

Problems in the Elementary School

EDEC/EDMS 7050

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Instructor: Dr. Penny Oldfather

427 Aderhold Hall; 706 542-4244; poldfath@uga.edu

Overview

We will focus on practical approaches for supporting students' critical thinking and active learning across various content areas. Particular consideration will be given to educators' roles for supporting students' critical thinking in a democracy.

Objectives

- To consider the role of educators in a democratic society
- To develop knowledge of various forms of critical and creative thinking
- To develop a repertoire of practical strategies for facilitating creative and critical thinking in classroom settings
- To gain insight into your own habits of thought and action that may affect your critical and creative thinking as an educator
- To "take charge" of your own learning through pursuing projects which meet personal educational needs and interests

Texts

Selected readings in Bel Jean packet

Course Expectations

- Attend all classes.
- Notify me beforehand at your earliest convenience if you cannot attend class. We will extend the class periods up to 30 minutes Mondays through Thursdays in order to omit Friday evening classes. Please plan accordingly.
- Be punctual for class. If you are teaching and have a long drive that will have trouble being prompt to class, you should reconsider whether or not to take the course
- Complete all readings and other preparations for each class in a timely manner.

- Participate thoughtfully and constructively in class discussions and activities.
- It is fine to bring a laptop computer to class to take notes or make a presentation, but it will be considered rude and inappropriate if you check your email during class. Turn off your cell phone, please.
- When others are presenting, demonstrate respect and consideration and avoid packing up your materials before class is dismissed.
- Be familiar with the UGA Academic Honesty Policy and be consistently fair and honest in representing your work to others.

Honor Code

"Students at The University of Georgia are responsible for maintaining and adhering to the strictest standards of honesty and integrity in every aspect of their lives. Honesty in academic matters is a large part of this obligation. Specific regulations governing student academic conduct are contained in the Student Handbook and these should avoid any misunderstanding." -- Undergraduate Bulletin

Course Requirements

Three lesson plans for critical thinking

Due: May 22, May 24, May 30

You will design three lesson plans which are geared for facilitating student's critical thinking. These must involve students' in active learning incorporate the ERR framework (Evocation, Realization of Meaning, and Reflection) that will be presented. Each lesson must also use at least one cooperative learning strategy. You can develop lessons aimed at young children (e. g., for your particular classroom, if you are currently a teacher), or you might pitch the lessons at an adult level (for members of this class). Your Bel Jean packet has two excellent examples of lesson plans done by previous students in this course. I suggest that you analyze how they were constructed as you consider your own planning.

Implementation practice - Due: May 30

You will be required to present at least one of your lesson plans with your assigned group. You will also have opportunity to practice facilitation of jigsaw and other cooperative learning strategies.

Dual entry diary – Due: May 23, May 31.

You will keep a dual entry diary, typed on computer. Your diary will include entries (“juicy” quotes that you will select) from each assigned reading along with your own particular responses to those quotes. Be sure to identify sources and page numbers of the selections. Your diary will be turned in to me twice. Bring it to class each day and have it placed on the table to use as a basis for class and/or small group discussions.

Inquiry Project

Proposal due: May 18th

Presentation due: You will sign up for one of the following dates: May 31, June 1, June 5, or June 6.

You will develop your own inquiry project in which you formulate your own authentic questions, including questions that incorporate all levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The project must include information from at least 3 relevant research-based articles. You need to obtain information and ideas from multiple sources, which, in addition to your readings will include interviews and observations.

The Inquiry Project Proposal

Your typewritten project proposal should include 1) a rationale, explaining why this is an important area of interest in relation to critical thinking and why it is of interest to you, personally and professionally; 2) questions you plan to address at multiple levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy; and 3) The resources you will seek (what books or articles or internet resources you have identified so far, what people you plan to talk to, what settings you plan to observe.

Your investigation might focus on questioning strategies, reading or writing strategies that promote critical thinking, forms of assessment that support students’ critical thinking, ways of assessing critical thinking, the potential of shared governance in schools, developing democratic classrooms, Foxfire strategies, expeditionary learning. There are many possible areas for inquiry. Please choose an investigation that will be deeply relevant for your professional and/or personal work and make a proposal. Consider ways in which you can

apply what you learn through this effort to involve students in similar inquiries.

The Inquiry Project is **not** a research paper. Instead, you will make a presentation designed to involve the class members in critical thinking. Select among the various strategies that will be presented throughout the course or those that you have found elsewhere.

However, in addition to the presentation, you will prepare a handout (about 3-4 single-spaced pages) for each member of the class. The handout will be structured as follows:

- **Rationale:** Why you have selected this focus
- **Questions:** The questions that you developed at each level of Bloom's Taxonomy
- **Findings:** The key findings related to each of your questions
- **Applications:** A brief reflection on what you have learned about how to use inquiry within your classroom to promote critical thinking
- **Resources:** A bibliography of resources: articles (including the titles of the three research articles you find at the library), books, people, places, web sites.

Self-Evaluation Assignment Due: June 6

Bring a type-written self-evaluation that is structured in terms of the course objectives and expectations. You may add any other additional thoughts you wish. This will not be graded, but it is required.

Evaluation of Your Work in the Course

Summative evaluation

Your course grade will be based on the holistic considerations regarding the following questions:

- Have you met the responsibilities of the student, listed on page one? Active class participation and good preparation for class will be very important in this consideration.
- What standards of quality have you met in your assignments for this course?

Formative evaluation

The main goal of evaluation in this course will be to help support your development as an educator. Rather than assigning traditional grades on specific assignments, I will use a checkmark system. A *check-plus* means that you have done an outstanding job and have exceeded the requirements for the assignment. A *check* means that you have done good work and have met the expectations for that assignment. A *check -* indicates that something else needed to be included, (e. g., more depth, more detail, more evidence of effort and critical thinking).

Writing criteria

Your writings for the course will be evaluated both on *what* you write (your essential ideas) and on *how well* you write. I will be interested in how well you apply critical thinking to the issues and concepts discussed in class and how well you demonstrate your understanding of the readings. All assignments should be word processed in 10- or 12-pt. font, double spaced, spell checked, and grammatically correct. (The dual entry diaries can be single spaced.) It is wise to ask someone to proof-read your work and for you to read your work aloud in order to prepare a high quality presentation. The very highest standards in written and oral communication are essential for your role as a professional. Your performance in communications will be taken into account in evaluating your course work

Dates and Topics

Tuesday, May 16

Course Overview

What is thinking? What is critical thinking? What is creative thinking?

A framework for teaching for critical thinking: ERR and RWCT

Activity: The Insert Method

Wednesday, May 17

Critical thinking and the role of schools in a democracy

Structuring classrooms for critical thinking

Readings:

Klooster *What is Critical Thinking?*

Beane and Apple chapter

Bateson chapter

Thursday, May 18th

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

Readings:

Paley: *On Listening to What the Children Say*

Other readings to be announced

Monday, May 22

More on Bloom's Taxonomy

Cube activity

Questioning strategies

Readings:

Two Commeyras articles *What Can We Learn From Students' Questions? ;
Were Janelle and Neesie in the Same Classroom? Children's Questions as
the First Order of Reality in Storybook Discussions*

Due: Lesson plan #1

Tuesday, May 23

Learner-centered approaches

Discussion Strategies

KWL

Readings:

Ogle article: *K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of
expository text*

Due: Inquiry project proposal

Dual entry diary #1

Wednesday, May 24

Supporting critical thinking through cooperative learning

Readings:

Kagan chapter: *Key Elements of Cooperative Learning*

Due: Lesson plan #2

Thursday, May 25

Theater as a tool for critical thinking

Mediating strategies for supporting critical thinking

- Graphic organizers
- Venn Diagrams

Assignment: Please bring examples of graphic organizers to share with the class

Due: Lesson plan #3

Tuesday, May 30

Lesson implementations

Come prepared to present one of your three lessons to a small group

Wednesday, May 31

Inquiry project presentations

Due: Dual entry diary #2

Thursday, June 1

Inquiry project presentations

Monday, June 5th

Inquiry project presentations

Tuesday, June 6 (Last Class)

Inquiry project presentations