

University of Massachusetts/Amherst

School of Education

Course Syllabus

for

Education 559

## Curriculum Development in Multicultural Education

Professor Sonia Nieto

Bilingual, ESL, Multicultural Practitioner Area  
and  
Language, Literacy, and Culture Doctoral Research Area

Spring 2002 Semester

## General Information

Course Title: Curriculum Development in Multicultural Education

Credits: 3

Meeting Time: Mondays, 4:00-6:30 P.M.

Classroom: 21A Furcolo

Instructor: Sonia Nieto

Office: Furcolo Hall, Room 210

Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30-4:00 P.M. or by appointment

Phone: 545-1551

FAX: 545-2879

email: snieto@educ.umass.edu

Messages: May be left in the mailbox outside my office, the faculty mailbox outside Room 109, on my voicemail, or through email

Required texts:

1. Bigelow, B., Christensen, L., Karp, S., Miner, B., & Peterson, B. (Eds.) (1994). *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice* (volumes 1 & 2). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools.
2. Fried, R. L. (1995). *The passionate teacher: A practical guide*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Available at:

Food for Thought Bookstore  
106 No. Pleasant Street  
Amherst, MA.  
253-5432 (Open Monday-Saturday, 10 A.M.-6 P.M.)

## Course Description

“... it can be reasonably argued that the schools’ curriculum is a mind-altering device.”

Elliot Eisner

This course has been designed for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and inservice teachers who want to explore frameworks, materials, and strategies that will help them translate the philosophy of multicultural education into effective educational practice with learners of any age, level, or background. Accordingly, the course focuses on approaches to curriculum consonant with a multicultural perspective.

More specifically, the course has been designed to meet the following general goals. It will help class members:

1. Develop a conceptual framework for multicultural education.
2. Become aware of ways to organize and design multicultural curriculum.
3. Explore various approaches to structuring and sequencing multicultural learning activities.
4. Become familiar with a wide variety of resources in multicultural curriculum and learn how to evaluate and select materials.
5. Apply various multicultural approaches to teaching, including those that utilize dialogical and cross-cultural techniques.
6. Examine culturally-sensitive methods of assessing student needs and learning preferences, evaluating the effectiveness of multicultural curricula, and assessing student learning.
7. Develop multicultural curriculum that can be used in actual educational settings.

*If you have any condition, such as a physical or sensory disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it or which will require extra time on examinations, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course so that we may make appropriate arrangements.*

## **Course Outline**

Introduction

I. Conceptual Framework for Multicultural Education:  
Rationale, Definition, and General Goals

II. Models of Multicultural Curriculum Development

III. Structure of Multicultural Curriculum

A. Subject matter, concepts, and themes related to multicultural issues

B. Educational objectives

C. Sequencing learning activities

IV. Multicultural Resources and Learning Activities

A. Identifying multicultural resources

B. Evaluating multicultural curriculum materials

C. Instructional approaches with multicultural perspectives

D. Community involvement in curriculum development

V. Assessment and Evaluation

A. Assessing student learning styles and implications for curriculum

B. Evaluating student learning

C. Evaluating curriculum effectiveness

Summary and Evaluation

## Course Format, Grading, and Requirements

### Course Format

The course will usually be conducted in a workshop format, and you are expected to be active participants. While occasional lectures will be given, much of the class time will be spent in dialogue, review of materials, curriculum exercises, and presentations concerning questions related to curriculum development with a multicultural perspective. You are encouraged to offer suggestions anytime during the semester for altering the focus on the course toward your interests, needs, and priorities.

Many of the class activities will revolve around the curriculum project. We will not meet as a whole group on April 1 or April 29 so that you can meet with your curriculum group to work on the curriculum project. Also, during most class sessions, you will have the opportunity to work in your curriculum groups for part of the period to review some aspect of the curriculum you are developing.

### Grading

You are free to choose either a grade or a Pass/Fail option for this course. Please let me know by the second class session ( February 11) which you prefer.

### Course Requirements

- A. Attendance/participation/readings notebook
- B. Oral Presentation
- C. Curriculum Critique
- D. Term Project: Curriculum

Each of these requirements is described in more detail below.

#### **A. Attendance/Participation/Readings Notebook**

Since you are expected to participate in many in-class activities, please make every effort to attend all class sessions. (We will not be meeting on April 1 or April 29).

To prepare readings for our class discussions, maintain a notebook in which you keep notes on each of the readings. Analyze each reading in light of your curriculum project, keeping in mind such questions as:

- how does this reading advance the ideas I have for the project?
- what can I use from this reading in my project?
- what are the implications of using these ideas?

I will expect everyone to be prepared to discuss the readings each week. The notebook should be turned in on May 6.

### **B. Oral Presentation**

You are expected to work in committees of 3-5 to develop a half-hour presentation in a form that is both interesting and informative on a curriculum issue related to multicultural education. Descriptions of topics for the critiques can be found at the end of the syllabus, but you may choose other topics related to multicultural curriculum if you like. The committee group will be evaluated on how well you prepare, organize, and present your topic, as well as on the group process you follow. No written paper is required. You should be prepared to select a topic by the second class session (February 11).

### **C. Curriculum Critique**

You are expected to review and critique an actual multicultural curriculum. Many examples can be found in the Multicultural Resource Room (203 Furcolo), or you may choose one from your classroom or school. In your presentation, you should describe the criteria you are using to evaluate it and demonstrate how you used it. The curriculum critique will be presented orally on Monday, March 11.

### **D. Term Project**

The course revolves around the term project, which is the major requirement. For this project, you need to develop a comprehensive multicultural curriculum consisting of at least the following components:

1. Description of and rationale for the topic or theme of the curriculum.
2. Educational context for the curriculum: philosophical orientation to the topic and to teaching and learning in general; description of the educational setting; age level and sociocultural backgrounds of students; time required to implement; and so on.
3. Goals for the unit and their relationship to the general goals of multicultural education.
4. Description of learning activities and materials/media. Actual materials should be included whenever possible.
5. Description of instructional strategies to be used.
6. Lesson plans for at least 5 lessons.
7. Description of assessment methods for determining student growth and for evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum.

8. Any additional components or explanatory notes necessary for a coherent description of the curriculum (i.e., bibliography, “Information for Teachers,” relevant vocabulary, and so on).

Any of the above components may be modified for your particular curriculum.

You are expected to briefly present your basic idea for the term project by the third class session (Tuesday, February 19; we will be following a Monday schedule that day). As your project develops, you will make presentations in class on various components of the curriculum. These are intended to provide class members with critical feedback to help improve their projects.

The final product will be a 15-25 page paper and is due on the last class (May 13). In addition, you will be expected to present the curriculum as a “poster” at our BEM Curriculum Fair on that date. I’ll say more about this in class.

## **Selected Topics for Oral Presentations**

As one of the course requirements, committees groups will do an oral presentation on a topic related to multicultural education. I am available to suggest resources, but you will be expected to do research as a group to locate appropriate information about your topic. The following are examples of the issues you may wish to address, but you can also develop your own.

### **Topic 1: Critical Pedagogy**

Among the wide variety of pedagogical approaches used in schools, critical pedagogy seems to offer a promising alternative for multicultural curriculum. In your presentation, describe this approach and discuss its implications, benefits, and drawbacks for multicultural classrooms. Also, give some examples of what it might look like in actual classrooms.

### **Topic 2: Cultural Differences in Learning**

Some research suggests that certain cultural differences in the learning styles and patterns of cognitive processing exist among different ethnic groups. Consequently, some researchers argue that students who differ from the dominant group fail in school because their culture at home is at odds with the culture of the classroom, that is, that they fail because of *cultural discontinuities*. Other researchers have suggested that the major barrier to educational achievement for children from poor and working-class families is that they are not familiar with the discourse of power. Still others believe that it is primarily the sociopolitical context in which students live and learn that determines whether they learn. And some believe that all of these factors are at work (for a review of these theories, see my books *Affirming Diversity* and *The Light in Their Eyes*; see also Geneva Gay's book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*. These, and several others (see list of references at the end of this syllabus) are on reserve in the library for 3-day loan).

Do you believe this to be true? Present a case for or against this position. In your presentation, describe how cultural differences can be addressed in the school's curriculum. You may want to focus on a particular group (i.e., on schools for African American males, or on Indigenous or single-sex schools) or on cultural differences in a multicultural setting. Address the controversies, advantages, and pitfalls of using such a framework in curriculum development.

### **Topic 3: Parent and Family Involvement**

Although most school systems claim that parental participation is important, few provide mechanisms for involving families directly and meaningfully in curriculum development. Some educators believe that parents should not be involved because they know little or nothing about curriculum development (particularly parents who are poor, uneducated, and/or from culturally dominated groups).

Present your views on this issue. If you believe that parents can and should have a voice in curriculum decision-making, describe some ways in which it can be done, particularly in a multicultural setting.

### **Topic 4: Cooperative Learning**

Some instructional strategies may be more appropriate for multicultural classrooms than others. Cooperative learning, for instance, has been suggested as one effective way of incorporating varying academic levels and learning styles.

Discuss the rationale for cooperative learning and describe some of the strategies that come under this general heading. Give examples of each, providing specific ideas for lessons. Alternatively, you may want to discuss other instructional strategies including debates, journal and diary writing, the use of technology, individualized instruction, oral histories, and so on.

### **Topic 5: Assessment**

Traditional assessment has come under criticism for failing to take into account differences in culture, experience, and hidden abilities. Consequently, different school systems and states are investigating and experimenting with other assessment processes including portfolios. At the same time, the national educational reform movement is resulting in more calls for standardized testing, including “high stakes” testing (such as the MCAS in Massachusetts) that will determine whether or not students are promoted to the next grade and if they will graduate from high school.

In your presentation, discuss the implications of these two developments. How has high-stakes testing influenced the development of alternative assessments? how will it affect curriculum development? pedagogy? how will teachers’ roles change? You may want to focus on examples of innovative assessments that are being used in local and state systems, on efforts to use standardized tests more fairly, or on alternatives to them. You can also focus on recent attempts to challenge the MCAS in Massachusetts. You may want to contact FairTest in Cambridge, Mass., to begin your research (also see their listserv, ARN-L@listsrv.cua.edu).

### **Topic 6: Classroom Visits**

Instead of focusing on a curriculum issue, you may want to report on classroom visits with a view toward understanding how a multicultural curriculum is actually implemented. First, find a teacher or teachers who are known for their commitment to multicultural education and contact them to see if they will allow you to visit their classrooms. In order to do this, you should plan to visit a particular classroom for at least ten hours, preferably on different days (for example, 2 hours a week for 5 weeks) and different times of the day.

Your presentation should focus on the content of the curriculum, the materials used by the teacher and students, the instructional strategies, and the environment in the classroom. You may want to bring in photographs of the classroom (but not of the students, unless you have received permission from the parents to do so), examples of the students’ work, and other actual products. In addition, it would be a good idea to interview the teacher. Be prepared to give examples of how teachers make the curriculum multicultural in both apparent and subtle ways.

## Selected Related References

The following references are initial resources that can help you with your committee's oral presentation and the development of your curriculum. This is simply a preliminary list and you are expected to seek out other references on your own.

Apple, Michael W. *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (1993).

\* Banks, James A. *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies* (6th ed., 1997).

◇ Banks, James. A. and Cherry A. McGee Banks (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (1995).

\* Bennett, Christine. *Comprehensive Multicultural Education* (4th ed., 1999).

Cohen, Elizabeth G. *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom* (2nd ed., 1994).

Cummins, Jim. *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society* (1996).

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)

\* Gay, Geneva. *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (2001).

\* Grant, Carl A. and Christine E. Sleeter. *Turning on Learning: Five Approaches for Multicultural Teaching* (2nd. ed., 1998)

Lee, Enid, Menkart, Deborah, & Okazawa-Rey, Margo. *Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development* (1998).

\* Nieto, Sonia. *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (2nd rev. ed., 1996).

\* Nieto, Sonia. *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (2000).

Perry, Theresa and James W. Fraser (Eds.), *Freedom's Plow* (1993).

\* Schiendewind, Nancy and Ellen Davidson. *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity* (2nd ed., 1998)

Sleeter, Christine E. and Carl A. Grant. *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender* (3rd ed., 1999).

Walsh, Catherine E. *Literacy as Praxis* (1991).

◇ Available in the Reference section of the W.E.B. Du Bois Library

\* Available for three-day reserve in the W.E.B. Du Bois Library