

## **FDN 2400 Critical Perspectives on Teaching and Learning**

### **The Inquiry Project**

#### Situating One's Self, Becoming a Teacher

Your Inquiry Project is composed of two parts:

- A. Social Justice Synthesis (Analysis of our world using concepts and tools developed in FDN 2400). (3-5 pages).
- B. Reflection on Teaching and Learning (You in the world.) (3-5 pages).

The two pieces together ask that you combine an ability to reflect on teaching and learning (B) with an understanding of theories and issues of social justice that we are exploring in FDN 2400 (A).

Everything we study in FDN 2400 has been designed to help you better understand schools, curriculum, students and yourself as part of a larger world. This larger world functions in part through systems and structures you can analyze and apply to better understand both schooling and the experiences of individual children in school. This ability to analyze allows you to better connect with and support your future students in authentic and powerful ways.

One of the approaches we take in this course is to explore concepts that help you to understand how negative educational outcomes might come about. We do this with an eye to finding ways in which schooling might become a positive experience for more children. In this regard we make two assumptions: certain children may be similar to you, but others may have experiences and identifications with which you will be unfamiliar.

This Inquiry Project asks you to engage your knowledge and your budding skills to reflect on and ready who you are, who you are becoming – that is, your “dispositions” -- so that you can be the teacher who makes a difference in the lives of students. You are developing your initial ability to do this. Practice here, in this project, by using these developing parts of yourself *before* you are a teacher with a room full of students.

The Inquiry Project will be scored based on the rubric that is available on our syllabus. The project is worth 20% of your grade. But more than that, I hope you will grow as a person and as a future educator.

As a whole, this project will:

- a. Define/unpack the meaning of social justice as it relates to education;
- b. Connect to and build upon course questions, themes, and materials;
- c. Ground your analyses in well-articulated and clearly supported arguments;

- d. Explore a “living question” (something about which you care) as it relates to your understanding of teaching and learning at this point in your life; and
- e. Examine issues from multiple perspectives. That is, know your own perspective and be able to articulate it, but also be able to understand and articulate the perspective of others quite different from you.

A. Social Justice Synthesis (3-5 pages) – Possible forms are listed below. Please feel free to explore another. (See point 4, below.)

1. Scholarly Research: For example, you could trace an issue through its historical and contemporary manifestations in schools.
2. Case Study: Explore an experience or scenario (from self-reflection or course materials) that impacts schooling. Use the lenses we have worked with to allow you to place this experience or case study in a larger perspective, one this class has helped you develop.
3. Conceptual Analysis: Consider all the issues of social justice addressed in this course and identify, then analyze a generative theme, such as:
  - a. “Learning does not happen if the teacher cannot ‘see’ the student. We all have a different narrative that explains how things came to be this way.
  - b. “The rules of power aren’t visible to those who hold power”
  - c. “Race and culture are social constructs”
  - d. “The system and structure of schools are spaces in which we navigate our identities”
  - e. “Teachers must learn to cross cultural borders”
4. There are limitless other possible forms. When you think of one, check it with me first so we are clear about your approach.

B. Reflection on Teaching and Learning (3-5 pages).

In this section of your Inquiry Project you will use what you learned and explored in Part A, above. I have suggested some questions as examples of how you might start your reflection. But this is *your* reflection. The questions below may not inspire you; please approach this as an opportunity to stake out your place as an educator as you see it now, at this point in your development.

- a. What are the knowledge, skills, and dispositions you believe to be important for you, as a learner and prospective teacher, to possess? That is, who do *you* need to be to teach well?
- b. Why teach? What motivates and sustains this goal? What will keep you going back to your students year after year, sharing in the process of learning with and from them, helping them to reach their potential as individuals and members of society?
- c. What kind of relationships do you hope to create between you (the teacher) and your students in the classroom? How do you want your future students to remember you?

- d. What are your roles and responsibilities toward the subject matter(s) you will teach? (Remember, connect this to your social justice synthesis in Part A.)
- e. According to many of the educational theorists we read this semester, all teachers must understand themselves as non-neutral social agents. You are an agent now, and you will be one as a teacher. What will you be an agent for? What, if any, issues will you be willing to take a stand on, or for which you will serve as an advocate?

C. Format for Your Inquiry Project

- a. A page is about 250 words when double-spaced, so use a font that gets you to approximately 250 words per page.
- b. Double-space the lines on your page. This makes it easier for me to read it.

**c. Save your paper with the following information in the title:**

LastName\_FirstName\_InquiryProject\_yoursection\_F2016.docx

For example, my paper would be saved with the title:

Turner\_Gayle\_InquiryProject\_103\_SF2016.docx

d. If you use an open source software to write your paper, you must still save it in MS Word format. You will do this by following these steps: In the program menu got to File > Save As > (select .doc or .docx or MS Word, depending on the options your software gives you) > Save

e. I. Send your Inquiry Project as an attachment in an email to [gayle@gayleturner.net](mailto:gayle@gayleturner.net). Use "Inquiry Project FDN 2400-(your section number)" as the subject line of your email message.

II. Upload your Inquiry Project to TK20

D. Due Date is Monday, December 5, 2016 at 11:30 PM.