Course Description and Rationale

Discussion and dialogue are vital to the exchange of ideas, opinions and beliefs throughout American society, and it can be argued that discussion is democratic in itself. This idea should not be lost in American schools where democratic ideals and principles such as freedom of thought and expression are upheld. It is especially important that we have discussion in our schools about controversial issues and topics, especially those that have divided society into polarized interest groups and factions over time. The purpose of this graduate seminar is to deeply analyze and examine discussion as pedagogy. In addition, this special topics seminar approaches discussion as pedagogy and controversial material not as mutually exclusive, but as dependent upon each other in promoting a democratic classroom environment in which the exchange of ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and opinions are allowed to happen freely, yet respectfully. Thirdly, this special topics seminar will afford students the opportunity to engage in discussion on selected controversial issues and topics that are salient to their experiences as educators. We will do this by first establishing a framework for identifying controversial issues and topics, and then exploring selected controversial issues and topics through course readings, assignments, and discussion.

Graduate seminars are discussion-based, and therefore your weekly participation is significant in influencing the direction of the course. In order to participate effectively and enhance your learning experience as well as that of your peers, preparation for the course through a thorough examination of your course readings is key. A major portion of this course is built upon discussion about salient controversial issues both domestically and globally. Open-mindedness, respect, and genuine interest (listening, critiquing, demonstrating concern, etc.) towards the ideas, opinions, beliefs, and lived experiences of your peers demonstrates the dispositions of establishing a community of teacher learners whose ultimate mission is to improve the educational experiences of K-12 students.

Goals for the Course

By fully participating in the course through effective preparation, discussion, and assignment completion, teacher learners will:
1. Analyze and critique the theoretical framework(s) that form the basis for discussion as pedagogy.
2. Differentiate between controversial topics and controversial issues while also understanding that the two are not exclusive.
3. Implement discussion about controversial topics/issues into their classroom practice and have this implementation be based on research and theory.
4. Identify and engage teacher learners and students in discussion about salient controversial issues.
5. Consider various forms of media as a tool in which they can engage students and teacher learners in discussion about controversial issues.
6. Develop lesson plans and practitioner ideas centered upon a controversial issue.

Conceptual Framework for Teaching

Teaching is a scholarly discipline whose art is vital in shaping and transforming the world one student/classroom at a time. In understanding the significant role that teachers play in this world, it is critical that the preparation of teachers reflects the multi-faceted, complex yet rewarding lifetime journey of learning. My mission of supporting and preparing teachers [teacher educators] is built upon three philosophical stances:

1. Inquiry: It is imperative that we ask critical questions about society and its influence in the classroom. Challenging and questioning assumptions as well as complacency is vital in forming a mutually beneficial relationship between teachers, the curriculum, students, schools, and subsequently the community.

2. Humanity: Education is more than a process by which information is exchanged, but it plays a significant role in shaping humanity. Pedagogy, curriculum, and the student are not mutually exclusive; they play an interrelated role in molding thoughts and attitudes. Education is more than information and methods; it is a humanistic process.

3. Reflection: The practice of teaching is an art in which educators must consistently reflect and think critically about the purpose and outcomes of their practice. To improve our practice we must think critically about the relationship between our pedagogy, curricular choices, and students.

Course Requirements

1. Be prepared for class each week. The most significant learning will occur as we meet together to share ideas to make sense of course content. It is important that you have read and thought about the required readings in order to effectively engage in discussion and activities.

2. Attend class each week, arrive on time. Excused absences include only those approved by the University—religious observance, documented illness or death in the family—and should be approved in advance. More than one unexcused
absence or repeated tardiness will result in your grade being dropped by one letter grade.

3. Successfully complete all readings and class assignments by the date on which they are assigned. No late papers/projects will be accepted without prior approval from the instructor.

4. All papers should be double-spaced, 12-point font with one-inch margins around. You should include a title page including your name, the course name, assignment name and date of submission.

5. All papers should be in APA format. This applies to citations, references, headings, and page numbers. Please use the latest edition of the APA manual.

6. It is important that you check your email regularly for announcements, updates, and assignments.

**Required Reading and Text**


*Many shorter book sections and articles will be available through electronic reserves. These readings are marked with a * on the syllabus.*

**Recommended Journals**

- Journal of Social Studies Research
- Theory and Research in Social Education
- Social Education
- The Social Studies
- International Journal of Social Education
- Urban Review
- Urban Education
- Race, Ethnicity and Education
- Action in Teacher Education
- Multicultural Education

**Brief Assignment Descriptions**

*Response Papers (30 Points- 3 points each)*

Students are required to submit a 2-3 page response to the weekly readings. Responses must be submitted by 11 p.m. on Sundays, the night before class. The purpose of this assignment is to (1) use writings to engage you in deeper thought about the readings, and (2) provide reference points and themes for the class discussion related to the respective readings. Responses should draw upon your personal and professional experiences, but
ultimately be rooted in the readings. Your personal and professional experiences as well as your interests are both valid and necessary in relating to the text. However, experiences and interests should be grounded in issues/points raised throughout the texts.

You are not reflecting on one selected reading, but you are finding common themes and issues across the texts. In addition to your response, you must submit two questions related to the readings. These questions can be critiques, insightful, or suggestive in nature, but should ultimately be open-ended and meant to engage your peers in further discussion of the texts.

You will select ten weeks in which you will submit these response papers. Be sure to follow APA formatting in your response papers. Please provide citations and references in your response paper.

**Student Led Discussion (30 Points)**

In this course we are learning about discussion as pedagogy as it relates to controversial issues/topics. However, what are some salient controversial issues/topics that require worthwhile discussion in classrooms? The final third of the course will be spent furthering our understanding of selected controversial topics/issues. You will select a controversial topic and identify the issues that arise from this topic and lead the class in discussion on that selected topic/issue. You can choose topics/issues based on professional experiences, global or domestic issues, or concepts that arise through the curriculum or hidden-curriculum (preferable). I would also prefer that you select an issue/topic that you want to address with students, but may feel uncomfortable doing due to your lack of in-depth understanding.

In addition to leading discussion for that evening you will select at least three readings. The first two readings should be content-based meaning that after thoroughly reading, your peers and instructor will have a deeper understanding of the topic/issue in itself. The readings should offer opposing viewpoints as reading one viewpoint does not lead to a deeper understanding of the topic/issue. These readings can come from peer-reviewed literature or books. The third reading should be scholarship related to education that provides teachers with pedagogical suggestions for teaching your selected topic/issue. Practitioner scholarship will probably help you the most in finding your third reading and should be peer-reviewed.

Two weeks before presenting, you will meet with the instructor to discuss your selected readings. At this time, the instructor will discuss the readings with you and distribute them to your peers either via email or Blackboard. On the day you lead discussion please provide a handout that has points of discussion, questions, and themes (it would help to bring this handout to our meeting too). You will sign up for your topic and day for the student led discussion during the second week of class. Please have more than one topic/issue in mind.

**Media Review and Presentation (20 Points)**
According to Scheiner-Fisher and Busey (2013), one method for addressing controversial issues with students is through the use of print/digital media and film. You will select a book and a movie that addresses a controversial topic/issue of your choice. The book and movie cannot be a rendition of one another. You will write a 5-7 page media review that discusses the issue, how well the book and movie address the issue, competing viewpoints in the book and movie, and what aspects of the book and movie can be used to engage students in discussion pertaining to the selected topic. Also be sure to address where in the curriculum (you are currently teaching) the book and movie can be used.

Your presentation of the media review will be 15-20 minutes in length. It should address the same concepts presented in your written media review along with excerpts from the book and film. Presentation format is your choice (PowerPoint, Prezi, poster presentation, etc.). Media Review and Presentation due March 10.

Newspaper Lessons and Presentation (40 Points- Masters Students)
According to Hess (2009), teachers incorrectly use current events to engage students in discussion about controversial topics. Current events should not be used to “sabotage” class discussion as controversial topics/issues are built over time. You will subscribe to a newspaper publication such as the Washington Post, New York Times, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Miami Herald, USA Today, Akron-Beacon Journal, etc. Over the course of the semester you will track a theme that points to a larger controversial topic and its issue(s). You will then develop an instructional unit plan around the theme that includes 3 lessons. Clippings/articles from the newspaper must be submitted with the instructional unit plan. Lastly, you will do a poster presentation that pertaining to your thematic controversial unit plan.

Practitioner Manuscript and Presentation (40 Points- Doctoral Students/Masters Optional)
For your final project you will write a scholarly practitioner manuscript to be submitted to a journal for publication. Your practitioner manuscript should be related to a chosen controversial topic/issue and include a review of literature. You must have a target journal in mind and formatting (APA, MLA, Chicago) should adhere to the requirements of your target journal. You will submit the author requirements along with your manuscript. You will do a poster presentation pertaining to your manuscript that will be presented on the last day of class.

Grading

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Discussion and Controversy Syllabus- Spring 2014  

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100-95%  A  78-75  C
94-92    A-  74-72  C-
91-89    B+  71-69  D+
88-85    B  68-60  D
84-82    B-  59% & below  F
81-79    C+

Students with Special Needs

University policy 3342-3-18 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Disability Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sds for more information on registration procedures).

Academic Honesty and Citations

Pre-service teachers are expected to pursue education with a commitment to honesty, a sense of personal honor, and a respect for knowledge and reflection. All writing must be your own and must be meticulously referenced according to APA style. Directions for APA style are available at http://webster.commnet.edu/apa/apa_index.htm, http://apa.org and many other places on the web. You may also wish to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association published by the American Psychological Association: New York. 2002). Failure to appropriately reference your work often constitutes plagiarism, which according to Kent State’s “Administrative policy and procedures regarding student cheating and plagiarism,” (http://imagine.kent.edu/policyreg/view.asp?BackURL=/policyreg/archive.asp?ChapterID=4&Table=Archive&ID=46) can be punishable by an “F” on an assignment or an “F” in the entire course and/or puts you at risk of being dismissed from Teacher Education. For more information consult the above listed website.

Students who are not officially registered for a course by published University deadlines are not eligible to attend class sessions or to receive credit or a grade for the course.

**Syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion**
CI 67/77095- TEACHING WITH DISCUSSION AND CONTROVERSY

Tentative Course Schedule

*Subject to change at the instructor’s discretion*

1. **January 13: Introduction**
   - Course requirements and materials
   - Syllabus Review
   - Experiences with discussion and controversy

2. **January 27: A Framework and Rationale for Discussion and Controversy**
   - **Readings**
     - Hess pp. 11-36 (Chapters 1 and 2), pp. 168-172
     - Ochoa-Becker, pp. 204-206*
     - Parker, pp. 121-127*

   *Assignments Due*
   - Reading Response due Sunday, January 26 by 11pm

3. **February 3: Determining what is [not] controversial?**
   - **Readings**
     - Hess pp. 1-6, 37-52 (Chapter 3)

   *Assignments Due*
   - Reading Response due Sunday, February 2 by 11pm

4. **February 10: Benefits and Challenges of Using Discussion and Controversy**
   - **Readings**

Assignments Due
• Reading Response due Sunday, February 9 by 11pm

5. February 17: Discussion, Controversy and the Teacher

Readings
• Hess pp. 53-76, 97-112 (Chapters 4 and 6)
• Brookfield and Preskill pp.192-203*

Assignments Due
• Reading Response due Sunday, February 16 by 11pm

6. February 24: Deciding Which Issues are Salient

Readings
• Hess pp. 113-129 (Chapter 7)

Assignments Due
• Reading Response due Sunday, February 23 by 11pm

7. March 3: Media Review Research

Use this week to work on your media review research papers and presentations.

8. March 10: Race as Controversy (Media Review Presentations)

Readings
• Introduction

• Chapter 1


**Assignments Due**
- Reading Response due Sunday, March 9 by 11pm
- Media Review Paper and Presentation

**9. March 17: Controversy in History- Right or Wrong According to Whom?**

**Readings**

**Assignments Due**
- Reading Response due Sunday, March 16 by 11pm

**10. March 24: Spring Break-NO CLASS**

**11. March 31: Sexuality- Is it a civil rights issue?**

**Readings**

**Assignments Due**
- Reading Response due Sunday, March 30 by 11pm

**12. April 7: Religion in the Classroom- Should we include it and how?**

**Readings**


**Assignments Due**
- Reading Response due Sunday, April 6 by 11pm
- Rough draft of newspaper unit plan/practitioner manuscript

**13. April 14: Immigration - What is the fear behind immigration?**

**Readings**

**Assignments Due**
- Reading Response due Sunday, April 13 by 11pm

**14. April 21: CRT, Hip-Hop and Diverse Perspectives- what is their place in classroom instruction?**

**Readings**

**Assignments Due**
- Reading Response due Sunday, April 20 by 11pm
15. April 28: Final Project and Presentations

16. May 5: Final Project and Presentations