

**Orientation to Early Childhood Education:
Teacher-Researchers in Communities Developing Connections & Curriculum**
EDEC 4010 and EDEC 4010L (Laboratory)
Fall 2008

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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 the 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 oriented toward social justice?

These questions will be part of our ongoing inquiry throughout the semester as we understand ourselves and 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

1. 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 being adequately prepared and/or if an absence cannot be avoided.** One absence will not affect your grade. Whatever the reason, additional absences will. You cannot participate if you are not here. Participation points are earned through being present, on-time, prepared, and actively participating in class activities and discussions.

2. 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. You will want to think back about your experiences growing up, about any major shifts in perspective, and about your experiences since coming to UGA. Such a critical consciousness is imperative

if a teacher is to work toward classroom practices that are inclusive and socially just. The goal is for you to become conscious of your own positioning and to recognize it as one possibility among many.

3. 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? 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?

4. Family & Culture Literature Circle #1: Each student will select one book from a group of six to read and discuss with a small group in class. Groups will meet over two weeks in class to discuss connections and disconnections between the content of the book and the topics and readings from across the semester. After your final book club meeting, you will email Amy a 400- to 500-word email discussing key insights in the book related to course content.

5. 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. The goal of this literature circle is to collect concrete strategies for learning about the community around the school you will teach and for developing classroom community. You will discuss the book during one week in class and will share key strategies with the rest of the class.

6. Mini-Inquiry Unit Integrating Community Study: Students will work in small groups to 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 concept or particular 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.

7. Community Integration Plan: Each student will present an action plan for learning about the community where you will teach and for the promotion of community within the classroom. This plan will include FIVE specific things the student will do as a first year teacher, including a rationale and any concerns.

Grading:

Attendance, preparedness, and participation	20 points
From Where Do I Read?	15 points
Critical Reading	15 points
Literature Circle #1	10 points
Literature Circle #2	10 points
Community-Based Inquiry Unit*	20 points
Community Integration Plan	10 points
Extra Credit for being a CLASE tutor at Oglethorpe Ave.	10 points

*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. 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 on WebCT.

Literature Circle #1

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

Diaz, J. (2007). *The brief wondrous life of Oscar Wao*.

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

Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the boundary: A moving account of the struggles and achievements of America's educationally underprepared*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Smith, B. (1945) *A tree grows in Brooklyn*.

Suskind, R. (1998). *A hope in the unseen: An American odyssey from the inner city to the ivy league*.

Literature Circle #2

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

Kyle, D.W., McIntyre, E., Miller, K.B., Moore, G.H. (2002). *Reaching out: A K-8 resource for connecting families and schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Ostrow, J. (1995). *A room with a different view: First through third graders build community and create curriculum*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Peterson, R. (1992). *Life in a crowded place: Making a learning community*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Servis, J. (1999) *Celebrating the fourth: Ideas and inspiration for teachers of grade four*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Van Sluys, K. (2005). *What if and why: Literacy invitations for multilingual classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

DATE	COURSE THEMES	BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS	IN CLASS ACTIVITIES/ TOPICS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE	LAB

8/19	Locating ourselves in community: We are cultural beings in local contexts		Course Intro I am from...		
8/26		Jones: ch. 1-2 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
9/2		Jones: ch. 3-4 In class: Ladson-Billings Letter to the Next President	Classism, racism, sexism, and other -isms. How do they impact us? How do they impact classrooms?	From where do you read the world?	City Bus Ride
9/9		Jones: ch. 5-6 In class: Freire's letters	Reading the world through a critical lens: Introduction to critical literacies.		Grocery Store
9/16		1 st Book Club Book (first half)	Book Club #1		Library
9/23	Learning about a community created by others: Genuine curiosity and ethnographic engagement	1 st Book Club Book (second half) In-class: Comber (<i>Literacies in Place</i>); Foxfire	Book Club #1 Theory and practice in critical literacy	Email Amy about discussion	CLASE observation and interview
9/30		Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez (to be posted)	Ethnographic Tools	Critical Reading	CLASE observation and interview
10/7		Paley (to be posted) In-class: Siddle-Walker	Ethnographic tools		* Follow up conversations
10/14		Jones: ch. 8-9 In-class: Invitations and other models of inquiry	Critically reading social situations inside and outside school		* Follow up conversations

10/21	Community in the Classroom: Connections across the Social and Academic Curriculum	Jones: ch. 10-11 In-class: <i>Talkin' Black Talk; Why Johnny Can't Talk Either</i>	Reading, writing, and language: Connections and disconnections with lives		Community Study: Select school, on-line statistics, business, industry, places where kids hang out, interview, photo mapping
10/28		Dyson (to be posted)	Popular culture: Connections to school literacies Investigating Georgia Performance Standards		
11/4		Ladson-Billings (to be posted) Civil (to be posted)	Mathematics: Connections to families and communities <i>Testing Ms. Grube/CPE video</i>	Rough draft: Community presentation and mini-inquiry	
11/11		1 st 1/2 of Choice Book #2 Sharma (to be posted)	Book Club #2 Classroom structures and community expectations <i>Responsive Classroom</i>		
11/18		Jones: ch. 12	Book Club 2 Museum of Ideas Being the teacher who makes a difference.	Community study presentation	
12-2		OPTIONAL MAKE & TAKE DAY		Mini-Inquiry unit due Community integration plan due 12-9 (emailed by midnight)	