

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM**

**EDUC 649 001: Critical Dialogue in Education (Credits: 1.5)  
Summer 2021  
July 26 – August 13**

**PROFESSORS:**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

A. Prerequisite: Admission into the MEd Curriculum and Instruction concentration in Transformative Teaching program.

B. Offers opportunity to develop critical dialogue and peer feedback skills focused on professional practice.

**DELIVERY METHOD:**

This course will be delivered online using synchronous and asynchronous formats via Blackboard housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before “@masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

- **Course Participation:** Active and consistent participation in the course as described in the individual course syllabus is extremely important for online courses. Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Online courses will, at a minimum, have weekly requirements for student participation that can be documented by any or all of the following methods:

- Submission/completion of assignments as specified by the professors
- Communication with the professors
- Active, meaningful, and respectful communication with peers

Expect to log in to this course **at least 3 times a week** to read announcements, participate in the discussions, and work on course materials. Students must also regularly check their GMU email for

communications from the instructors. Remember, this course is **not** self-paced. There are **specific deadlines** and **due dates** listed in the **CLASS SCHEDULE** section of this syllabus to which you are expected to adhere. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

- **Written Assignments:** All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. (Formal assignments do not include Blackboard discussions, class/course feedback, in-class reflections or journaling) The American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA) style guide should be followed for formal written assignments. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the Mason library web guide at <http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/>. Students may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support. Students will do the following:
  - Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
  - Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
  - Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
  - Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
- **Sessions:** Because our online courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our session will generally **start** on Wednesday and **finish** on Tuesday. Synchronous meetings will be arranged as needed.
- **Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students are expected to seek assistance if they are struggling with technical components of the course.
- **Technical Issues:** Students should expect that they could experience some technical difficulties at some point in the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly.
- **Mentoring/Advising:** If you would like to schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues, and you are unable to come to the Mason campus, we can meet via telephone or web conference. Send an email to your instructors to schedule your one-on-one session and include your preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- **Netiquette:** Our goal is to be **collaborative**, not combative. Even an innocent remark in the online environment can be misconstrued. Please always re-read your responses carefully before you post them to encourage others from taking them as personal attacks. **Be positive in your approach to others and diplomatic with your words.** We will do the same. Remember, you are not competing with each other but sharing information and learning from one another as well as from the instructors.

## **LEARNER OBJECTIVES:**

**This course is designed to enable students to:**

1. Develop as researchers and reflective practitioners.
2. Develop an understanding of the ways that dialogue and discourse reproduce (or resist) social and political inequality, power abuse and/or domination.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:**

This course fits with the core values of the College of Education and Human Development, which include collaboration, research based practice, innovation, ethical leadership, and social justice.

This course is designed to meet the following professional teaching standards:

- GMU Dispositions for a Career Educator I, IV, and V
  - Commitment to the Profession
  - Commitment to Being a Member of a Learning Community
  - Commitment to Democratic Values and Social Justice
- Teachers College Columbia Teacher Expectations II, III and IV
  - Learner-Centered Educators
  - Effective Collaborators
  - Advocates of Social Justice and Diversity
- NBPTS Propositions 1 and 5
  - Teachers are Committed to Student and Their Learning
  - Teachers are Members of Learning Communities

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Gee, J.P. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education* 25, pp. 99-125.

Wink, J. (2010/2011). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world* (4th ed.). NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. [Review chapters 1 & 2]

\*Please Note: Additional articles, chapters, PowerPoint presentations, and media will be posted on Blackboard as needed.

## Prompts for All Readings:

- What does this have to do with me?
- How could I explain these concepts to my students?
- What emotions are conjured up as I read? What's that about?
- What can I change about my practice, curricula, relationships, and policies?
- How can I use this to center my teaching on my most marginalized students?

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

### 1. Assignment descriptions

- Course Participation (Assesses objectives 1 and 2)
- Community-School Connections Project – PBA (Assesses objectives 1 and 2)

### 2. Assignment weighting

Course Participation:	
Session 1: Photo Personal Narrative Responses to Peers	10 points
Session 2: Post data from interviews in Bb	10 points
Bb Discussion: data analysis	15 points
Session 3: Culture Circle Zoom Session	15 points
Community-School Connections Project	50 points

### 3. Grading policies (and grading scale appropriate for UG or GR level)

#### Grade Distribution

95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
75-79	C
74 and below	F

### 4. Primary Project

The Community-School Connections Project is designed to support you to develop as researchers, reflective practitioners, and critical educators as we consider connections between the community in which your students live and your classroom. The project will engage you in the process of critical pedagogy as you *name, reflect critically* on, and begin to think about how to *act* in ways that offer empowering learning experiences for you and for your students. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to gain new knowledge about the relationship between the school and the community in which your students live. You will learn how to obtain such information by engaging in a skilled dialogue with a community member. Embedded in this project are multiple opportunities to learn about and practice self-reflection. The eight main components of this project are:

1. Identify a topic
2. Develop interview questions
3. Identify a community member (participant)

4. Write the first reflective memo in preparation for the interview
5. Interview the participant
6. Write notes (including quotes) on the interview
7. Write the second reflective memo on the entire process
8. Compile documents and reflect

The following paragraphs provide further detailed instruction on each step of the process. It is important that you carefully follow the steps as they teach fundamental skills for data collection.

### 1. **Identify a topic**

Draw on your experience as a classroom teacher and the language of critical pedagogy to take a critical stance as you go through the questions below:

- What are some critical issues (e.g., related to marginalizing, hegemony, grooming, etc.) that intrigue you as a classroom teacher?
- What are some critical issues/problems you have faced that may be connected to the community in which the children live?

Using these questions create a list of topics that are of interest to you. Combine topics if appropriate to create a short list of 3 important topics. Keep this list of topics and include them in your final report.

### 2. **Develop interview questions**

Applying the principles of respect, reciprocity and responsiveness, construct a set of 5-6 interview questions. Develop the questions using the guidelines provided on the handout **Interviewing as a Research Skill**. It would be useful to pair up with a colleague to practice interviewing and to try out your interview questions. Take notes and after the interview is completed, have a conversation discussing the interview process and the specific questions. Modify your questions, if needed, based on your interviewing experience. (Remember that questions may be modified as you conduct the interview). Keep this list of questions and include them in your final report.

### 3. **Identify a community member (participant)**

Identify a community member who could provide more insight into the critical issue you identified. The interviewee must be a person who can serve as a wise, well-respected community informant. For example, a member of a community advocacy group, a religious leader in the community, a librarian, a football/soccer coach, an aftercare teacher. Check with your mentor if you are unsure. Contact this person and introduce yourself, explain the purpose of your project, and make an appointment to interview this person. Document this process to include in your final report.

### 4. **Write a reflective memo in preparation for the interview (1-2 pages double spaced)**

Reflect on the following questions in your memo:

- What was the participant's response to my request?
- What are my initial thoughts about the participant based on my brief interaction?
- What are my thoughts and feelings about the interview process?

- What are some socio-cultural and moral dilemmas inherent in the topic identified, of which I should be aware?

### 5. Interview the participant

Begin the interview by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of your assignment. **Inform the interviewee that his/her name or identification will not be revealed in your report and the information will not be published.** Use the interview questions you began to develop in class to begin the dialogue. Please feel free to ask additional questions as necessary. You may use a tape recorder with the participant's permission if you feel it will help you. However, this is not a requirement. Take detailed notes (including quotes) during the interview. Thank the participant at the end of the interview.

### 6. Write notes on the interview (4-6 pages double spaced)

Type your notes as soon as you can. It is important that you not procrastinate as you will lose valuable data. Describe in detail each of the issues discussed by the community member. **It is very important that you write in complete sentences.** Provide a few (3-5) direct quotes that capture the participant's perspective in their own language. At the end of your notes identify two important issues from the participant's perspective. **Do not include any analytic or reflective memos with these notes. Save such memos separately and include them in your second reflective memo. Post your notes (including quotes) in the Bb Data Posting & Discussion folder by August 8.**

### 7. Write a reflective memo on the entire interview process (1-2 pages double spaced)

Address the following questions in your second reflective memo:

- How did my initial thoughts affect the interview process?
- What are some differences in perspectives between the participant and me? Refer to your data (your interview notes, including quotes).
- Which part of the interview process was most difficult for me? Why?
- What new understandings and insights did I gain about this equity issue? Refer to your data (your interview notes, including quotes).

### 8. Compile, reflect, and share

Compile information from the documents created in steps 1 through 7 and add an introduction, and preliminary conclusions to the report. The final compilation of the Community-School Connections Project must include the following:

**Introduction:** Briefly introduce the research topic and the community member. (5-7 sentences) 5 points

Interview questions 5 points

First reflective memo (1-2 pages)	10 points
Notes (including quotes) from the interview (4-6 pages)	10 points
Second reflective memo (1-2 pages)	10 points
<b>Preliminary conclusion</b> (5-7 sentences)	10 points
	Total: 50 points

### **VIA Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement**

There is no VIA requirement for this course.

### **GMU Policies and Resources for Students**

#### *Policies*

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- d. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- e. Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor. *Campus Resources*

- a. Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- b. For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

### **PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### **CORE VALUES COMMITMENT**

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership,

innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/> For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website <http://cehd.gmu.edu/>.

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

Sessions	Readings/Assignments
<p>1 July 26 – Aug. 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the Gee article (in Bb Readings)</li> <li>• View the VoiceThread presentations of your cohort peers and respond to all of them. Reminder: The purposes of this work are to (1) practice using the VoiceThread tool and to (2) deepen our thinking about identity, schooling experiences and their impacts. In responding to your peers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider connections to the Gee reading, your own lived experiences and/or to students with whom you have worked, and</li> <li>○ Identify themes within and across photo narratives that raise questions/issues for you as an educator.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Complete your responses/comments by Aug. 1</p>
<p>2 Aug. 2 - Aug. 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blackboard discussion: Focus on data analysis practice (see link to practice transcript in the Discussion space) 1<sup>st</sup> posting due Aug. 5; 2<sup>nd</sup> posting due Aug. 8</li> <li>• Your interview data (notes – including direct quotes): post in the Bb Data Posting &amp; Discussion folder, due August 8</li> </ul>
<p>3 Aug. 9 – Aug. 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture Circle Zoom session on data analysis: Date/Time TBD</li> <li>• Community-School Connections Project due in Blackboard on Aug. 15.</li> </ul>

Note: Faculty reserve the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.