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Office Hours: By appointment, Tues, 4:00-6:00 p.m. and Wed, 12:00-2:00 p.m.

**LRC 595a-2, Spring 2012**  
**Issues in Language, Reading and Culture: Curriculum as Inquiry**

Inquiry is a stance on learning, a set of beliefs that we hold as educators which influence our pedagogical decisions and actions. Inquiry involves a process of problem-posing and problem-solving as learners develop a critical lens on the word and the world in order to take action for social change. In this course, we will consider the perspective of curriculum as inquiry and the theoretical and practical implications of this view of curriculum. In particular, we will examine the inquiry cycle and the importance of conceptual connections to students' lives, invitations for students to expand their knowledge and experiences, and student-initiated investigations on compelling issues and tensions. This cycle will be explored through examples from classrooms as well as engaging in small group discussion and work. Specific issues of practice related to moving to student-initiated inquiry will be addressed along with the role of the teacher in guiding and supporting students as inquirers. Particular approaches to inquiry, such as Reggio Emilia and Problem-Based Learning, will be explored as well as implications for inquiry with a range of age levels, from young children to adults, and in a range of global settings.

An understanding of curriculum is at the heart of what we do as educators. Often the term "curriculum" brings to mind textbooks, teachers' guides, course syllabi, district mandates, published programs, and standards. From this perspective, curriculum is a program that is mandated by external "experts" and implemented by educators. We will explore curriculum as putting a system of beliefs into action. Curriculum thus becomes a process of professional decision-making to figure out how to we can enact our beliefs as educators in our teaching contexts. Our understandings about curriculum support us in making long-range plans as well as day-to-day decisions with students. These understandings also allow us to connect theory and practice. To make these connections, we create organizational frameworks to support decision-making and to move from beliefs to practice. Within this particular course, we will look at beliefs related to inquiry and how those might be integrated into a curricular framework within your own setting and interests as an educator.

Our class experiences are based on the following beliefs about learning:

- Learning is a process of inquiry.  
As learners we need to search out the questions that matter in our lives and develop strategies for exploring those questions and sharing our understandings with others.
- Learning is an active process.  
We will immerse ourselves in "doing" inquiry as well as reading and responding to professional books, articles, and literature.
- Learning is a social process of collaborating with others.  
We will explore our thinking through dialogue and small group engagements. We will engage in inquiry with others who have similar questions.
- Learning occurs as we make connections to our own experiences and as we explore tensions with our current beliefs.  
Responses to readings and inquiry explorations will focus on making connections to our lives and teaching experiences. We will share ideas and concerns from our teaching and professional experiences and will pursue inquiry projects that relate to our current interests and tensions.
- Choice allows learners to connect to their experiences and feel ownership in their learning

We will have choices in what we read, how we respond, and the specific focus of projects and activities.

- Learning is reflective as well as active.  
We will have many opportunities to reflect on what we are learning through writing, talking, sketching, webbing, and self-evaluations.
- Learning occurs in a multicultural world with many ways of knowing.  
We will explore readings and inquiry engagements that reflect diverse cultural perspectives on the world and build on the diversity of cultural experiences and perspectives of class members.

### **Course Readings:**

Short, K. & Burke, C. (1991). *Creating Curriculum*. Heinemann

Short, K. & Harste, J. (1996). *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*. Heinemann.

Erickson, Lynn. (2007). *Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom*. Corwin Press.

Selected professional book related to curriculum focus

Articles and chapters on D2L

### **Course Structure**

The framework for this course is the inquiry cycle. The first part of the course will focus on exploring the broad concept of “learning/inquiry” through reflections on your experiences and readings and through discussions of curriculum and curriculum frameworks. The second part of the course will focus on examining the Inquiry Cycle as one particular example of a curricular framework for inquiry and we will live an example of the cycle using the big idea of journeys. The third section of the course will focus on your own interest areas within curriculum as inquiry and involve exploring other curricular frameworks and approaches to inquiry as well as small group inquiries. These groups will read related professional books and talk about their curricular plans and frameworks.

### **Learning Experiences:**

#### **1. Participation and attendance**

Attend class regularly and participate in discussions, sharing, small groups, inquiry engagements, and class activities. An essential aspect of participation is to read and prepare for inquiry engagements and discussions of the professional readings. Preparation and participation in class is significant, not only for your learning, but for the learning of others.

If you are absent or not prepared for a class session, your actions will have a significant impact on others in the class as well as on your own learning. If you absolutely must miss a class session due to illness, leave a message in advance at the LRC office (621-1311) or on e-mail. Contact a class member so that you are fully prepared for the next class meeting. Meet with me at the next class session to determine how you will make up the work for the class you missed. **More than one absence or excessive tardiness/leaving early will affect your grade for the course.** Your attendance and active participation in course engagements is highly valued and an essential aspect of the course.

## **2. Response Journal**

The purpose of the journal is for you to reflect on your readings of the professional articles and chapters and on your thinking about your own curriculum frameworks. Record your understandings, questions, and connections to these readings and to the area of curriculum on which you are focusing. The journal is a vehicle to reflect on important and difficult ideas and issues raised by our reading and your work on curriculum as inquiry in your setting.

## **3. Curriculum Framework for Inquiry**

Develop drafts of your own curriculum framework for inquiry within your setting. Write a short reflective paper indicating your rationale for this framework and explaining its components and possible uses.

## **4. Selected Professional Book on Curriculum as Inquiry**

Choose a professional book on inquiry to read for the area of curriculum that is of interest to you for your final inquiry project. Discuss this book in a small group setting, write a reflection on this book, and find a way to share your insights from this book with class members.

## **5. Participation in the TLS Graduate Student Colloquy- February 16, 2012**

The TLS Colloquy is a significant professional experience for all TLS graduate students. The colloquy is organized by graduate students to provide an opportunity for graduate students to present their work to each other as well as to hear a major speaker in the field. The colloquy brings together all members of the department, students and faculty, as a community to think about current research and larger political issues related to language, literacy and culture. The colloquy will include a keynote speaker in the early afternoon and in the evening as well as sessions where students present to students, and an evening meal. You are encouraged to attend the entire colloquy but are required to attend either the afternoon sessions or evening keynote as part of our course. Write a reflection on what you notice about the inquiry processes of the speakers in the sessions you attend.

## **5. Inquiry Project**

Your final inquiry should focus on some aspect of curriculum as inquiry that is a true inquiry for you – something that interests you or is causing you in tension in your own work as an educator. A project proposal will be due March 20. On this proposal, describe your project in as much detail as possible, including your rationale for undertaking the project and what you intend to do. Your project will be due May 1. The inquiry projects will be presented to other class members during the last two class sessions, May 1 and 8.

Project options include:

- a. Theoretical research or a literature review of a question or issue explored primarily through professional readings. You might want to read Dewey, Freire, etc. to get at the theoretical underpinnings of inquiry. You might want to read about sign systems or you might want to read what others have written about curriculum as inquiry. This project would involve reading and then writing a synthesis paper that pulls together what you read and the implications for your own thinking and work.
- b. Development of a curricular framework for organizing an inquiry-based curriculum in your context (course, professional workshop, classroom). This project involves creating broad curriculum structures and gathering supporting engagements and resources rather than planning

for a specific inquiry focus. It could include planning daily and weekly class schedules and blocks of time, deciding on the broad categories of your curriculum and then organizing materials and resources around those, gathering strategies such as webbing that you see as basic to your curriculum. This would probably take the form of a curriculum notebook organized around the categories you have identified for your curriculum.

- c. Creating a "planning to plan" document for a specific inquiry focus in your teaching context. This would include gathering resources and creating a web and plan of possibilities for an integrated concept or theme that you want to explore with students. This project would probably take the form of webs, plans, and lists of resources and books along with a reflection on what you did and how you plan to use it.
- d. Field-based classroom inquiry. Plan and implement a short unit of inquiry with your students. Record their responses and reflect on what you have learned from this experience and implications for future planning and curriculum. Another option would be to observe and interact in a classroom where the teacher is using an inquiry approach to curriculum.
- e. Learning something new. Choose an area or topic you know little about but are interested in and develop a plan for learning about that topic. The topic does not need to be school-related. It can be for your own personal learning or something you want to eventually examine with students but are just exploring for yourself right now. The focus is not developing an curriculum plan, but exploring the topic for yourself. Keep a journal about your learning - what you are learning and how you are going about the learning. Write a reflective paper on your learning process and the implications for you as an educator.
- f. Propose another option related to inquiry that relates to your interests and tensions.

As part of your inquiry, keep track of your process of inquiry including notes, rough drafts, artifacts, student work, etc. Some type of written "product" will be turned in. You will also write a self-evaluation of the process and product for your inquiry project.

## **6. Evaluation**

For each project, you will be asked to write a self-evaluation in which you state your goals for that project and evaluate the process you went through in reaching those goals as well as your final product. I will add my evaluative comments based on your statement of goals. You will also write a mid-term evaluation of your learning and the course that includes your goals for the rest of the semester and a final self-evaluation at the end of the semester.

Your final grade will be based holistically on both your and my evaluation of your growth and learning, the quality of your written work, and your attendance, participation, and preparation for class sessions. While you can negotiate the ways in which you define and complete class projects, you must complete all of these projects to fulfill course requirements and your final grade for the course will be based on the thoughtfulness and quality of this work with a B reflecting the completion of all course projects at a satisfactory level. Incompletes will not be given for the course except in extreme situations and only with prior approval by the instructor.

## University Policies

- Approved Absences All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion, Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students will be honored
- Students with Disabilities: If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Resources (621-3268; drc.arizona.edu) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations.
- Policies against plagiarism. <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies>
- Policies against threatening behavior <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/~policy/threaten.shtml>

## **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION, Language, Reading and Culture, University of Arizona**

The term "multicultural education" expresses the essential mission of the department and the university. Multicultural education is not just "about" certain subjects; it does not merely offer "perspectives" on education. It is an orientation to our purposes in education - and ultimately an orientation to life, one that values diversity of viewpoints and experiences and sees people as valuable contributors to the experience of school and society. Life in universities is a self-consciously multicultural. Learners bring a variety of linguistic and cognitive strengths from their families, communities and nations into the classroom; these strengths are resources to be appreciated as such by educators. Education must expand on the linguistic and cognitive strengths that learners already possess and bring with them to the classroom, rather than ignore or try to replace them with others. Respect and appreciation for cultural and community knowledge means that universities serve the interest of education when they allow for an exchange of views, rather than rely exclusively on a transmission model of instruction. We recognize the existence of a variety of communities - each with its own voice and interests - both within and outside the university; a broad education offers the opportunity to hear and study as many of these voices as possible. Such an accommodation must include those communities which have traditionally been excluded or underrepresented in the university. Recognition of the validity of these general principles must be reflected in our courses, our relations with students, staff and other faculty members, and in the community life of LRC.

### Tentative Schedule of Class Sessions

- January 17 Introduction to the course:  
What is curriculum and inquiry?
- January 24 Changing Our Minds: Learning about Learning  
Collection of artifacts on who you are as a learner and inquirer  
Read children's book for literature circle  
Bring diagrams on something you were successful in learning and something you abandoned.
- January 31 Changing Our Minds: Learning about Learning  
Bring a diagram or visual metaphor of your learning process  
Write a reflection on who you are as an inquirer and your inquiry processes  
Read Creating Curriculum, mark significant quotes
- February 7 The Inquiry Cycle as a Curricular Framework  
Read Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers, C. 1 and 4  
Bring data related to your investigations on learning/inquiry
- February 14 Creating a Conceptual Frame for Inquiry  
Read Erickson, C. 1-3  
Read book for literature circle on journeys  
Bring your life journey map
- February 16 TLS Graduate Student Colloquy
- February 21 Creating a Conceptual Frame for Inquiry  
Read Erickson, C. 4-6  
Readings related to forced journeys  
Reflections on inquiry processes from the colloquy
- February 28 Inquiry Cycle: Invitations and Investigations  
Read Freire and Van Sluys chapters  
Bring draft of own inquiry framework
- March 6 Inquiry Cycle  
Read Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers, C. 2 and 3, and Lave and Wenger excerpt  
Bring data for investigation on forced journeys  
Bring draft of own inquiry framework and reflection on the framework
- March 13 Spring Break
- March 20 Exploring Other Curricular Frameworks and Approaches to Inquiry  
Read Group Inquiry Book  
Mid-Term Reflection and final inquiry proposal
- March 27 Exploring Other Curricular Frameworks and Approaches to Inquiry  
Read Group Inquiry Book

April 3	Exploring Other Curricular Frameworks and Approaches to Inquiry Read Group Inquiry Book Meet in inquiry groups
April 10	Exploring Other Curricular Frameworks and Approaches to Inquiry Presentations on Group Inquiry Books Meet in inquiry groups
April 17	Issues related to inquiry Read Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers, C. 5 Meet in inquiry groups
April 24	Issues related to inquiry
May 1	Project Presentations - Final projects due
May 8	Project Presentations - Final reflections due