Syllabus

Description

It is important to understand how meaning is constructed by individuals who are multicultural and multilingual as well as to be able to critically assess the relevant needs, desires, and conditions that exist within the discourse of the American public education system. Positioning ourselves as explorers and teacher-scholars, we will look at the linguacultural diversity as it continues to evolve among our students and our own role as facilitators of the learning process within the epistemology of learner-centered multicultural education.

Drawing upon research that is relevant to student populations in the United States and overseas, we will reassess our role as educators who participate in a process that is both local and global. Aiming to move away from those definitions of culture that reinforce stereotypes and toward new definitions of culture that are inclusive and democratic, we will examine our students’ intercultural personhood and its interaction with the constantly changing world. In the process, we will conduct personally meaningful research that is both introspective and relevant to our profession as well as focus on formulating personal epistemological positions from which our students may ultimately benefit (3 credits).

Course goals

Students will be able to:

1) Critically examine various definitions of culture and formulate their own definition.
2) Understand cultural negotiation as an extremely complex process which can be directed by competent teachers who see the struggle taking place therein as a source of growth.
3) See cultural and linguistic diversity as a phenomenon that is beneficial to all participants in the process of cultural negotiation, native and non-native English speakers alike.
4) Understand the role pre-existing knowledge (schemata), sociocultural conditioning, and other factors play in cultural negotiation and examine schemata that may be shared, if only to some extent, by members of various sociocultural groups.

5) Define culture shock as a prolonged, multifaceted event and learn specific strategies which can be used to guide and assist multicultural individuals experiencing culture shock.

6) Examine various aspects of multicultural education and apply elements of these aspects to their own contexts, needs, and objectives as teacher-scholars.

7) Understand that cross-cultural competence is much more than a collection of “truths” related to given ethnic groups and explore specific strategies for developing such cross-cultural competence.

8) Build a solid foundation for future sociocultural/pedagogical research and professional development along those vectors which are in their students’ best interests.

9) Translate all of the above into a personal epistemology, or “a way of knowing,” that will inform their actual teaching praxis as teachers who will be prepared to serve in Maine, elsewhere in the US, and overseas, allowing them to establish themselves as multicultural educators and linguistic and cultural diversity experts.

**Method**

Knowledge is socially constructed. In this class, we will construct personally meaningful knowledge through discussion and reading. You will be actively involved in this process by interacting with your peers and me and also by critically analyzing the readings.

**Required readings**

- Articles (see the course outline). The articles and reading guides have been posted on Blackboard by the instructor.

**Requirements and grading policy**

- Discussion/participation = 30%
- Mini-assignments/Responses to prompts (3 prompts x 10%) = 30%
- Philosophy of teaching multicultural learners (with a presentation) = 40%

1) Participation in the discussion is required. In order to participate in the discussion, please read the required texts and be prepared to discuss topics and issues explored in the readings. You are expected to have read the assigned readings for the week in their entirety before coming to class (the list is provided). For example, read what is listed under “Week 2” before our second class. Download the reading guides from Blackboard. Naturally, you will not be able
to participate in the discussion unless you actually come to class. Therefore, missing more than two classes will automatically lead to not being able to pass the class (30 points).

2) In addition to participating in the discussion, you will be required to submit responses to three separate prompts (see pp. 7-10). Each response should be 400-500 words in length (excluding your References page). They will be graded separately from participation in the discussion. A short, informal presentation is required for each one of the three (30 points).

3) Your statement of philosophy of teaching multicultural learners will reflect your understanding of the complex issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom (see p. 10). The total length will be limited to 1200-1500 words (excluding the References page). This paper will demonstrate your competence as a multicultural educator who has the theoretical knowledge informed by current research and the practical orientation toward inclusive, democratic discourse in the classroom. Feel free to use additional sources when writing this paper (use the latest edition of the APA style manual). A PowerPoint presentation is required.

Specific instructions are provided below (40 points). Deadline: 12/8/14.

Optional: We are trying to re-conceptualize ourselves as teacher-scholars, i.e., practicing classroom teachers whose pedagogy is informed by theory and scholars whose inquiry is directed by practice. Researcher’s logs are journals that will allow us to reflect upon the readings as we explore the required texts. We will think about connections between our contexts and current research and introspectively assess our own inhibitions, sociocultural conditioning, and potential as multicultural educators. Keeping such a journal as you read the texts will allow you to prepare for the discussion and respond to the question prompts. Should you become really interested in one of the things we will be discussing this semester, it will serve as an excellent starting point for future research.

Follow the APA format (6th edition) when citing your references:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

A = 93-100%, A - = 90-92%, B + = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B - = 80-82%, C + = 77-79%, C = 73-76%

Academic support

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. At any point, if you encounter difficulty with the course or feel you could be performing at a higher level, consult with me.

Students experience difficulty in courses for a variety of reasons. For problems with writing skills or time management, make an appointment to see a tutor at USM Learning Commons
Tutoring (780-4228), http://www.usm.maine.edu/learningcommons/tutoring-services. Help is also available in Portland through the Counseling Center, 105 Payson Smith (780-4050), and the Office of Academic Support for Students with Disabilities, 242 Luther Bonney (780-4706).

Technology support

USM Help Desk: send an email to helpdesk@usm.maine.edu or call 780-4029.

Library support

Live support is available during business hours. Go to http://usm.maine.edu/library and click on “Ask us / A librarian is only a click away” to chat with a librarian. You can also call the USM Library in Portland (780-4270), Gorham (780-5345), or at LAC (753-6540).

Remember that, as a USM student, you have already paid for access to online article databases through our library’s website (EBSCO Host/Academic Search Complete, JStor, and others).

Course outline

Week 1: Introduction (9/8)

Week 2: Culture (9/15)

Noel: Introduction & Chapter 1


Week 3: Culture shock, intercultural personhood, and imagined communities (9/22)


Week 4: Examining the process of second language acquisition (SLA) (9/29)


Week 5: Stereotypes and prejudice (10/6)

**Written response #1 is due**

Noel: Chapter 2


**No class – Fall break (USM), 10/13-10/14**

Week 6: Sociolinguistics and English (10/20)


**Week 7: Immigrants, refugees, and the dominant discourse (10/27)**

Noel: Chapter 3


**Week 8: Diversity and Multiple Intelligences (11/3)**

**Written response #2 is due**

Noel: Chapter 4


**Week 9: Understanding linguistic diversity (11/10)**


**Week 10: Identity and English Language Learners (ELLs) (11/17)**

Noel: Chapter 5


**Week 11: Teaching L2 culture (11/24)**

**Written response #3 is due**


**Week 12: Transforming pedagogy (12/1)**

Noel: Appendix


**Week 13: Conclusion and presentations (12/8)**

December 8, 2014 -- Philosophy of teaching multicultural learners is due

---

**Prompt #1**

“What is Culture?”

Once we have had the opportunity to discuss the readings, I would like to introduce a particular aspect of our conversation that is a direct extension of what we do in our classrooms -- I am talking about role-play as a learning/teaching tool.

The first task is simple. Imagine that you are a certified cross-cultural communication coach. You have been invited to give a short speech about culture to a group of students many of whom have not visited other countries or speak a second language fluently. In 400-500 words, please provide an expanded definition of the term “culture.”

Make sure that the final product is coherent. Here are a few suggestions and ideas to think about (you do not need to address them all in your paper):

Noel (2008), Knox (1999), and Street (1993) provide different definitions of “culture” and look
for an alternative to traditional definitions of culture. For example, they describe culture not as something static, but as something constantly evolving in a rapidly changing world. Street, in particular, looks at culture as a way of doing, not just the artifacts or static truths shared by all members of the community. But if culture is constantly changing and not simply a set of truths, then what is “American culture”? “Chinese culture”? “Somali culture”?

Furthermore, if culture is a verb, can a person who is not ethnically Somali participate in the Somali culture? If the answer is “yes,” what would an outsider have to do to become an insider? And if the answer is “no,” then what can be done to start this dialogue between the outsiders and the insiders?

Look at the identity “pies” (Noel, 2008, pp. 10-11). Why would your own pie be different from anyone else’s? What allows us to speak of every individual in the world as a multicultural person? For example, what makes you a multicultural person?

Language is identified as a sociocultural phenomenon (both intracultural and intercultural). English is an international language that is used in a variety of contexts. Why isn’t it enough for us to expose our students to only the local varieties of English or only the dominant discourse? On the other hand, why is it important to expose our students to the local varieties of English as well as the academic variety of American English?

Knox looks at how English is used by Thai learners of English and other non-native English speakers who use English to communicate with native English speakers and non-native English speakers. In what ways is the context he is describing different from our context in Maine, and – given that the Internet is here and that our learners are mobile – in what ways is that context similar to ours? What implications does this have for our students’ needs and objectives, especially in terms of their evolving sociocultural identity, and what is our role as educators who teach English (directly or indirectly) in this context?

Furthermore, if culture is a verb, what is the function of language in school settings, and how does language empower immigrants and refugees in K-12 settings? We know that linguistic barriers tend to create problems for ELLs (English language learners). Without oversimplifying the issues, discuss the differences between the functionalist perspective on cultural socialization and the critical perspective on cultural socialization (e.g., see Noel, 2008, pp. 31-36) as well as the role English language instruction may play within both paradigms.

For more ideas, please see “Reflective Writings” in Noel (2008, pp. 37-40).
Prompt #2

"Coming to America"

This assignment continues the theme of role-play but is going to be a little bit different. I would like you to create a short activity (20-25 minutes). The topic is going to be "Immigration." Here is what you need to do:

1) Imagine that you want to discuss immigration with a particular group of students. For example, if you teach Somali students, imagine that you need to create an activity for that particular audience.

2) Read about immigration (Noel, Chapter 3) and then go online to find more information about immigration patterns.

3) Select a specific sociocultural group to write about. I'd like this group to be different from your audience. For example, if your students are Somali, write about Chinese immigrants; if your students are Chinese, write about Czech immigrants, and so on.

4) Create a short activity to teach your students about that particular group of immigrants. Focus on the history and adaptation to life in North America.

I am not testing your ability to create a lesson plan. Rather, I would like you to study the history of a particular group's immigration in some detail and present that information to your students. If you are currently employed as a teacher or if you have taught before, please draw on your teaching experience to create this particular activity. If you have never taught before, please draw on your experience in other areas. Be creative.

What will your students be able to learn about this group?
What would you want to learn about this group if you were a student?
What would you do to expand this into a full-length unit?

Prompt #3

“Advocacy Statement”

This assignment has an element of role-play to it. Imagine the following situation. You teach in a public high school where 60% of the students qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Approximately 40% of your students are ELLs. While some of your ELLs are immigrants whose parents are either permanent US residents or naturalized US citizens, most of your ELLs are refugees and/or children of asylees. Many drop out. Over 20 languages are spoken in the school, but English is the only medium of instruction.

At a recent faculty meeting, it was announced that the school district's administration is considering switching from the difference orientation to the deficiency orientation (as discussed by Noel). As a result, many things will probably change: you will get new textbooks
that are based on the "deficiency" pedagogy, third-party teacher trainers will be brought in to help you adapt your lesson plans and make the transition to the "deficiency" model, and so on. You have been told that the administration believes the "deficiency" model will help the school district secure funds for remedial education programs and also increase the school district's graduation rates. Another faculty meeting has been called to discuss this idea.

Three scenarios are possible. Please pick one:

1) You like the "deficiency" orientation and support the decision to switch to the "deficiency" orientation.
2) You like the "difference" orientation and do not support the decision to switch to the "deficiency" orientation.
3) You think both can be used in the classroom and thus want to propose a third model (your own).

You will have the microphone for about five minutes. In approximately 500 words, explicate your position in a logical fashion. Avoid being emotional, but instead focus on constructing a logical argument. Be sure to mention the multiple intelligences theory, learning styles, and your students' needs.

**Philosophy of teaching multicultural learners**

Length: 1200-1500 words (excluding the References page), double-spaced.

This final paper is an opportunity to show that you understand complex issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity in the 21st century classroom and the theory and pedagogy of multicultural education. It is an opportunity to demonstrate that you are willing to accommodate diverse learners in your classroom. You are welcome to draw on our readings and other relevant literature as well as what you have learned from our discussions. Please have another look at the three papers you have written – you may be able to find ideas that can be incorporated into your final paper. The final product will be a coherent statement of teaching philosophy in which you will position yourself as an expert on cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD).

Imagine that you want to apply for a new teaching job or that you need to submit a statement of teaching philosophy to keep your job. You need to demonstrate that you can teach diverse student populations effectively. What makes you an effective CLD teacher? What is your role as a teacher who understands multicultural students' needs? A teacher who is prepared for challenges associated with teaching diverse students is able to define culture, align learning objectives (including ESL literacy) with this orientation, and express his/her opinion. Please offer evidence of practice, provide concrete, specific examples, and demonstrate that you understand these challenges. Explain how your own praxis is learner-centered and what you do to create an inclusive learning environment for CLD students.
Rubric (10 = best, 1 = worst):

1) Grounding in practical experience and theory: The teacher clearly shows an understanding of theory as it relates to his/her practical experience teaching multicultural learners (e.g., specific teaching techniques and strategies), is able to cite relevant sources and explain their relevance to the issues being discussed and his/her context, and positions himself/herself as a teacher-scholar who understands connections between theory and praxis (1→10).

2) Evidence of reflective practice: The teacher critically examines his/her own intercultural personhood and identity, presents himself/herself as an educator who learns from students and peers, and explains how he/she creates an inclusive learning environment based on this dialogue with himself/herself and with his/her students (1→10).

3) Cross-cultural awareness: The teacher shows that he/she is an individual who has done research related to specific sociocultural groups that he/she works with and demonstrates potential as a cross-cultural teacher-scholar (1→10).

4) Coherence and format: The statement is coherent, the paper is structured logically (introduction/body/conclusion) and has been proofread, and all sources are properly cited using the APA format (6th edition) (1→10).

Total: 40 points.

A short PowerPoint presentation is required (10 minutes). As with many of the things we will have done by this point, this assignment is based on something that teachers are often required to do. Specifically, it has become standard practice in our profession to require teachers to be able to create and present a statement of teaching philosophy – this one will focus specifically on working with ELLs and other CLD students. I hope that you will not treat this assignment as just another paper.

Remember that I am primarily interested in a demonstration of your understanding and knowledge of what we have been talking about and your potential as a multicultural educator. As with any assignment, I look at this as a dialogue between us.

One final note: while you will be able to find plenty of examples and samples online, I do not expect you to follow any specific format other than what is in line with the general guidelines in #4 (above). If you have ever had to hire teachers, you probably know that there are applications that stand out, and then they are those that do not. First and foremost, I would like your paper to be coherent and centered on the message that you can teach multicultural learners. Please deliver this message in a way that is both unique to you and context-appropriate.