

Education 3263 Diversity & Inclusion
Wednesday 6:10-8:50 PM
Professor Jerusha Conner
Office: Mendel G44F
Office Phone: 519-3083

Spring 2009
Room: Tolentine 213
Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00-5:00
Email: jerusha.conner@villanova.edu

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Description and Objectives

American cities and their institutions are rapidly becoming more and more diverse. In cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington DC, New York, Seattle, and San Francisco, students of color make up half or more of the public school students. In Philadelphia, Black or African-American children and youth now comprise the majority of the population under the age of 18, while the number of children and youth of Hispanic origin is also on the rise. Whether they teach in the inner-city or the suburbs, teachers are more likely to have students of different ethnic, racial, and language groups in their classrooms. An important pedagogical objective for these teachers is to ensure that all their students have access to academically challenging curricula and intellectually rich learning experiences; however, in many American schools students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds remain barred from high quality educational opportunities.

The course is organized around two central questions:

- 1) Who is excluded from a high-quality education and how?
- 2) What can teachers and school administrators do to counter these inequities and create more inclusive classrooms for all their students?

Issues of exclusion, inclusion, and diversity in education are complicated and sometimes steeped in controversy. The course readings have been selected to illuminate some of this thorniness. Students will be asked to identify in these readings ideas that they find useful as well as ideas they find problematic, so that as a class we can grapple with the complexity of teaching diverse students. Aspiring teachers will also reflect on how they can reach students whose backgrounds differ from their own, create classrooms that promote social justice, and effect positive social change through their teaching.

By the end of this course, students should be able to

1. *Explain how social and economic legacies have led to the unequal distribution of educational opportunity;*
2. *Understand how differences among students generate different approaches to learning;*
3. *Identify instructional techniques that are adapted to diverse learners;*
4. *Describe reasons to learn from students and strategies for doing so.*

Course Requirements

1. Participation (20% of final grade).

Because this class will involve discussion based on the readings, it is vital that you come to class not only having read the assigned texts, but also prepared to discuss them. Strong participation entails more than simply talking in class—it means listening carefully and respectfully to others and responding constructively to their ideas with questions and interpretations of your own. I will encourage you to share insights and critical interpretations of the readings, to make connections to materials from this and other courses, and to relate the readings to your own experiences in schools and other educational settings. Students who find it difficult to speak up in class will be allowed to supplement their participation through email communication with me. Participation in small group work during class will also count towards your participation grade, as will any worksheets or mini-assignments we complete during class time. Consequently, missing class will adversely affect your participation grade. Unexcused absences will result in the loss of 5 participation points.

2. Post-observation Analytical Paper (15% of final grade). **Due Feb 11th.**

Choose one of the following essay topics.

1. In class, we will discuss how the media portrays urban schools prior to your first observation. We will also view clips from popular movies set in urban schools. You will have a chance to write about your expectations before you visit either Overbrook or Strawberry Mansion High School. Following your first visit to the school, you will write a short essay (between 3-5 pages) in which you reflect on how what you saw confirmed or departed from the media portraits discussed in class. In your essay, you should also discuss the dangers and/or the usefulness of these portraits, using specific examples, and where applicable, drawing on the assigned readings.
2. During your observation, pay careful attention to the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the social structures, norms, and/or practices evident in the classroom setting. Following your observation, compose a short (3-5) page essay reflecting on what you saw. You may focus on a particular vignette or scene, describing and analyzing what was happening when you conducted your observation. You may critique how the teacher designed or carried out the particular lesson you observed and offer your suggestions for improvement. You may focus on the artifacts in the room and the messages they communicate. You may analyze how the particular class you observed fits within the larger structure of the school. Regardless of your focus, you should strive to make connections with the course readings as relevant.

3. Midterm Research Presentation (15% of final grade). Due Feb. 25

Alone or with 1-2 classmates, you will choose a current federal or state special education policy or a local policy that pertains to diversity to investigate. Examples include:

- An aspect of IDEA, such as Response to Intervention, Procedural Safeguards Notification, Discipline and due process, IEP development, etc.
- The Philadelphia School District's decision to require all students to take an African-American history course
- The Philadelphia School District's decision to remove from the calendar any month or day associated with a diverse group, such as Hispanic Heritage month and the International Day of Disabled Persons.

You will research the history and background of the policy and examine its implications for schools, classrooms, teachers, and students. During the week of February 25th, you will present your findings to the class in an 8-10 minute presentation, involving powerpoint. This project will help you to reflect on how to conduct research and present findings effectively, preparing you to assist your learning partners as they take on a similar endeavor with their senior projects.

4. A Portrait of Your Learning Partner (15% of final grade). Due March 25

Each of you will be assigned to work with a high school student, also known as your learning partner. Over emails or in person, you will strike up weekly conversations with this student. Initially, your correspondence should focus on getting to know one another, learning about one another's backgrounds, life stories, values, and interests.

The portrait you write, based on these conversations, should be at least three pages in length. It should contain a description of your partner and information about his or her background and the things that matter to him/her. Other themes to cover may include the informant's interests, aspirations, successes, and the challenges he or she may have faced. As much as possible, you should strive to include your partner's voice in your write-up, including direct quotations. If you conduct an observation at the school your learning partner attends, you may also include a "vignette" or a scene from your observation in your portrait. You will be encouraged to share the portrait you write with your partner.

5. Records of Your Learning Partner's Views on Educational Matters (10%).

During the second half of the semester (weeks 8-13), you will conduct a series of short live, telephone or email dialogues with your learning partner around central questions pertaining to issues of curricular design, instructional strategies, assessment, and classroom management. These questions appear on the course outline and are adapted from questions developed by Alison Cook-Sather at Bryn Mawr College. You will keep records of your conversations. If your conversations are live, you should turn in clearly written transcripts of your conversations. If your conversations take place over email, you should print out the exchange. Each week, you will share these records not only with me, but also with a group of your classmates, known as your consultancy group. These conversations should be well-developed and rich—not simply one short sentence in response to the core question. You may need to ask follow-up questions or clarify concepts for the students in order to acquire strong responses, which should inform and deepen your understanding of your partner's perspective on educational matters.

Reciprocal Learning and Teaching Final Project (25% of final grade). **Due May 6th**.

Starting the third week of the course, you will spend approximately 1 hour each week with a student at Strawberry Mansion High School in Philadelphia. (You should block out 3 hours to allow for travel time.) The Office of Service Learning will arrange your transportation to and from the school.* You will work with your “learning partner” on his or her senior project, providing support and guidance. You will receive training in class and an orientation to the school before meeting your learning partner. Ideally, you will be matched with a student whose disciplinary interests align with your own.

Your “learning partner” will serve as the subject of your portrait (in assignment 4 above) and the informant for assignment 5 above; however, if you wish to work with another student in addition to the Strawberry Mansion student for these assignments, you may do so, with my permission.

Your work with your learning partner will serve as an educational laboratory, in which you will practice reciprocal teaching and learning. You will learn from your partner about his or her academic strengths, intellectual interests, and learning preferences and needs, and you will have the chance to experiment with, adapt, and reflect on the teaching techniques that work most effectively with your partner. As you reflect on your sessions with your partner, you will begin to deepen and refine your own understanding of the complexities and nuances of both teaching and learning.

As a culminating project, you will write an essay for a book provisionally titled *Learning to Learn from Urban Youth*. Your essay should focus on one or two things you have learned from your time at SMHS about teaching, mentoring, urban youth, and/or urban education. Drawing on the records from assignment 5, classroom conversations, observations and course readings, you should analyze how your experience contributed to your developing understanding and how it will inform your approach either to teaching or to working with youth. In particular, you are encouraged to address the experience of learning to listen to high school students and how you will carry these lessons into your own classroom. These papers should be approximately 5-10 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 point font. You should use appropriate headings and subheadings to organize your writing. Your essay, due May 6th, will be worth 25% of your final grade.

*If your schedule does not permit you to visit SMHS, you will make alternate arrangements with Dr. Conner for completing an additional ten hours of coursework, an in-depth research paper in lieu of the final project, and three school-site visits. You will be responsible for completing all other course requirements.

Extra Credit

Students may earn up to 10 points of extra credit by presenting a draft of their final paper at a conference that will be held on the VU campus in April. More details to come.

Students with Special Needs

The Office of Learning Support Services provides reasonable accommodations for students with various special needs. To ensure confidentiality, students must complete a Request for Accommodation Form each semester at Villanova in order to receive accommodations during that semester. Call or email the office for an appointment. Phone: 610-519-5636 E-mail: nancy.mott@villanova.edu

Reading Outline

Introduction: What is Diversity?

Week 1. Jan 14. Course Overview

Week 2. Jan 21. Not Learning and Unlearning

Kohl, H. (1994). *"I Won't Learn from You" and Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment*. New York: The New Press, pp. 1-32.

Part 1: Who Has Been Excluded and How?

Week 3. Jan. 28. Race and Ethnicity

Kozol, J. (2006). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. Chapter 1, pp. 13-37.

Week 4: Feb 4. Language and Immigration Status

Olsen, L. (1997). *Made in America: Immigrant Students in our Public Schools*. New York: The New Press, 90-108.

Week 5: Feb. 11. Family Situation

Krebs, B. & Pitcoff, P. (2006). *Beyond the Foster Care System: The Future for Teens*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 27-50.

Gorski, P. (2008). The myth of the "culture of poverty." *Educational Leadership*, 65, 32-36.

*Post-observation reflection paper due

Week 6: Feb. 18. Physical and Cognitive Disabilities

McDermott, R. (1993). The acquisition of a child by a learning disability. In S. Chalkin & J. Lave, Eds. *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context*, 269-305.

Hehir, T. (2006). Eliminating ableism in education. In Katzman, Gandhi, Harbour, & LaRock (Eds.) *Special Education for a New Century*.

Week 7: Feb 25. Research Presentations

Part 2: How Can Schools and Classrooms Become More Inclusive?

Week 8: March 11. Detracking

Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping Track: How School Structure Inequality*. 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 214-260.

Core Question Week 8: How is your learning affected by the particular classmates you may have in a class? (Follow-up question: Do you prefer to be in a classroom with students of the same or different racial and ethnic backgrounds as you? Why?)

Weeks 9: March 18. Student Empowerment and Voice

Rudduck, J. (2007). Student voice, student engagement, and school reform. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.) *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School*. Springer Academic Publishers.
Philadelphia Student Union (2008, Winter). *The Union Rep*. www.phillystudentunion.org

Core Question Week 9: What ideas do you have for how your classes or school could be improved to support your learning?

Week 10: March 25. Multicultural Education

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3): 465-491.

Sleeter, C. (1996). *Multicultural Education as Social Activism*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press. pp. 91- 115.

Core Question Week 10: What subjects do you think students should study in school and why? What skills should students be taught and why?

*Portrait of learning partner due.

Week 11: April 1. Multiple Intelligence, Learning Styles, and Differentiation

Fierros, E.G. (2004). How multiple intelligences theory can guide teachers' practices: Ensuring success for students with disabilities. *On Point Series - National Institute for Urban School Improvement*. Washington, DC: Office for Special Education Programs.

Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). The rationale for differentiated instruction in the mixed ability classroom. In *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms, Second Edition*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Core Question Week 11: How can a teacher meet the different learning styles and needs of students in his/her class?

Week 12: April 8. Cooperative Learning

Lotan, R. (2003). Group-worthy tasks. *Educational Leadership* 60(6).

Silences and Learning to Listen to Robert. (1998). In *Groupwork in Diverse Classrooms* (J. Shulman, R. Lotan, & J. Whitcomb, Eds.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Core Question Week 12: What kinds of learning activities do you like best and why?

Weeks 13: April 15. No class. AERA.

Core Question Week 13: What kinds of things can a teacher do to support your learning and motivate you to work hard in his or her class?

Week 14: April 22. Reflective Practice

Darling-Hammond, L., French, J., & Garcia-Lopez, S. P. (Eds.) (2002). *Learning to Teach for Social Justice*. New York: Teachers College Press. Selections by Ruiz, Rowland, Bang, Caster, & Corti.

Week 15: April 29. Review and Wrap-up.