

**Orientation to Early Childhood Education:  
Teacher-Researchers in Communities Develop Connections and Curriculum**  
EDEC 4010 and EDEC 4010L (Laboratory)  
Fall 2009

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“Effective teachers of students who are racially, ethnically, culturally different from themselves have learned how to recognize and build on assets students bring, interpret students’ classroom behavior accurately, contextualize problems students bring within a sociopolitical rather than cultural deficiency analysis, and communicate constructively with adults in students’ lives.”  
Christine Sleeter, 2008

**Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce future educators to the important work of knowing themselves as cultural beings, studying communities in order to better understand the social and political contexts in which teaching and learning occurs in schools, and imagining creative instructional strategies that integrate local experiences and knowledge. Drawing on sociocultural theories and anthropological methods, students will engage in community-based research that emphasizes curiosity and genuine interest in how children and families live, work, and play in community spaces. Students will then engage critical theories to consider how classroom expectations and curriculum building can either create powerful opportunities for children and families to connect to schools in meaningful ways or marginalize children’s and families’ lived experiences. Finally, 4010 students will outline a community-based unit of inquiry integrating at least two content areas and one arts-based discipline and make a concrete plan of action for both creating community in their future classrooms and integrating the broader community outside the walls of the school.

Three questions will guide our work in this course:

1. Where am I from and how does that impact how I read the world and my work in a community with which I am unfamiliar?
2. Where are the children I will teach from and what resources can we draw on and integrate into the social and academic curriculum?
3. What practices will help me become a teacher-researcher who learns from children, families, and communities to make my classroom engaging, rigorous, inspiring, and oriented towards social justice?

These questions will be part of our ongoing inquiry throughout the semester as we understand ourselves, children and families as cultural beings who work, play, and live in cultured lives. Working as intellectuals who wonder, research, document, and question the worlds around us, we will seesaw between theory and practice while learning the importance of elementary educators weaving the two together.

**Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Program Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for preparation programs in the College of Education states that the college “aspires to prepare exemplary, reflective professionals to serve a diverse

global community” (see <http://coe.uga.edu/framework/>). The early childhood program shares that aspiration and seeks to prepare exemplary and reflective teachers of young children by committing itself to the standards for early childhood education of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The early childhood standards addressed in EDEC 4010 and the EDEC 4010L field experience include the following:

*Standard I:* Child Development and Learning – Sections ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii

*Standard II:* Curriculum Development and Implementation – Sections i, ii, iii, xii, xiv, xv, xvi, xviii, xxiii

*Standard IV:* Assessment and Evaluation – Sections i, ii, iii, v

*Standard V:* Professionalism – Sections i, vi

*Standard VI:* Field Experiences – Sections i, ii, iii

### **Academic Honesty Policy**

This course adheres to the academic honesty policy including policies against plagiarism of any kind. Admission into UGA implies agreement with the following statement, “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” (See the Office of the VP of Instruction website <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>).

### **Critical Performances:**

**Attendance and Participation:** Learning is a social activity and the course meetings are built around this assumption. It is imperative that each student comes to class having read the assigned materials, completed the assigned activities, and prepared to engage in thoughtful discussions around the weekly topics. Receiving a peer’s “notes” from a course meeting will never substitute for being an active participant in the dynamic process of socially constructing meaning. Attending class prepared is not only mandatory but absolutely necessary if everyone is to benefit from this course. **You are required to email me ahead of time if you must attend class without having read the assigned readings and/or if an absence cannot be avoided.** Participation points are earned through being present, prepared, and actively participating in class activities and discussions.

**From where do I read the world?:** In this 2-3 page, double-spaced paper each student will critically reflect on the various social, cultural, and political locations she or he identifies with that most impact her or his reading of people, places, events, and ideologies. One purpose of this paper is to become more conscious of influences on our understandings of the world around us and to recognize how those influences may impact our work in communities and classrooms with children and families. Such critical consciousness is imperative if a teacher is to work toward classroom practices that are inclusive and socially just.

**Critical Reading:** Each student will select *one* of the following assignments and write a 2-3 page reflection of her/his critical readings. Each critical reading will engage the three layers and tenets of critical literacy as described in Jones (2006) but some specific questions for consideration are suggested in the following:

**A television commercial:** Write a brief context (On what network is the commercial? At what time did it play? What is the commercial advertising? Give a synopsis of the commercial). Possible questions to explore include: Who is part of the target audience and why? How did you “read” this target audience? Who might feel marginalized by the commercial and why? What perspectives are privileged in this commercial and what are the cues that this is so? Whose interests are being served through this commercial? How does your “reading” connect to Power, Perspective, and Positioning? From where did you read the commercial (Insider? Outsider? Both? Cultural similarities? Differences?) How might this commercial be reconstructed to be more socially just? If you were compelled to do so, what kind of social action could be started from this commercial?

**An oral conversation:** Write a brief context (Who are the participants? What is the location of the conversation?). Who would feel most comfortable engaging in this conversation? Why? Who might feel marginalized? Why? What cues did you “read” to make such interpretations? How does your “reading” connect to: Power, Positioning, and Perspective? From where did you read the conversation? How might have this conversation been reconstructed to be more socially just? If you were compelled to do so, what kind of social action could be started from this conversation?

**A magazine advertisement:** Write a brief context (What magazine is it? Where is the ad located in the magazine? Where can the magazine be purchased? For how much?). What perspectives are privileged in the images and text? Who might relate most to this advertisement and why? Who might feel marginalized by this advertisement and why? What cues did you “read” to make such interpretations? How does your “reading” connect to: Power, Perspective, and Positioning? From where did you read the advertisement? How might this advertisement be reconstructed to be more socially just? If you were compelled to do so, what kind of social action could be started from this text?

**Autobiography/Fiction Literature Circle #1:** Each student will select one book from a group of six to read and discuss with a small group in class. Students will conduct self-evaluations and peer-evaluations based on preparedness, participation, learning, ability to consider multiple perspectives, and ability to articulate connections and disconnections between the content of the book and the topics and readings from across the semester.

**Autobiography/Fiction Essay:** Each student will write a 3-page essay about their experience reading their selected autobiography or fiction text. The essay should include what reading the book meant personally, personally-relevant issues raised in the book, surprising parts of the book that offer insight to different perspectives of the world, and anything else. In a brief conclusion, the student will make connections between the book, other readings and assignments in this class, insights about personal lives and educational institutions, and their future work as a teacher.

**Classroom Practice Literature Circle #2:** Each student will select one book from a group of six to read and discuss with a small group in class. Students will conduct self-evaluations and peer-evaluations based on preparedness, participation, learning, ability to consider multiple perspectives, and ability to articulate connections and disconnections between the content of the book and the topics and readings from across the semester.

**Classroom Practice Book Flier and Online Dialogue:** Each group will prepare a flier to advertise the book they selected and read about classroom practice. After a brief presentation to the whole class about the book, classmates will post questions to each book group online. Each member of the class will be expected to post at least 2 questions and engage in at least 4 additional dialogue posts during the period of one week.

**Mini-Inquiry Unit Integrating Community Study:** Students will create an elementary-grades appropriate mini-inquiry unit that draws from and integrates their learning from the community study. This mini-inquiry unit does not have to include detailed lesson plans but must include the following:

1. A five-day plan for classroom activities that center around a particular place, concept, social/ecological issue, or content derived from the community study.
2. Explicit integration of two academic content areas and one arts-based area across the mini-inquiry.
3. Georgia Performance Standards connected to the inquiry.
4. Resource list that includes specific people, books, photographs, newspaper articles, music, videos, brochures, maps, websites, objects of study, or other materials that will be used.
5. A written exploration of potential social action-oriented projects students may be interested in pursuing from the inquiry.
6. Reflection on the process of making real connections between communities and academic curriculum in the classroom.

**Community Integration Plan:** Each student will write an action plan for the integration of families and community into the classroom and curriculum that will include FIVE specific things the student will do as a first year teacher.

**Grading:**

<b>Attendance, preparedness, and participation</b>	<b>20 points</b>
<b>From Where Do I Read?</b>	<b>20 points</b>
<b>Critical Reading</b>	<b>20 points</b>
<b>Literature Circle #1</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>Autobiography/Fiction Essay</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>Literature Circle #2</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>Classroom Practice Book Flier and Online Dialogue</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>Community-Based Inquiry Unit*</b>	<b>20 points</b>
<b>Community Integration Plan</b>	<b>10 points</b>

\*Rubric for scoring the community-based inquiry unit will be constructed in the class as a group

**Please note:** No incompletes will be given in this course except in unusually extenuating circumstances and with the permission of the instructor. Assignments handed in after the due date will only be accepted when prior arrangements have been made with the instructor, and these assignments will be lowered at least one half grade per day. Please keep a copy of all work you hand in.

**A note on written assignments:** All papers submitted for scoring must be revised, edited, and in compliance with citing references for any quotations, ideas, or other content borrowed from other sources. *Absolutely no plagiarism of any degree is allowed. If you are unsure how to cite references including information found on the Internet, please see the instructor.* Students are advised to have a peer or peers read their assignments before submitting them to the instructor. The quality of the content and writing will always be the focus during scoring but papers are also expected to be well-edited.

### **Required Texts:**

Jones, S. (2006). *Girls, social class, and literacy: What teachers can do to make a difference*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

**Required readings that include journal articles and individual chapters from books will be handed out in class or posted online.**

### **Literature Circle #1**

**Choose one of the following texts to read with a small group:**

Alexie, S. (2007). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. New York: Little Brown.

Canada, G. (1995). *Fist stick knife gun*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Childers, M. (2006). *Welfare brat*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Diaz, J. (2008). *The brief wondrous life of Oscar Wao*. Riverhead Trade.

Hadjii (2008). *Don't let my mama read this: A southern-fried memoir*. New York: Harlem Moon Broadway Books.aaaaa

hooks, b. (1997). *Bone black: Memories of girlhood*. New York, NY: Owl Books.

Klein, S. (2008). *Moose: A memoir of fat camp*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Santiago, E. (1993). *When I was Puerto Rican*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

### **Literature Circle #2**

**Choose one of the following texts to read with a small group:**

Allen, J. (2007). *Creating welcoming schools: A practical guide to home-school partnerships with diverse families*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Bomer, K. (2005). *Writing a life: Teaching memoir to sharpen insight, shape meaning – and triumph over tests*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Buhrow, B. & Garcia, A.U. (2006). *Ladybugs, tornadoes, and swirling galaxies: English*

- language learners discover their world through inquiry.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Grant, T. & Littlejohn, G. (2008). *Greening school grounds: Creating habitats for learning.* Toronto: Green Teacher.
- Ostrow, J. (1995). *A room with a different view: First through third graders build community and create curriculum.*
- Peterson, R. (1992). *Life in a crowded place: Making a learning community.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Van Sluys, K. (2005). *What if and why: Literacy invitations for multilingual classrooms.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Vasquez, V. (2004). *Negotiating critical literacies with young children.* New York: Teachers College Press.

DATE		BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS	IN CLASS ACTIVITIES/ TOPICS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE	LAB
Week One 8/20	Locating ourselves in community: We are cultural beings in local contexts	George Ella Lyons and Dorothy Allison (in-class)	I am from...		
Week Two 8/27		Jones: ch. 1-2  Pryor: Deep Ethnography article  In class: Investigations into Athens	Where we are from impacts how we read the world; Looking through ethnographer's eyes at Athens, Georgia		Virtual Community
Week Three 9/3		Jones: ch. 3-4  In class: Ladson-Billings Letter to the Next President	Classism, racism, sexism, body image, homophobia, and other issues. How do they impact us? How do they impact classrooms?	From where do you read the world?	City Bus Ride
Week Four 9/10		Jones: ch. 5-6  In class: Freire's letters	Reading the world through a critical lens: Introduction to critical literacies.		Grocery Store
Week Five 9/17		Jones: ch. 7  1 <sup>st</sup> 1/2 #1 Choice	Book Club #1		Library

No Class Meeting		Book  *No class meeting; Online dialogues and small group meeting			
Week Six 9/24	Learning about a community created by others: Genuine curiosity and ethnographic engagement	Jones: ch. 8 Cowhey (chapter on food drive to be posted)  2 <sup>nd</sup> 1/2 #1 Choice Book	Book Club #1  Theory and practice in critical literacy		Social Service Agencies: Compile a list of Athens area services
Week Seven 10/1		Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez (to be posted)  Chapters from “A Story Untold” (to be posted)	Possibilities of pedagogies  <i>Testing Ms. Grube/A Different Standard</i>  <i>Paperclips</i>	Critical Reading	Historical Society, museums, political headquarters, etc.
Week Eight 10/8		Paley (to be posted) Cowhey (to be posted) Sobel Mapmaking (ch. 4-5 to be posted) Comber and Nixon (ch. 7 from Literacy Moves On)  In-class: Project-based Centers	Making Things		* Follow up conversations  Select community/school
Week Nine 10/15		Jones: ch. 9-10 Van Sluys (to be posted)  In-class: Invitations and other models of inquiry	Critical reading inside and outside school  Invitations and Georgia Performance Standards		Begin Community Study
Week			Jones: ch. 11	Reading, writing,	

Ten 10/22	Community in the Classroom: Connections across the Social and Academic Curriculum	In-class: <i>Talkin' Black Talk; Why Johnny Can't Talk Either</i>	and language: Workshop models in the classroom <i>A Close-Up Look at Reading</i>		Study: Interviews, walks, social services, parks, on-line statistics, popular culture, business, industry, places where kids hang out (Chuck E. Cheese; YMCA after school; Bishop Park Saturday mornings), photos, mapping, bus routes, transportation, local activity
Week Eleven 10/29		Dyson (to be posted) Vasquez (ch. 6 to be posted) Elaine Millard (ch. 9 of <i>Literacy Moves On</i> to be posted)		Email 1-page self-study on popular culture to instructor	
Week Twelve 11/5		Ladson-Billings (to be posted)  Civil (to be posted)	Mathematics in Place: Connections to families and communities	Rough draft: Community Study and Mini-Inquiry Unit	
Week Thirteen 11/12		1 <sup>st</sup> 1/2 of Choice Book #2  Sharma (in class)  Science for Social Justice (chapter to be posted)	Book Club #2  Science in Place: Connecting Science to Families and Communities		
Week Fourteen 11/19		2 <sup>nd</sup> 1/2 of Book #2	Book Club #2	Community study presentation 1 <sup>st</sup> Groups	
Week Fifteen 12/10			Jones: ch. 12	Know Your Place: Being the teacher who makes a difference	