Individual and Cultural Diversity in the Classroom
300:401, Section 05 (3 credits)

Fall 2013

Instructor Mara C. Hughes

Mondays 3:55-6:55
Hickman Hall, Cook Campus, Room 130

email: marachughes@gmail.com
phone: (646) 321-0361 (This is my cell phone.)
Office Hours: I don’t have an office, but I am happy to
speak to you before or after class, or to make an
appointment with you—just email me.

Prerequisites: Admission to the GSE Teacher Education Programs or Designation as an Education Minor
and 05:300:200 Introduction to Education

Mode of Instruction: Seminar

Course Description: Focuses on the range of student diversity in contemporary classrooms, including
cultural, linguistic, and academic differences. Emphasizes strategies to enhance academic success,
promote interaction, and facilitate the inclusion of diverse students in the regular school setting.

About the Course: This course considers how our society—and our schools in particular—responds to
difference. Differences in race, gender, class, sexual orientation, cultural and/or linguistic background,
religion, and ability are often assumed to be intrinsically significant. In contrast, this course suggests
that these differences are made to matter through cultural processes. Students in this course will begin
by examining their own assumptions and associations around these differences, and will go on to
examine historical, structural, and cultural inequalities that shape people’s lives based upon their race,
gender, etc. Students will then consider how schools in particular respond to student diversity and how
students are impacted by and react to these responses. Finally, students will consider how teachers’
actions can create more equitable learning outcomes for the young people in their classrooms.

Course Goals
Students will be able to...
1. Notice and question their own assumptions and prejudices
2. Recognize the potential impact of those assumptions and prejudices on students
3. Identify examples of structural inequality based on race, class, gender, religion/culture, sexual
   orientation, and ability
4. Identify examples of cultural inequality based on race, class, gender, religion/culture, sexual
   orientation, and ability
5. Describe how individual, structural, and cultural actions of the school create success for some
   students and failure for others
6. Describe and explain the varied responses of students to these conditions
7. Think outside narrow definitions of “ability” or “school readiness” to identify a range of
8. Identity specific actions to take and to avoid to create more equitable classrooms, including consideration of both the social and the academic curriculum

Stance & Ground Rules

“To engage in learning always entails the risk that learning may have an impact on you, that learning may change you. This means that [learning and therefore] education only occurs when the learner is willing to take a risk.”

- G. Biesta

In this course, we will be discussing topics that are not only complex, but have the potential to bring up powerful emotions for all of us. At times, you might disagree with each other, with the ideas in the readings, or with me. You might feel uncomfortable. This is a good thing—it provides a wonderful opportunity for real learning to occur.

As part of creating a community in which discomfort can be productive, I am asking you to embrace a stance of humility, inquiry, and empathy. By humility, I mean that we will all be open to considering new ideas—especially ideas that might conflict with our current worldview. By inquiry, I mean that we will be constantly seeking to ask questions and to learn from each other, from the readings, and ultimately, from our future students and their families. By empathy, I mean that we will attempt to step into other people’s shoes, and that we will treat one another with kindness and respect.

We will also be adhering to certain ground rules in our class. Though we will discuss these rules together, the following rules are those that I have found to be most helpful in the past:

- **Take risks.**
  Ask questions, raise new perspectives, stay engaged—even when you are uncomfortable.

- **Assume good intentions.**
  If someone in the class says something you find hurtful or offensive, assume that they did not do so intentionally. Share your perspective—educate them.

- **Try on new ideas.**
  Push yourself to entertain new ideas—especially ones that you might want to reject right off the bat! Question things that are the taken-for-granted or just “common sense.”

- **Respect confidentiality.**
  In order for anyone to feel comfortable taking risks and sharing their thoughts and experiences, they need to feel reasonably secure that what they say is not going to end up as gossip once class is over.

- **Take care of yourself.**
  The topics we discuss in class often bring up strong emotions for people. Remember to take care of yourself, and please come talk to me or write me an email if ever something happens that makes you particularly uncomfortable.

One final point regarding class expectations: I consider you all to be teachers now. As teachers—people who will be caring for children—you have a professional responsibility to take what we are learning seriously, to do your part by reading and participating, and to treat your classmates with kindness and respect.
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Required Texts:

Course Expectations

- It is essential that you attend all sessions of this class, and that you are actively engaged in discussions and activities. Doing so not only significantly impacts your own learning, but also the learning of your peers, and of your future students. If you need to miss class one week, please email me and let me know. If you will be missing more than one class, a note will be required for that absence and each successive absence. Excessive physical or mental absences will impact your final grade, and could result in your receiving no credit for the course. *All that said, I also understand that people have a lot going in their lives—please talk to me if there is something that is making difficult for you to attend class, complete the reading, etc.*

- Reading is assigned weekly, and you are expected to complete ALL readings prior to class. Reading is a critical part of this course. All required readings have been carefully selected based upon their relevance to the topic at hand, the significance of the ideas they contain, and how accessible and (hopefully) interesting/enjoyable they are to read. None of the readings are expendable—please take this seriously.

- You are expected to turn in all work on time. If you need an extension, be sure to ask for it before the due date. Extensions will only be granted for legitimate reasons, and will only be granted 48 hours before the due date. Late papers for which you have not been granted an extension will be subject to a grade penalty. When an extension has not been granted, grades on assignments will be lowered one grade for each day they are late (i.e. 4.0 to 3.7 to 3.3 etc.) No papers will be accepted more than one week from the due date.

- Please use electronics responsibly in class. Research has indicated that multitasking (e.g. checking email while participating in a class discussion) is incompatible with deeper conceptual thinking. For both your own learning and that of your classmates’, we need you at full capacity
during class. Therefore, please use computers, tablets, etc. ONLY to take notes or reference readings.

- Anyone with a learning difference needing accommodations of any kind should contact me as soon as possible.
ASSIGNMENTS

**Reading Blogs (35%)**

All students will be responsible for blogging a total of 14 times using the Sakai Blogs tab.

- **ONE of your blogs will be an introduction.** It will be due on **SUNDAY, September 15th, at MIDNIGHT.** In your introduction, you should include:
  - your academic plans and standing, and information about how this class fits into your academic plan
  - any experience you have had with thinking about issues of diversity, and any concerns you have about doing so in this class
  - what you hope to get out of this class – what questions you hope it might answer

You should also address the questions, “Who are you? How do you understand your identity?” and you should write about a time that you felt highly aware of the importance of a particular part of your identity.

- **TEN of your blogs will be about the readings** (note: we will have 13 weeks of readings, so you may take three weeks "off" from blogging before class). These blogs will be due **by midnight on the day before class,** and should discuss ALL of the readings for that day. You may have more or less to say about any single reading; that's fine. Make sure that you address them all. Though there may be times when you wish to defend a particular position, in general I encourage you to take a reflective stance, including paying particular attention to your **affective response** to the readings. For example, were you surprised? Angry? Delighted? Why might you have felt that way? Bring in additional resources and/or readings, where applicable—things from past classes, the media, popular culture, etc. Use personal experience **JUDICIOUSLY,** and understand that your blog is NOT PRIVATE. At the end of your blog, you should pose a question that came up for you in relation to the readings. You will often have the chance to discuss your question with your classmates, so it is best to write an authentic question you really **do** want to discuss!

- **TWO of your blogs will be about topics of your own choosing that are related to diversity.** At least one should pertain to a news story or current event. The other could include something you experience this semester, something you notice from media or popular culture, etc. You must relate the topic to our class readings. These blogs will be due **by midnight on the last day of class,** **Monday, December 9th.**

- **ONE of your blogs will be a reflection on the blogging experience, and on how your thinking has evolved over the course of the semester.** It will be due **by midnight on the last day of class,** **Monday, December 9th.**

- **To earn full credit for the blog, you must also post at least TEN comments to your peers' blogs over the course of the semester.**

Your blog entries should be **engaging** (it grabs the reader's attention and maintains interest), **textually grounded** (it includes references to readings, films, and other media that support your
positions and thinking), and polished (it has no grammar or spelling errors).
Blogs will be accepted in both written and video format. To submit a blog in written format, use a word processor -- like Microsoft Word -- to create a blog post of between 500 and 750 words. BE SURE TO SAVE YOUR BLOG POST TO YOUR COMPUTER. If it does not upload properly, you MUST have a TIME-STAMPED copy saved to show me in order to receive credit. IF YOUR POST IS LOST, YOU WILL NOT GET ANY CREDIT FOR IT.

To submit a blog in video format, use a digital recorder to record your discussion of required materials in a video of between 5 and 8 minutes. BE SURE TO SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER. Then, use a YouTube account to upload it to YouTube, and post the link to the Sakai Blogs tab. If it does not upload properly, you MUST have a TIME-STAMPED copy saved to show me in order to receive credit. IF YOUR POST IS LOST, YOU WILL NOT GET ANY CREDIT FOR IT.

NO LATE BLOGS WHATSOEVER WILL EVER BE ACCEPTED, NO EXCEPTIONS.

Personal Inquiry (20%) - DUE MONDAY, OCTOBER 7TH.

All of us have absorbed stereotypes about others just through growing up in this society. In this assignment, you will challenge your preconceived notions and push your comfort level by attending an event or visiting a community with which you are unfamiliar. You will then write a 3- to 5-page analysis of your experience, focusing on the experience of bringing your preconceived notions into conversation with reality. A detailed description and rubric will be made available on Sakai.

Institutional Inquiry (20%) - DUE DATES VARIOUS.

In this assignment, you will work in small groups in order to investigate structural inequality in our society. You will do this by choosing an institution (e.g. grocery store, community center, government office, etc.) and visiting that institution in two separate locations: in a middle- to upper-income neighborhood, and in a low-income neighborhood. You and your group will present the results of your inquiry to the class. A detailed description and rubric will be made available on Sakai.

Curriculum Analysis (25%) - DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 16TH.

In this assignment, you will have the opportunity to investigate a curricular resource of your choice, with the hope that you will find something you can use as you begin your teaching career. You will locate roughly one unit’s worth of materials which are designed to increase equity in the classroom. You will then review and critique these materials. A detailed description and rubric will be made available on Sakai.

GRADING, ETC.

Academic Integrity: I expect that you will comply with standards of academic integrity (that is, you will not even think about cheating) in this course. If you need assistance in understanding an assignment or course content, please seek assistance from other appropriate resources or me. Assignments should be your own work, except in cases where I have required a group product. The consequence for violating policies of academic integrity and other elements of the student code of conduct are serious and can have a tremendous negative impact on your academic progress and future career. You should not turn in the same work in two separate classes without the specific written
approval of the faculty members involved. Leaving work until the last minute can increase the
temptation to plagiarize work from journals or “borrow” friends’ work. You can avoid problems by
getting your work done early. Exams are also your own work. Please familiarize yourself with the
university policy on academic integrity
(http://www.rcstudentservice.rutgers.edu/academic_integrity.html).

Grading:
Students in the Graduate School of Education are graded in each course at the end of each term as
follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>F</td>
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The School does not assign the grades of D or D+ in its courses nor are minus grades assigned.

Writing Guidelines
- Detailed descriptions are provided for each assignment. Please refer to the grading rubrics
  posted on Sakai.
- Your writing should reflect a critical analysis – think of it as your building a case, or an
  argument, to support your point of view. Be sure you have a thesis statement to frame your
  paper.
- In-text citations and bibliography should be in APA format. You can go to the following
  website to get specific guidelines for APA: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
- Please be sure to edit your work for spelling and grammar. You will lose points for these errors.
  Don’t forget to use paragraphs!!!!

New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers Addressed in this Course:

Standard 2 - Teachers shall understand how children and adolescents develop and learn in a variety of school,
family and community contexts and provide opportunities that support their intellectual, social, emotional and
physical development.

Teachers know and understand:
2.2 How student learning is influenced by individual experiences, talents and prior learning, as well
as language, culture, family, and community values; and
2.3 How to identify and teach to the developmental abilities of students, which may include learning
differences, visual and perceptual differences, cultural and socio-emotional differences, special
physical or emotional challenges and gifted and talented exceptionalities.

Teachers value and are committed to:
2.4 The educability of all children and adolescents;
2.5 The belief that all children and adolescents bring talents and strengths to learning;
2.6 Appreciation for multiple ways of knowing;
2.7 The diverse talents of all students and to helping them develop self-confidence and subject matter competence; and
2.8 The belief that all children and adolescents can learn at high levels and achieve success.

**Standard 3** - Teachers shall understand the practice of culturally responsive teaching.

*Teachers know and understand:*

3.1 How a person’s world view is profoundly shaped by his or her life experiences, as mediated by factors such as social class, gender, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, age and special needs;
3.2 The supports for and barriers to culturally responsive teaching in school environments;
3.3 The process of second language acquisition and strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English; and
3.4 The negative impact of bias, prejudice, and discrimination on students and society.

*Teachers value and are committed to:*

3.5 Respect for individual and cultural differences, and appreciation of the basic worth of each individual and cultural group; and
3.6 The diversity of learning that takes place in the classroom, respect for the talents and perspectives of each student and sensitivity to community and cultural norms.

*Teachers engage in activities to:*

3.7 Create a learning community in which individual differences are respected;
3.8 Learn about the diverse students they teach, and the students’ families and communities;
3.9 Use strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English; and
3.10 Use knowledge of students and their lives to design and carry out instruction that builds on students’ strengths while meeting their needs and taking into account issues of social class, gender, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, age and special needs.

**Standard 7** - Teachers shall adapt and modify instruction to accommodate the special learning needs of all students.

*Teachers know and understand:*

7.1 How to access information regarding applicable laws, rules, regulations and procedural safeguards regarding planning and implementing the individual education program; and
7.2 Available resources related to educational strategies to accommodate individual differences and to employ positive behavioral intervention techniques to students with special needs.

*Teachers value and are committed to:*

7.3 The belief that children and adolescents with special needs can learn at high levels and achieve success.

*Teachers engage in activities to:*

7.4 Apply knowledge of students’ abilities/disabilities, experiences, talents and prior learning, as well as language, culture, economics, family and community values to positively impact student learning;
CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1: Introduction (Sep. 9th)

*There is no required reading this week.

Week 2: Identity and Prejudice (Sep. 16th)


Week 3: Natural or Socially Constructed Differences? (Sep. 23rd)


Week 4: The Power of Cultural Messages (Sep. 30th)

1) Butler, J. Doing justice to someone. *This is a difficult reading. If you need help, check out: Lorber, J. Night to his day: The social construction of gender.


Week 5: Structural Inequality (Oct. 7th)


PERSONAL INQUIRY PAPER DUE.

Week 6: Privilege (Oct. 14th)


Week 7: Structural Inequality in Schools (Oct. 21st)


**Week 8: Cultural Messages in Schools (Oct. 28th)**


**Week 9: Identity Development (Nov. 4th)**

   a. Read EITHER ch. 3: The Early Years OR ch. 4: Identity Development in Adolescence
   b. Read ch. 6: The Development of a White Identity


**Week 10: “At Risk” Youth (Nov. 11th)**


**Week 11: Addressing Differences in Schools (Nov. 18th)**


**Week 12: Understanding “Ability” (Nov. 25th)**


**Week 13: Teaching for Equity and Social Justice (Dec. 2nd)**

1) Boaler, J. (2006). How a detracked mathematics approach promoted respect, responsibility and
Week 14: The Impact of Teachers (Dec. 9th)
