



## Civil Discourse in the Classroom: Promoting Social Justice through Middle and High School Texts

**Number of Credits:** 1\*

**Course Instructors:** Miriam Woods, Jordan Mix

**Course Description:** With a renewed push to increase academic performance in the classroom, genuine conversations regarding social justice issues often get pushed to the side for assessments and data collection. While many district mission statements elude to the idea that the purpose of education is to develop a socially-aware citizenry, the space for that learning and development to occur is minimal, at best. For these conversations to occur, teachers need to actively select texts that engage students in critical thinking while also utilizing strategies to create civil discourse surrounding topics which are often controversial.

The purpose of this course is to challenge teachers to intertwine purposeful texts and conversations around social justice into their existing curriculum and learning goals. In this class, participants will reflect on the challenges of engaging students in authentic conversations regarding social justice and, at the time same, learn about the necessity of integrating critical consciousness in their curriculum. Participants will learn about privilege, civil discourse, and strategies for fostering conversations the classroom.

Participants will share current texts and research others that could be utilized to integrate conversations regarding social justice. At the end of the course, participants will develop an implementation plan for how they will take their learning back to their classrooms.

**Learning Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the challenges that affect a teacher's ability to promote social justice in the classroom
- Identify how privilege can dictate how curricular decisions are made and critical conversations are facilitated in the classroom
- Integrate effective strategies for facilitating civil discourse in the classroom
- Develop and apply plans to integrate materials into the curriculum that engage students in civil discourse on relevant social justice issues.

**Course Requirements:** To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments and respond to specific questions outlined in each assignment. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a disqualification in the course and a failing grade.

**Resources:** No texts are required for purchase in order to complete this course.

GSA's are designed with the intention of creating a safe space for students to have purposeful conversations surrounding important health and advocacy issues.

Agarwal-Rangnath, R. (2013). **Social Studies, Literacy, and Social Justice in the Common Core Classroom: A Guide for Teachers.** ISBN: 9780807754085.

*This book provides a framework (grades 3-8) to help educators literacy and social students for social studies. This text frames the lessons with the Language Arts Common Core Standards while also making it applicable for the daily realities of the classroom. Each chapter explains how teachers can restructure, reshape, and work with mandated curriculum materials to teach from a critical perspective. The book also discusses how to meet Common Core Standards by teaching language arts and social studies as complementary subjects.*

**Course Requirements:** To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments and respond to specific questions outlined in each assignment. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a disqualification in the course and a failing grade.

**Getting Started**

- After registering for the course, you will be sent an email with the website address, password and course key you need to access your online course, along with log in instructions.
- Access each assignment through the course home page. All assignments will be submitted through the Moodle platform on each respective assignment page.
- Please save a backup copy of all course assignments and completed work.

**Participation:**

- You are not required to be present (i.e. online) specific days or times. You will work at your own pace. The course is structured in 3 Weekly Units, however all assignments will not be due until the final day of the course.
- All responses will be posted online. Large documents, files, photographs or PowerPoint presentations may be attached as part of your response by using the “Attachment” option.
- You may work collaboratively and submit similar responses on all assignments except the Implementation Paper, which must be individually authored.

**INTASC Standards that are addressed in this course:**

- 2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- 3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- 4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.
- 5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- 6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- 7. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
- 9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professional in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
- 10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and well-being.

**Check the Iowa Teaching Standards that are addressed in this course:**

X	1. Enhance Student Achievement		5. Monitoring Student Learning
	2. Content Knowledge	X	6. Classroom Management
X	3. Planning and Preparation	X	7. Professional Growth
X	4. Instructional Strategies	X	8. Professional Responsibilities

**Assignment List/Timeline:** This assignment list with estimated times for completion is meant to serve as a helpful checklist for you as a learner in completing all the assignments! This is a recommended amount of time to review all articles, webinars, videos, and other materials associated with each assignment. You may take longer or shorter to complete each assignment and times are only estimates based on past learners experiences.

Topic/Activity	In Class	Out of Class
<b>Getting to Know the Class; Additional Readings:</b> Take the time to get to know the class layout, read over the Help Section, and review any other materials present in the class to get started. Take your time!		3 hours
<b><u>Week 1 - Social Justice in the Classroom</u></b>		
<b>Discussion: Introductions</b> – Participants will introduce themselves to their class and discuss what they hope to gain from the course.	1 hour	2.5 hours
<b>Discussion: What Makes Teaching Tough Topics Uncomfortable</b> – Participants will reflect on their own teaching experiences and share with classmates about times when they are required to teach uncomfortable topics. They will share their detailed reflection in a discussion post.	1 hour	2.5 hours
<b>Discussion: Critical Consciousness:</b> Participants will review several resources and respond to the concept of critical consciousness in their own classrooms. They will share their understanding in a discussion post.	2 hour	2.5 hours
<b><u>Week 2 – How to Create Positive Discourse</u></b>		
<b>Discussion: What Is Privilege</b> – In order to develop an understanding for why teaching social justice matters, participants will reflect on what privilege is and how that affects our understanding of our students, historical events, and perspectives from under-represented populations. Participants will share their understanding in a discussion post.	1 hour	2.5 hours
<b>Discussion: Civil Discourse</b> – Participants will reflect on several resources for the importance of engaging in civil discourse and the importance of doing so in the classroom.	2 hour	2.5 hours
<b>Discussion: Fostering Classroom Conversation:</b> Participants will reflect on the specific strategies used in classrooms to engage in civil discourse and conversations surrounding social justice through texts and literature.	2 hour	3 hours
<b>Discussion: Sharing and Researching Texts</b> – Participants will share texts and literature they use in their own classrooms and how they could be used to engage students in conversations on social justice, and they will research more texts to engage in civil discourse in the classroom. Participants will share their findings in a discussion post.	1 hour	3 hours
<b><u>Week 3 – Be the Change!</u></b>		
<b>Discussion: What Makes Change</b> – Participants will discuss what makes change in a classroom and the school and district barriers that may exist for the change to occur.	1 hour	2.5 hours
<b>Discussion: Book Banning</b> - Participants will learn about book banning and the process for appealing decisions related to book banning. They will share their reflections in a discussion post.	2 hours	2 hours
<b>Final: Implementation Plan</b> – Participants will create a lesson plan or activity they can use in their school that will engage students in civil discourse and promote social justice? Participants will research three to five middle school and high school texts and create an activity around a particular social justice issue.	2 hours	4 hours
<b>Total Class Time</b>	<b>15 hours</b>	<b>30 hours</b>

**Coursework:** Participants can earn up to 75 points total for the course. The following table depicts the breakdown of points possible for the required coursework

Activity	Points
9 Discussions (5 points each)	45
Final Implementation Plan/Paper	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

**Grading Scale – Graduate Credit**

100-90% (70-69 points)	A
89-80% (68-56 points)	B
79-70% (55-49 points)	C
69-60% (47-42 points)	D
59%-Below (<42 points)	F

**Grading Scale - License Renewal Credit**

100-80% (70-56 points)	P
79%-Below (<56 points)	NP

**Student Requirements:** Students are required to:

- Participate in all discussion forums
- Complete all quizzes
- Complete a final implementation plan

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you are a student with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this class, please see the instructor to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Statement of Plagiarism:** Academic dishonesty results in failure of this course. Give credit where credit is due. Use the APA Publication Manual to cite references when needed. Not crediting ideas or words of others is unacceptable scholarship as is submitting work that was done for a previous course or that is not your own origin in design or completion. Submit original assignments. Do not submit work for this course that you have done for other courses.

**Grading Rubrics for Individual Activities**

**Discussion Forums (45 points possible):** Discussion Forums are asynchronous ways to engage in class discussions. They require you to submit an answer to a question and respond to the posts of other peers. Because they are an integral part of sharing strategies, analyzing research, and sharing ideas, discussion forums in this course comprise a significant percentage of your final grade. It's highly recommended that you read and respond to more than the required two peer postings because greater participation will facilitate a greater depth of understanding. Additionally, it's important to make posts in a timely manner to benefit from peer responses.

<b>Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums</b>		
		<b>Points</b>
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	Makes connections to the other content and real-life that are supported by reference(s) and example(s)	1
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	1
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	1
<b>Assignment Specific Criteria</b>	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	1
<b>Participation (Responses to at least 2 peer posts)</b>	Responds to other posts (when available)	1
<b>Total Points Possible</b>		5

**Implementation Plan (25 points possible)** - The implementation plan is a critical part of this course. Participants must complete a one-page implementation plan. The paper is meant to be a reflection as well as a chance to state what you will use going forward. The rubric below will be used to grade the Implementation Plan, but additional details will be provided within the course.

<b>Grading Rubric for Implementation Plan</b>		
		<b>Points</b>
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	Highlights any new knowledge gained as a result of course.	5
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	5
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	3
	Discusses Overall Implications	2
<b>Assignment Specific Criteria</b>	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	2
<b>Mechanics</b>	Writing is clear, well developed, and organized, No or few grammar and spelling errors	2
<b>Implementation</b>	Clearly states ideas to use in the future	2
	States resources to be used	2
	Is realistic in their approach – understands limitations may exist	2
<b>Total Points Possible</b>		25