“We don’t see the things the way they are. We see things the way WE are.” - *Talmund*

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**Reflective Practice in Early Childhood Teaching and Learning**  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
CURRINS 512, Section 2  
Fall, 2013

**Instructor:** Jesús Castellón  
**E-mail:** castell2@uwm.edu  
**Office hours:** by appointment only  
**Class location and hours:** END 384, W, 6:00 pm – 8:40 pm  
**Dates:** Sept. 4 – Dec. 11, 2013

**Course Description**

In previous coursework you have explored how the broader socio-cultural-historical contexts of education shape teaching and learning in classrooms. Yet, we often find that teacher candidates struggle to integrate these kinds of understandings into their personal frames of reference and ways of making meaning as educators. Often teacher candidates need more than one course and several dissonance-creating experiences over time in order to begin to incorporate new information related to the social (particularly urban) contexts of education into their worldviews.

In this course, early childhood education majors will engage in the process of inquiry into and reflection upon how their own socio-culturally framed positions of race, socio-economic status (SES), gender, and sexuality will influence both the schooling experiences they create and the educational outcomes of the young children they will teach. We will then explore how these socio-cultural positions shape the meaning we make about our professional practice in the urban setting, including frames of reference around pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction.

We begin this exploration by revisiting our understandings of culture and how it is implicated in curriculum and instruction. We will carefully examine the idea of “cultural framing.” In other words, how will our own identities and social positions related to race, SES, gender, and sexuality influence our actions, perceptions, and sense of responsibility as teachers in classrooms? We will focus on how our worldviews and cultural perspectives impact how we design and develop curriculum, how we enact instruction, how we think of ourselves as teachers, and how we engage with children as learners. We will examine how these identities and the frames they produce either constrain educational opportunities in the classroom or can enhance educational opportunity for all children. A process of inquiry and reflection will be used to help students grapple conceptually with the issues of equity and diversity and then begin to explicitly connect and incorporate these into their own ways of making meaning about teaching and learning. Finally, we will explore what shifts in beliefs and worldviews mean for students’ roles and responsibilities as professional educators of young children.
Course Objectives

- Students will come to understand the socio-culturally constructed nature of their normative beliefs related to race, SES, gender, language diversity and sexual orientation.

- Students will explore and reflect upon how the above constructions circumscribe educational opportunities and outcomes for children across social groups and, in particular, in relationship to young children in urban areas.

- Students will examine and reflect upon how and why their own socio-culturally positioned identities have shaped their own educational trajectories and thus frame and influence the ways they make meaning related to teaching and learning.

- Students will understand how their own culturally constructed beliefs shape the ways they view and enact pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction as teachers in classrooms, thus affecting educational opportunities and outcomes within their classrooms.

- Students will reflect upon their roles and responsibilities as educators in mediating and altering educational and social inequity as manifested across social identity groups, thus coming to understand their roles as cultural agents.

Course Expectations and Requirements

A Note on Teaching Methods - Though short lectures will sometimes be provided, this is not a lecture-based course. Passive learning is not the objective. We will work diligently to create and model a supportive learning community where responsibility for individual and group learning falls to each member of the group. We will work together to construct the knowledge and changes in thinking that emerge from this course. A variety of participation structures will be utilized to advance the course objectives including large group discussion, small group activities, and individual reflection.

If you require any accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, I am more than happy to help. Please let me know as soon as possible.

1. Initial Teaching and Learning Statement (5%): Due Class Session 2 (Wed., September 11)

   You will develop an autobiographical account of your schooling experiences. In this account you must report on the factors that explain your performance in school and your matriculation to the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. The guide for this assignment can be found on the D2L website.
2. **Class Participation and Informal Assignments** (25%)

Our goal is to develop a community of learners where students are responsible not only for their own learning, but for that of the group as a whole. As they say, none of us are as smart as all of us! We will expect that you learn the names of the other students in the class and engage with them in knowledge construction and critical thinking.

This is a discussion based course, and students are as responsible as the instructor to make class sessions productive. Students are expected to **participate vigorously and thoughtfully** in class discussions. Thus, all pre-assigned reading tasks **must be completed before** the class for which they are assigned. Often you will be provided with guiding questions that are designed to structure your reading of the assigned texts. In addition to having thought through the answers to such questions **before the start of class**, you should be able to summarize the main argument(s) and/or central concepts for each excerpt or text that is assigned. In those instances when you are not provided with guiding questions **you are expected to come to class with questions or issues from the reading that you found central or worthy of further exploration**. You should keep a **written record** of questions and/or issues that arise in the process of completing the reading. You **will be randomly called upon to introduce those issues or questions for class discussion.** Please note that the course participation grade will emphasize the quality and thoughtfulness of your participation in the class rather than the quantity of responses.

3. **Near Weekly Reflective, Research, Analytical, and Case Study Assignments:** (35%)

These “Short” Writing Assignments will support you in critically reflecting on the readings, on your field experiences, on curricular materials, and on the relationships between larger social constructions of culture and your own views of teaching, learning, children, and families. Eight short formal written assignments are assigned that will provide you with the opportunity to engage the topics of study via a variety of forms. You will choose six of these to complete (Writing Assignment #5 is required). (In other words you can opt “out” of two of these.) On the weeks that you opt out of the formal written assignment you still should keep written notes from your reading to aid in your class participation. **All of these assignments should be submitted via D2L.** In most cases it will take a minimum of 2-3 pages of single spaced writing/typing in order to adequately address the discussion.

Please keep a **copy of each of your written assignments** as you will need them to complete your Revised Teaching and Learning Statement. Assignments should be typed in 12 point font with 1 inch margins. Each written assignment is due by 11:59 pm on the due date. If you turn the written assignments in by the listed due date, feedback will be given and you will be able to revise them if needed. **If you turn the written assignments in after the due date, you will not have the opportunity to revise them for a better grade.**
Note: The ultimate, final due date for all Short Writing Assignments is 11:59pm on **Wednesday, December 11th**. Any short writing assignments turned in after this time will not receive credit.

4. **Passions and Inspirations Journal** (15%) (Weekly Entry; required beginning the week of **September 4th (Wed.)** – minimum of 14 entries total.

Given that this course is about reflective practice, I would like you to develop the dispositions and habits of mind of a reflective professional. The act of reflection is very personal; therefore you will receive a pass/fail grade for this assignment and not a letter grade. I will however, collect these to read and comment on them periodically throughout the semester. **Please bring the journal with you to class each session. Failure to do so will result in loss of participation points for that day.**

Your weekly entry should relate to anything that inspires you or speaks to your passions about teaching and learning that you experience that week. You can keep quotes from your readings that resonate with you. You can share things that happen in field placements that make you think about your role as an early childhood educator. You can reflect on your thinking about our class discussions, or take notes as ideas you want to remember arise. It is up to you how to organize the journal and what you choose to include. At times in class, I will also ask you to complete reflections for the journal.

**Part of your final paper will include a review of the journal and an overview reflection.** Specifics for this will be included in the assignment guide for the final paper.

5. **Revisited Teaching and Learning Statement** (20%): **Sunday, December 15th, 11:59pm to D2L**

In this culminating project students will offer a reassessment of their Initial Teaching and Learning Statement. Students will report upon how their understandings of their own educational experiences have changed (or not) over the course of the semester. Students must discuss how these shifts (or lack thereof) are relevant to how they now think about their roles and responsibilities as teachers, pedagogy, curriculum and instruction.

### Grading

- Class Participation and Informal Assignments 25%
- Initial Teaching and Learning Statement 5%
- The Short Writing Assignments 35%
- Passions and Inspirations Journal 15%
- Revised Teaching and Learning Statement 20%
The final course grade will be determined as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94 - 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>87 – 89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77 – 79.9%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 - 93.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>84 – 86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>74 – 76.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 – 83.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70 – 73.9%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>60 – 63.9%</td>
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The grade of a C or better must be earned in this course in order for it to fulfill the professional requirements of the Early Childhood Certification program. This course cannot be taken for credit/no credit.

**Required Texts**


- Additional required readings are available via the D2L course site.

> Note: These are relatively accessible trade books and can be obtained through regular library check out both at the UW-M library and at the Milwaukee Public Library. Used copies of the books may also be available in used book stores or via the internet. Please check with your instructor if you need assistance obtaining the books.

**Early Childhood Education Attendance Policy**

In the ECE Program we believe strongly that the development of strong relationships supports us in creating productive learning communities, a model that we hope you take with you into your professional work as a classroom or childcare teacher. All of the program/professional courses are interactive and discussion based. Missing class means missing the interaction and the collaborative construction of knowledge. It is difficult if not impossible to make this up. Thus, we take attendance and participation in class very seriously. So, for any ECE program class, more than two absences will require you to submit a letter of explanation to the Early Childhood Committee, and may result in the requirement to retake the course. More than three absences may result in a failing grade in the course.

For CURRINS 512, students are expected to **attend every class, on time**. Class attendance will be taken and tardiness and early departures noted. If you must miss any class or any part of a class, please contact the instructor ahead of time, **explaining** the reason for your absence.
Failure to do so will result in a loss of the points for that class. Each class session is worth 5 points for a total of 70 points. If you do need to miss class, you are still required to complete all readings and assignments for that class. In addition you will need to complete a 2-3 page reflection on the readings that were due for that day. For submission of this reflection paper you can earn up to 3 class points for that day. **This reflection is due no later than one week after the missed class, and will not be accepted after that.**

**Early Childhood Technology Policy**

We realize that cell phones and laptop computers are a mainstay of student life for many of you. Should you find it necessary to bring a cell phone to class, please turn it off before class begins. If you are expecting an emergency call, please notify the instructor before class begins and step out into the hallway to take your call. Text messaging during class is strictly prohibited, and will result in the loss of your participation points for that day. Taking class notes on your laptop is allowed, but engaging in web surfing, checking email, or completing work for other classes during 512 is not. Again, these activities will result in the loss of your participation points for that class period.

**A final, personal comment**

If you are having difficulties of any sort in the course – with presentations, discussions, reading, writing, classmates, or the instructor – I encourage you to meet with me to discuss your concerns. I am working to make this the best learning experience possible and I am always open to suggestions and feedback. It is also helpful to provide feedback on what is working. Making this a challenging, productive, and successful learning experience is my fundamental goal and I need your input and student perspective to achieve this.
Agenda/Topics

Note that this is a tentative schedule. Given the developmental nature of teaching, learning, and coming to deep understandings of the ideas/concepts for this course I will likely find it necessary to amend this calendar. I will provide you with weekly assignment guides outlining what must be prepared for the following week’s class, should the assignment differ from the syllabus. All readings are available on the D2L course site. Please bring your readings to class to support class discussion (printed or in electronic format).

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<tr>
<th>Class Session</th>
<th>Session Focus</th>
<th>Readings Due</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1</strong> Wed. 9/4</td>
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<td><em>Course Introduction</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Self-Disclosure Inventory</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Introduction to Learning Community</em></td>
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<td><strong>Session 4</strong> Wed. 9/25</td>
<td>Social and Cultural Capital in Education</td>
<td>Ways with Words (Heath): Introduction and Chapters 1-4.</td>
<td>Writing Assignment #1 (Exploring Identity)</td>
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<td><strong>Session 5</strong> Wed. 10/2</td>
<td>Social and Cultural Capital in Education, cont.</td>
<td>Ways with Words (Heath): Chapters 5-9 and Epilogue.</td>
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<td><strong>Session 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;Wed. 10/16</td>
<td><em>Case Studies of SES: Parental Involvement and School Funding</em></td>
<td>You will work in a Learning Group and you will read one article from each of the following reading sets:</td>
<td>Writing Assignment #3 (Parental Involvement Interview)</td>
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<td><strong>Session 9</strong>&lt;br&gt;Wed. 10/30</td>
<td><em>Constructions of Gender and Opportunities for Learning</em></td>
<td>○ SchoolGirls (Orenstein)</td>
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<td><strong>Session 12</strong>&lt;br&gt;Wed. 11/20</td>
<td><em>Making Meaning of Race in Schools and in Teaching – Part 1</em></td>
<td>○ Race in the Schoolyard (Lewis) (Ch. 1-4)</td>
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<td><strong>Session 13</strong>&lt;br&gt;Wed. 12/4</td>
<td><em>Making Meaning of Race in Schools and in Teaching – Part 2</em></td>
<td>○ Race in the Schoolyard (Lewis) (Ch. 5-7)</td>
<td>Writing Assignment #7 (A Race Case)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Session</td>
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<td>Assignments Due</td>
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(Community Event) and  
Writing Assignment #8  
(Movie Critique) |

*Writing Assignments #5 (Community Event) and Assignment #8 (Movie Critique) have rolling due dates, but must be completed by Wednesday, December 11, 2013.*

Writing Assignment #5 is REQUIRED. All others are your choice.

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**Revisited Teaching and Learning Statements**

**Due: Sunday, December 15th, 11:59pm**

Papers submitted after the due date will be awarded 50% of the final grade on the assignment.

*Please submit to the D2L drop box.*
Uniform Syllabus Policies

University Policies. Each syllabus will provide the following link to the Secretary of the University Web site (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf) that contains the following University policies:

1. *Students with disabilities.* Notice to these students should appear prominently in the syllabus so that special accommodations are provided in a timely manner.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf

2. *Religious observances.* Accommodations for absences due to religious observance should be noted.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm

3. *Students called to active military duty.* Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty should be noted.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S40.htm

4. *Incompletes.* A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf

5. *Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment).* Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf

6. *Academic misconduct.* Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html

7. *Complaint procedures.* Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S49.7.htm

8. *Grade appeal procedures.* A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm

9. *Other.* The final exam requirement, the final exam date requirement, etc.
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm