

EDCC 501 Creating Cultures of Change: Constructivist Environments
Eastern Mennonite University
Fall 2012

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Credit Hours: 3 semester hours

Class Schedule: Fridays, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Sept. 14-15, Sept. 28-29, Oct. 12-13, Oct. 26-27, Nov. 9-10

Course Description

This core course emphasizes concepts such as reflective practice, student centered learning, and processes for change. Applying a constructivist perspective, participants will learn how to become meaningful change agents in classrooms and school. Emphasis will be placed on integrating theory with the world of practice as participants work through models of change utilizing their first-hand experiences within their own classrooms and educational settings.

Conceptual Framework

“Preparing Caring, Reflective Teachers for a Changing World”

The EMU Teacher Education Program has chosen the theme *Preparing Caring, Reflective Teachers for a Changing World* as the conceptual framework from which its beliefs and outcomes are based. The Teacher Education Program envisions preparing informed lifelong leaders and learners who value the dignity of all persons and are ready and willing to share a pilgrimage of openness and continuous growth as they invite others to join them. These caring, reflective educators will offer healing and hope in a diverse world. Six performance outcomes focus all course and candidate outcomes.

Course Outcomes

Students successfully completing this course will:

1. Define and provide a rationale for constructivist practice from both professional and theoretical bases. (S, I, PK)
2. Critically examine personal assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning. (I, PK, C)
3. Plan for learning environments using constructivist practice. (C, Ca, L)
4. Enact constructivist practice through plan-act-observe-evaluate cycle. (PK)
5. Create classrooms where student inquiry is encouraged. (I)
6. Move toward the development of dispositions necessary to become transformative teacher leaders. (L)

M.A. in Education Program Outcomes

Scholarship: to acquire advanced knowledge through core curriculum and specialty area courses and to organize and integrate that knowledge into professional practice. (S)

Inquiry: to generate questions and to use critical thinking to self-assess, to view problems from multiple perspectives, to make informed decisions and to engage in action research for educational change. (I)

Professional Knowledge: to acquire advanced pedagogical and specialty area knowledge in order to create cultures of change and manage environments conducive to learning, setting high expectations and implementing appropriate instructional and assessment practices. (PK)

Communication: to develop communication strategies (verbal, nonverbal, and technological) which support collaboration and resourcefulness to empower self and others. (C)

Caring: to develop a nurturing spirit that advocates for students, encourages social and ethical responsibility, and promotes peacebuilding in diverse settings. (Ca)

Leadership: to act as social change agents by working collaboratively to bring about fair and just systemic change within educational contexts. (L)

Classroom Climate

As professional educators, the free discourse of ideas should be expected. The classroom is a space that thrives on the open exchange of ideas, thoughts, emotions, and convictions. You may find that some of the class readings and discussions challenge your views and theoretical frameworks. I expect you to be open to differences and maintain a willingness to interpret issues from frameworks that may or may not be quite so comfortable for you. I have opinions, which I may express from time to time. You are free to express either agreement or disagreement without fear of consequences. I may challenge your views or disagree with them, but be assured that you will experience no consequences for disagreeing with me. If you feel that I am violating this commitment, please make an appointment with me so that we can discuss the issue. Also, please be sensitive in your class participation by not unfairly dominating discussions. Be aware of others' right to speak and welcome questions from your classmates. My goal is to create a safe space in which everyone feels that they can participate. This does not mean people cannot disagree or that people cannot have emotions connected to their words. What it does mean is that we all need to be sensitive, appreciative, and respectful, no matter how strongly we might disagree (adapted from K. Roulston's syllabus at UGA and M. Sallee's syllabus at UTK).

Participation Requirements

Attendance

Your attendance and active participation is a strong indication of your commitment to not only this course, but to the teaching profession. Since much of this class involves interactive learning experiences with colleagues, no absences will be excused without a compelling reason and prior notification via email or phone. University policy includes lowering of grade for absences for a day or part of a day. An "A" grade cannot be earned by any student who misses a weekend or the equivalent.

Student Participation

Class participation is imperative so please come prepared and be on time to every session. Participation includes your ability to contribute to a safe and scholarly learning environment by exhibiting mutual respect and openness, as well as by demonstrating that you have read and prepared for class. Further, you will be expected to function in a leadership capacity at various points in the course. This may involve such activities as giving a short presentation, leading a discussion group, or participating in workshop activities as a leader.

Text and Assigned Readings

Required Text: Marlowe, B.A., & Page, M.L. (2005). *Creating and sustaining the constructivist classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

In preparation for class discussion, you will be asked to read assigned chapters from your text as well as additional outside readings on selected topics. Further, you will complete 3 journal reviews on specific topics. For each journal review, you will read between 15-30 pages of professional journal articles/books and present a short review/critique of the readings.

Journal Review 1: Assessment within Constructivist Classrooms

Journal Review 2: Principles of Instruction within Constructivist Classrooms

Journal Review 3: Creating Constructivist Climates of Justice and Caring

For each of the journal reviews, I will provide several options for readings and will assist you in finding readings that are relevant to your particular educational goals.

Assessment of Student Learning (ASL)

Throughout the course, you will work through the Assessment-Reflection-Instruction cycle with your K-12 students in order to document student learning (accommodations will be made for students who are not working in K-12 classrooms). Beginning with assessment, we will learn how to more effectively analyze student data and design/differentiate instruction based on that data using constructivist principles. Throughout the process, I will look for the ways in which you act as a reflective practitioner, making critical instructional decisions based on the needs of your students. This assignment will be broken up into several sections and we will complete a significant portion of the project together in class.

Interview Project

Based on an interview protocol, you will interview three (3) of your colleagues (teachers, principals, etc.) about constructivism and cultures of teaching and learning. The interview protocol will be collaboratively constructed during our class and will emerge from questions you continue to have about implementing constructivist principles in schools. The findings from the interview project will be the impetus for our discussion the final weekend about constructing cultures of change in schools.

Final Exam

You will write a 7-10 page paper that summarizes your own emerging understanding of constructivism in response to a given case study. In addressing the case study, you will consider the philosophical underpinnings of constructivism, express practical applications of constructivist learning theory, address critiques of constructivism, and consider ways to impact the learning environment of your school.

Expectation	Due Date
Attendance	Throughout
Participation	Throughout
Journal Review 1	Sept 29
Journal Review 2	Oct 13
Journal Review 3	Nov 10
ASL	Sept 28, Oct 12, Oct 26, Nov 9
Interview Project	Nov 9
Final Exam	Dec 3

Evaluation

The above projects will be graded holistically; your final grade for the course will be determined according to the whole of your performance and will be decided in collaboration between the student and the instructor. To receive an “A” in the course, students will have given careful attention and exemplary participation in each of the course requirements listed above and will have met minimum writing standards based on the graduate writing rubric. Students must be in class for 90% of the designated minutes and must turn in all assignments by the stated deadlines. Students who miss more than 10% of the class time will likely not receive higher than a “B” for the course. Further, students who fail to complete assignments by the expected deadlines will likely receive a “B” as well. Students who are not able to complete course requirements by the specified deadlines, or whose work is significantly below university standards, or who miss more than 20% of the sessions may receive a “C” or below.

Use of Graduate Level Writing Standards and American Psychological Association (APA) Writing Style: Candidates are expected to use *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 6th Edition* for written assignments including annotated bibliographies and references. Candidates citing references in Power Point references are also expected to use APA style. All instructors teaching in the Master of Arts in Education program are asked to apply the EMU Graduate Writing Standards to any written work submitted. The instructors may use their discretion if the assignment does not lend itself to the EMU Graduate Writing Standards rubric. Use of APA and the Graduate Writing Standards rubric ensures uniformity of writing standards and serves to prepare enrolled program candidates for writing their action research projects.

Writing Tutors: *Please take advantage of the free individual tutoring from our writing tutors. Writing tutors are strong writers who hold scheduled one-on-one sessions with students and are an excellent resource for writers at any level or at any stage in the writing process. Please remember that writing tutors do not provide an editing or proofreading service. They will help you put what you learn into practice and will work with you to improve your own proofreading and editing skills. To make an appointment, please contact Yvonne Martin or Don Steiner.*

Special Accommodations Statement: *EMU seeks to meet the needs of all admitted students. We are committed to provide both physical and programmatic access with reasonable accommodations for all qualified documented students who are served through Student Disability Support Services of the Academic Support Center. Our policies for students with disabilities are consistent with the necessity of ensuring reasonable accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988, the Americans with disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008.*

It is my desire to meet the learning needs of all of my students. If you have a specific need, please feel free to let me know and I will work with you to ensure that this learning situation is accommodating. Further Student Disability Support Services provides appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. Students can request assistance by calling Joy Martin at 540-432-4233 or by emailing her at joy.martin@emu.edu.

Academic Integrity: *Academic Integrity Policy (AIP): EMU faculty and staff care about the integrity of their own work and the work of their students. They create assignments that promote interpretative thinking and work intentionally with students during the learning process. Honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility are characteristics of a community that is active in loving mercy, doing justice, and walking humbly before God. EMU defines plagiarism as occurring when a person presents as one's own someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. (Adapted from the Council of Writing Program Administrators). [Taken from "Academic Integrity," 2011-12 Undergraduate Catalog.] This course will apply EMU's AIP (see catalog, pp. 16-19) to any events of academic dishonesty.*

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

Dates	Topic	Tentative Class Activities	Due BEFORE Class
Weekend 1 Sept. 14 – 15	Making the Case for Constructivism	Course Introduction Getting to Know You Teaching is... What happened to Susan Jackson? Constructivist Practices and Beliefs Reflective Cycle of Assessment and Instruction	Read: MP: Ch 1-3
Weekend 2 Sept. 28-29	Aligning Assessment with Objectives	Constructivist Practices Assessment Analysis Learning Objectives Classroom Learning Communities Emerging Understanding of Constructivism	Read: MP: Ch 4-5 Do: Bring assessment data Journal Review 1
Weekend 3 Oct. 12-13	Instructional Principles	Guiding Principles of Constructivism Byler Chair lecture Saturday am Designing Instruction Differentiating Instruction	Read: MP: Ch 9-10 Do: Lesson Plan Journal Review 2
Weekend 4 Oct. 26 – 27	Classroom Climate	Presentations of Teaching Event Reflections/Questions Peer Feedback on Reflective Cycle Classroom Climate/Caring	Read: TBA Do: Teaching Event Journal Review 3
Weekend 5 Nov. 9 – 10	Transformative Teacher Leadership	Interview Presentations Addressing Opposition Synthesizing Constructivism: What Have I Learned? Course Evaluation Discuss Final Exam	Read: MP: Ch 7 TBA Do: Interviews with Colleagues
Final Exam due by December 3			

Bibliography

This course is intended to be an introduction to constructivist theory and to the concept of reflective teaching espoused by EMU Education Department (see graduate catalog and Teacher Education Handbook). The following sources provide the knowledge base for this course and are recommended resources for teachers seeking more understanding of constructivism. An updated bibliography will be provided at the end of the course representing the resources presented throughout the course.

Airasian, P. W., & Walsh, M. E. (1997). Constructivist cautions. *Kappan*, 78, 444-449.

Brooks, J. G. (2002). *Schooling for life: Reclaiming the essence of learning*. . Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Brooks, J. G. & Brooks, M.G. (1999). *The case for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Combs, A. W. (Ed.) (1962). *Perceiving, behaving, becoming: A new focus for education*. Washington, DC: ASCD.

Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Silva, D. (2003). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and education*. New York: Macmillan (first published, 1915.)

Educational Leadership. *The constructivist classroom*. Vol. 57, No. 3 November, 1999. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Fosnot, C.T. (Ed.). (2005). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives and practice* 2nd Ed. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gagnon, G. W., Jr., & Collay, M. (2001). *Designing for learning: Six elements in constructivist classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Gagnon, G.W., Jr. & Collay, M. (2006). *Constructivist learning design: Key questions for teaching to standards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Henderson, J. G. (1996). *Reflective teaching: The study of your constructivist practices*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Katz, M. S., Noddings, N., & Strike, K. A., (eds). (1999). *Justice and caring: The search for common ground in education*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Martinello, M. L., & Cook, G. E. (2000). *Interdisciplinary inquiry in teaching and learning*. New York: Macmillan.
- Nieto, S. (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* Columbia University: Teacher's College Press
- Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Regan, T. G., Case, C. W., & Brubacher, J. W. (2000). *Becoming a reflective educator* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Rosebrough, T. R., & Leverett, R. G. (2011). *Transformational teaching in the information age: Making why and how we teach relevant to students*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Slattery, P. (1995) *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Weber, E. (2005). *MI strategies in the classroom and beyond: Using roundtable learning*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Zahorick, J. A. (1995). *Constructivist teaching: Fastback*. Bloomington, IN: PDK Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (1996). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.