mind that will allow beginning teachers to see children, families and communities with empathy and curiosity, rather than judgment. In addition, students will practice finding resources (rather than problems and deficits) in children's lives, which can then be drawn on in the classroom.

As part of the laboratory, students will practice general strategies that could be applied in nearly any community to learn about the lives of the people there. In addition, as a class, we will pool information to learn about local communities, which will support students' work in placement schools during future field experiences. Finally, the lab work will inform one of the major projects for the 4010 course.

Unlike Early Childhood laboratories for future courses, this course does not require you to be in a particular place at a particular time each week. Instead, you will devote a few hours each week to the assignments. The assignments are broken into two major chunks. The first includes several mini-ethnographies, which are designed to help you practice your observational skills and your empathetic imagination. The second chunk is a community study, where you will work with a small group to learn about a school, its families, and the community surrounding it. These assignments are described in more detail below. The grade for the 4010 Laboratory is pass-fail. To pass, all assignments must be completed.

Mini-Ethnographies

The goal for each of these observations is for you to see what you can learn both about others and yourself. Each assignment will raise particular issues and questions; however, here are some broad questions you might consider as you embark on each of these adventures:

- Where do you see connections between what you observe and your own life?
Where do you see disconnections?
- Who seems to be comfortable in this place or situation? What is taken as normal?
What is taken as abnormal?
- What resources do you notice in these situations that might be drawn on in the classroom?
- What challenges do you observe?
- How does something you observe reframe a belief you had previously about children, families or schools?
- What new understandings or epiphanies have you had related to children, families, and communities?

For each laboratory assignment, **you will write** a 500-word memo reflecting on your observations and experiences. Do not try to answer all of the above questions. Focus on what is most meaningful to you. **During weeks 2-7, you will do one observation each week. The 500-word reflection on the observation is due by midnight the night before the following week's class and should be submitted to the 4010L instructor through WebCT.** Late reflections will receive partial credit. Each reflection (as well as your participation in a one-time discussion group) will be graded: full credit/partial credit/no credit.

Week 2: Virtual Reflection

As a warm-up, you will begin by listening to an audio-story. The audio file can be downloaded (or just listened to) from WEB CT. As you listen, think about the above questions. Practice curiosity and see what resources both these young women have that teachers could draw on. You might also think about the ways these young women's lives challenge any previously held assumptions.

Week 3: City Bus

Even if you are a regular bus rider, this week you should ride a city bus as an ethnographer. In particular, I'd like you to check out routes 5 or 7. (See www.athenstransit.com for more detailed information.) As you ride, notice who is riding the bus? Where are they going? Who is not riding the bus? What challenges do you see? What benefits are there? If this were your primary mode of transportation, how would your daily life be enriched? Challenged? How might children's experiences on this bus be drawn on in school?

Week 4: Grocery Store

The purpose of this observation is to visit a store where you do not typically shop. An ethnic grocery would make a good choice; however, if you have another idea, please share it. How do children and adults interact in this setting? How do adults interact with one another? Notice the products available for purchase, prices of various products, and how shoppers seem to decide on purchases. As you walk around, notice how you feel about being in this particular place. What about the building or the other people make you feel welcome or unwelcome? In what ways might this experience help you think about parents coming into a school?

Some possible stores:

Carniceria Potosina, 186 W. May St., Winder
El Arcoiris Mexican Store #2, 232 N. Broad St., Winder
Guerrero Supermarket, 3077 Danielsville Road, Athens
Los Amigos, 109 Rowe Rd, Athens
Fooks Foods, Baxter and Rocksprings streets, Athens

Week 5: Library

Visit the children's section of the Athens Library after school hours. Take careful notes on the children and families you see there. Where are children physically located and how do they move about the space of the library? What library resources are they using?

How are the children talking to each other? How are different adults talking to children? If you feel comfortable, strike up a conversation with a parent. What can you learn about the community by looking at printed material in the library?

Weeks 6&7: CLASE Observation

You will observe literacy tutoring at a CLASE site (see <http://www.coe.uga.edu/clase/tutoring> for details). You should visit the same site twice over the two weeks to give you the opportunity for a more in-depth observation. Use what you see in the first visit to inform what you look for in the second. How do students and tutors greet and interact with one another? What do they talk about, and what kinds of language do they use in their talking? Who seems comfortable in this space? Who does not seem comfortable? What resources are used during tutoring? Which of these draw on children's resources and interests outside of school? How do tutoring sessions come to an end? How do tutors, children, and parents interact with one another at pick-up time? In addition to the questions above, you might think about the ways in which the teaching that goes on in this site is both like and unlike the way you think of teaching in a school classroom.

You should plan to do these observations even if you are doing the extra-credit tutoring at Oglethorpe. You will see things quietly watching that you may not observe when you are engaged in tutoring. Also, you should plan to submit a reflection for both weeks.

Weeks 8&9: Discussion Groups

During weeks 8&9, your laboratory instructor will schedule several small-group discussion times for you to have a conversation about what you have observed and learned during the mini-ethnographies. You must attend one of these conversations. Meeting times will be planned through WebCT during the weeks 6&7.

Community Study

During the second half of the course, you will work with a small group to study a school and the community surrounding it. Groups should have 4-5 people and you may choose your groups yourselves. We will spend some time in the 4010 course doing this.

The goal of this activity is to practice learning about a school community so you can develop tools you will use later, but also to learn about local school communities so you can use what you learn in your future field placements. **Your final laboratory product for this portion of the course will be a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation where you introduce the rest of the class you the community you studied. This presentation should include statistical information, pictures, and quotes from people you spoke to. It may also include audio or video clips, but this is not required.**

For the school & community you study, you should plan to speak to 2-3 people who work at the school who are not teachers. Ideally, these people might also be parents or might live in the community. You might think about talking to a paraprofessional, a cafeteria

worker, a bus driver, or a custodian. Introducing yourself to the school secretary might be a good way to find out who might be willing to talk to you. (Assign 1 or 2 people in your group to do this; don't do a mob interview ☺).

You do not have to do all of the following things, but do as many as seems reasonable for your group. Each person in your group should speak live and in person to at least two human beings for this project. In general, the more people you speak to, the better. The goal is to get a rich picture of the school and community. To do this, you might:

- Take pictures of the school and surrounding neighborhood.
- Interview a parent at the school.
- Ask to observe an after-school program at the school (or a visit a nearby one where children are bused.)
- Walk a neighborhood where children who attend the school live.
- Talk with owners of businesses in the neighborhood of the school.
- Follow one of the school busses to see where it goes as it drops off kids.
- Spend some time in a neighborhood park.
- Research the area on the internet.
- Talk to people at community organizations about the neighborhood.
- Ride a public bus route in the area.
- Speak to a UGA student who had a field placement at the school.
- Visit an area store and talk to someone who works there.

Your group may choose one of these schools in Athens as the focus for your study:

Alps Road Elementary School, 200 Alps road
Barnett Shoals Elementary School, 3220 Barnett Shoals Road
Chase Street Elementary School, 757 N. Chase St.
Fowler Drive Elementary School, 400 Fowler Dr.
Gaines Elementary School, 900 Gaines School Road
Olgethorpe Ave. Elementary School, 1150 Olgethorpe Ave.
Timothy Road Elementary School, 1900 Timothy Road, Athens
Whit Davis Road Elementary School, 1450 Whit Davis Road
Whitehead Road Elementary School, 500 Whitehead Road

If you are interested, you may also choose one of these rural schools, although these would involve considerably more driving:

Oglethorpe County Elementary School, 15 Fairgrounds Road, Lexington, GA
Taliaferro County Public School, Crawfordville, GA

You will present your community study as a group on the last day of class. You will also (either individually or in pairs) write a multi-disciplinary unit that explicitly draws on what you have learned about the community. This part of the assignment will be graded as part of the 4010 course.