

Strategies for Teaching Equity and Social Comprehension

An Online Graduate Course

Syllabus

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Course Description:

This course examines the difficult topics of equity and social comprehension in the classroom. It is designed to provide educators with an understanding of these issues and strategies to use in the classroom to build trust, empathy, understanding and acceptance. Schools are developing an equity based curriculum to create an understanding of the struggles of diverse communities, student identity and cultural competence. These difficult conversations are necessary in our present climate. When working and learning with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures present in the classroom, students need a more comprehensive understanding of themselves and their peers. When students learn how to use their own strengths and points of view to contribute in a diverse classroom they build confidence, self esteem, learn empathy and a sense of community. We want to raise teacher and student awareness of the concepts of equity, inclusivity, diversity, bias (both explicit and implicit), and social justice. In education today, we need to strive to promote equitable, diverse and inclusive learning spaces where learners fine tune their mindsets to create an inclusive and equitable climate in our classrooms, in the community and for their futures.

Learner Outcomes

Students will explore the following in order to impact their instruction in the classroom:

- Develop an understanding of social comprehension
- Understand the difference between equity and equal
- Examine their identities
- Explore family histories
- Practice active and empathetic listening
- Examine their own biases
- Identify various micro aggressions and learn to think critically about them
- Explore the impact media has on identity
- Be encouraged to think about how media affects how they see themselves
- Explore who and what they are responsible for
- In exploring responsibilities students will be asked to understand other perspectives
- Consider crisis situations and how emotions influence behavior in those situations
- Examine various appropriate literature to support the teaching of equity and social comprehension in the classroom

Curriculum Design

This is a sixty-hour, three credit graduate level course completed over a thirteen-week period. Modules One through Nine will be completed one per week. Module Ten will be completed over a two-week period so students will have time to revise and complete the final integration project.

Hardware & Computer Skills Requirements

Computer and Internet access required. Students must have regular access to a computer and be able to use computer skills to successfully complete this course. Many problems instructors and students run into stem from mis-configured browsers, incorrect software versions, pop-up blockers, and other issues. Most of these issues can be prevented by performing the browser tune up before the course or once a problem arises. Often students find it easier to use *Mozilla Firefox*, *Google Chrome*, or *Safari* rather than Internet Explorer; for some applications Internet Explorer may work well.

Course Materials:

The required textbook for this course is *-Being the Change- Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension* by Sara K. Ahmed; Heinemann; 2018.

Module Outline

Module One: What is Social Comprehension?

- Member Introductions
- Individual and group expectations
- Course sessions, resources and requirements
- What is social comprehension?
- How do we make meaning from and mediate our relationship with the world?
- Assignments

Module Two: Why do we Need to Talk about Equity in the Classroom?

- What does it mean to have “equity in education”?
- How is equity different from equal?
- Why do we need to talk about equity in the classroom?
- Eight powerful tools to promote equity in the classroom?
- Things equity focused teachers should be saying in their classroom now.
- Assignments

Module Three: Knowing Our Identity

- Affirming our identities
- Placing ourselves in the world
- Journeying into our family histories
- Assignments

Module Four: What is Active Empathetic Listening?

- Introduce active listening by giving kids a chance to show what they already know
- Build listening skills
- Tools and Ideas
- Addressing tensions
- Assignments

Module Five: Self Awareness and Sincerity

- Seeing our own bias
- Understanding microaggressions
- Dismissing others' biases
- Respect
- Assignments

Module Six: Becoming Better Informed

- Understanding how our identity affects us
- Moving beyond our initial thinking
- Impact of media
- Assignments

Module Seven: Finding Humanity in Ourselves and Others

- What is humanity?
- Broadening our ideas about who we are responsible to and for
- Understanding others' perspectives
- Can we be friends with people who are different from us?
- Assignment

Module Eight: Facing Crisis Together

- What emotions emerge when facing a crisis?
- How do we identify, understand and react to these emotions?
- Understanding how everyone's identity is at stake.
- Get out of your echo chamber.
- Shine a spotlight on upstanders
- Assignments

Module Nine: Creating Comfortable Spaces

- How can you cultivate a safe learning environment?
- Setting up your classroom and discussion procedures
- Show respect
- Teach micro-affirmations to validate your students

- Assignments

Module Ten: Social comprehension and Equity in Literature

- Why diversity and equity in content matters for reading growth
- Discussing equity and social justice through literature
- Ways to bring more equity to your literacy Instruction
- Teaching social justice through children’s literature
- Final assignment

Student Requirements

1. Participation: Actively participate in all activities.
2. Reading assignments: Complete all readings and reflection assignments.

Grading Criteria

Assignment	Points	Grading Scale	
Class Participation	20	100-93	A
Class assignments	80	92-85	B
Total Points	100	84-77	C

Student Academic Integrity

Participants guarantee that all academic class work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one’s own), is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and is subject to academic disciplinary action.