

Course Syllabus

EDUC 2100 Education and Society Online Graduate Course

Instructor Information

Course Instructors: Tinukwa Boulder, PhD. and Beatrice Dias, PhD

Class Format and Duration: Online (Fully asynchronous) fifteen-week course

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School of Education Mission-Vision

“We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. **We teach.** We commit to student, family, and community success. **We commit to educational equity.** We advocate. We work for justice. **We cultivate relationships.** We forge engaged partnerships. **We collaborate.** We learn with and from communities. **We innovate and agitate.** We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. **We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures.** We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. **We shape practice and policy.** We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. **We lead with integrity.** We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.”

Course Description

We will critically examine and discuss overarching questions that focus on the roles of state-sanctioned schooling in society and how these roles are expressed ideologically, socially, politically, and legally. We will pose, examine, and discuss critical questions to help understand the relationships between and among schools and other institutions and systems, both state and private such as prisons, health care, welfare, and so on. We explore and discuss educational movements within and outside state-sanctioned schooling within historical and political contexts.

Learning Pursuits

The main goal of this course is to ***grow our scholarship by following a process of deep and authentic inquiry.***

Course material is designed such that the graduate learner will:

1. Examine and discuss critical questions about state-sanctioned schooling in society and how these roles are expressed ideologically, socially, politically, technologically, and legally.
2. Explore, pose and discuss critical questions to help understand the relationships between and among schools and other institutions and systems, both state and private such as prisons, health care, welfare, and so on.
3. Explore and discuss educational movements within and outside state-sanctioned schooling within historical and social-political contexts.

Coursework is intended to engage learners in:

- Examining their own relationship with school;
- Building critical questions about education and society through engagement with a wide range of readings and media;
- Developing their own analyses of course material, and applying those learnings to further refine their questions; and
- Deepening their inquiry through an exploration of movements within and outside state-sanctioned schooling.

Course objectives are aligned with the learning pursuits crafted by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad (in her book: [‘Cultivating Genius’](#)), who draws on the wisdom of 19th century Black literary societies. Based on Dr. Muhammad’s five learning pursuits, we formed the following course objectives:

Identity Development

We will think about how our personal experiences with schooling are tied to the broader concept of education and society.

Skills

Through engagement with course material and our learning community, we will enhance (or even discover) many of our capabilities, including our: reading, listening, articulating, writing, inquiry, analytical, empathy and imagination skills.

Intellect

The scholars we will be in dialogue with through readings and other media will offer new knowledge, or deepen our existing knowledge, on how education functions in society.

Criticality

We will be following our questions throughout this course in order to arrive at more in-depth and refined questions related to systems of education, and the movements within and outside them.

Joy

Our exploration for this course will be grounded in the joy of learning. This will require embracing vulnerability and humility in not knowing, and staying connected to our purpose as educators and community members.

Pedagogical Approach

It is our intention that all learners in this course will develop a deeper understanding of how their personal experiences in school connect to the more expansive scope of education and society. Contextualizing this broader topic in our personal narratives better equips us to interrogate the systems at work with empathy, authenticity and integrity. This practice also situates us within the exploration, so that we recognize our power and responsibility to act on what we

learn. Finally, acknowledging the experiences and perspectives we bring into this work, enables us to engage with the course topics in a more authentic and mindful way. This type of honest and reflective study is critical because, "We teach who we are" (Parker J. Palmer).

Please read all the course introduction documents carefully. The course facilitators will use Canvas, the University of Pittsburgh's learning management system, to deliver [instructional materials and learning activities](#) in this fifteen-week online course. We will interact and engage with the instructional content and learning activities in the Canvas course, and using external tools like Google Jamboard, Padlet, and Perusall. We will complete close readings and viewings to deepen our collective understandings of schooling within the historical, social, political, and economic contexts. Please review the core material (readings, audio and video) included in the [course modules](#) and take some time to read the [course approach](#) and [university policies](#). We will also participate in co-creating scholarly artifacts to facilitate our relational responsibilities and connect our collective [learning pursuits](#) to our knowledge traditions, and personal and professional experiences. Please take some time to read the [pedagogical approach](#) and a description of the [course modules](#).

Relational Responsibilities (Source: Sabina Vaught Syllabus)

In order to build a respectful and caring learning community, we will adopt Dr. Sabina Vaught's 'Relational Responsibilities' as a grounding guide for this course.

Our Collective Responsibilities

Our collective responsibilities are grounded in our interdependent relationships and are expressed through our active engagement with one another and ideas and through our dedication to learning.

We will undertake relational praxes of:

- Studying deeply
- Contributing meaningfully to one another's learning
- Engaging generously:
 - generating possibilities

- seeking out connection
- deepening of understanding
- practicing complexity over critique
- Abiding the principles of reciprocal relationality
 - It is your responsibility to co-create a rigorous and productive learning environment in which you challenge one another's ideas in a scholarly manner but never insult or disparage one another.
 - It is your responsibility to engage the ideas, discussions, and materials provided in this class in ways that *enhance and strengthen your own interests*.

Avoid Unintentional Censorship

Our responsibility is to engage with difficult readings and ideas as we undertake the study of repressive systems and oppressive institutions. Not all class members will respond to the readings in the same manner, and some readings will upset some students more than others. In light of this, there is no clear way to warn students in advance. Moreover, we as a community do not want to unintentionally engage in censorship. Read the article: [No trigger warnings in my class: Why you won't find them on my syllabi](#).

- Recognize and affirm that affective responses to readings and discussions are part of a just intellectual project
 - Check-in with one another in ways that honor our differences but affirm our membership in a community of conscience
 - Excuse ourselves when need be and without explanation in order to take necessary space.
 - Attend carefully and attentively to one another's experiences and ideas, recognizing those as gifts to the community
 - Make culturally-specific requests as soon as/if you realize you need to
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Course Policy and Approach

Student Expectations (Source: Sabina Vaught syllabus)

Active participation in this course is vital to developing a community of inquiry, practice, and learning. Active participation entails logging into your canvas course,

interacting with instructional materials, and completing learning activities by specified due dates and times. Please know that we will work with you to extend due dates if the deadlines are challenging to meet. We strive to build a learning community by recognizing our strengths in our collective knowledge, personal and professional experiences. We can achieve this by sharing the artifacts we develop, experiences, strategies, and making contributions in the discussion forums. We know that there are many aspects of our lives (internal and external factors) that distract us, but we hope that we can do what Dr. James Lang urged educators to do - to create our learning environments as classroom retreats or what Dr. Sabina Vaught described as "retreat spaces." We hope that this course serves as a retreat to interact with each other and build on our collective wisdom.

We will conduct most of our work in the discussion forums, but you are encouraged to communicate privately with the instructors via email. We will also use the announcement tool to disseminate course-related information. Coursework consists of discussion forums and reflection activities to enable us to share and discuss our insights, ideas, strategies, and resources in the form of instruction-student produced content and/or external resources such as articles, podcasts, TED Talks, blogs, and YouTube videos, etc.

Inclusion and Diversity (Source: Sabina Vaught syllabus)

The course aligns with the School of Education's mission to ignite learning and deliver a respective, inclusive, and equitable learning experience. We behave professionally, and we communicate mindfully while feeling free to share contrasting viewpoints and ideas. We create an open learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The diversity denoted by the intersections of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and culture that we all bring to this course is advantageous in serving as a strength and resource in our learning community.

"As the course instructors, [we are] committed to pedagogy that is anti-racist, non-sexist, non-classist, non-heterosexist, and non-gender-normative. This includes fostering an environment that is as safe and inclusive as possible. [We] intend to name and correct any actions on [our] part that fall short of these commitments as best as possible.

The University of Pittsburgh prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a disabled

veteran. The University is committed to creating a learning environment that is inclusive of all races, genders, socioeconomic statuses, religions, sexual orientations, nationalities, and languages.” (Roop, L., 2020).

In particular, we are committed to including the voices of minoritized groups in this class, including those of womxn and other people of color, transgender people, LGBTQIA+ people, non-Christian people, non-US citizens, and those who speak multiple languages. If you feel uncomfortable due to your social identities and background or how they are perceived, please let us know. If you do not feel comfortable talking with the instructors, you can contact the [Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#).

Preferred Names and Pronouns: You can use the NameCoach feature in Canvas to indicate your preferred pronoun. You can [Use NameCoach with Canvas](#) to add your pronouns.

Course Assessment

It is our policy that if a learner is actively and authentically engaging with the course material and our learning community, they are fulfilling the goals of this course. Learning happens at your own pace and from your own perspective, and cannot be assessed based on a decontextualized and depersonalized standard of measure. Moreover, grading has been proven to be ineffective in engaging authentic learning, but rather serves to conform behavior (see [Alfie Kohn's work](#)) for more details on this). As such, we are hoping to play with alternative approaches to traditional grading for this course. There are movements toward forms of radical assessment (such as the work of [Jesse Stommel](#)) that we believe would be more in line with our values. We invite the entire course community to engage in a critical exploration of grading practices, and develop our own radical assessment strategy for this course. While the university requires us to provide learners with a letter grade, we would like to work as a collective to decide how we might want to put into practice the School of Education's mission-vision of education justice and equity in our approach to grades. This work will be incorporated into our module structure of the course.

Rest assured that **you are enough**, and we are deeply grateful for your contributions to our shared learning. Our hope is that your participation in this course will enrich your scholarship and humanity. We will work with you to help ensure the logistics of grades do not interfere with your learning joy.

Scholarly Artifacts

Throughout the course, we will be building scholarly artifacts that help develop and articulate our grappings with the topics we encounter. Traditionally, we would refer to these works as “assignments”. We would like to play with ideas that liberate our minds to think about creating collective scholarly artifacts that are in service of our shared learning.

At the end of the course, each learner will have produced a series of reflections, writings and media that form a cohesive profile of their scholarly journey - beginning with personal narratives that offer a framing for connecting with the broader scope of education, including its: impact on peers, history and purpose, societal impacts, and active movements. Finally, learners will engage in a speculative exercise of envisioning future dynamics of education and society that uphold values of equity and justice. Collectively, the artifacts we develop through this course will ideally pave the way for new avenues of inquiry, and publication and collaboration opportunities.

Coursework Submissions (Adapted from Sabina Vaught syllabus)

All coursework has due dates and times to keep us on track in the course. If you need more time to complete a specific piece, or are experiencing difficulties with the pace of the course, please let us know as soon as you can.

Course Structure

We will be structuring this course using Canvas modules. Our course map will consist of five modules that cover a broad range of topics related to Education and Society. Please note that the weeks assigned to each module might change as we continue to iterate on the course design during the semester.

Module I: Welcome and Course Introduction

[Week 1]

- Introductory material about the course and facilitators.

Module II: Our Relationships with School and Its Role in Society

[Weeks 1 through 5]

- What are the narratives we hold about our personal relationships with school?
- How do these stories connect with the roots and roles of state-sanctioned schooling in U.S. states and society?

Module III: School in Context

[~Weeks 6 through 8]

- What are the relationships between and among schools and other institutions/systems, both state and private (prisons, health care, welfare, etc.)?

Module IV: Educational Movements for Equity and Justice in School

[~Weeks 9 through 12]

- What are the educational movements that have been undertaken outside state-sanctioned schooling or insurgent within it?

Module V: Future of Education and Society

[~Weeks 13 through 15]

- What are our visions for a more just and equitable system of education, and what should its role be in society?
- What can we do from where we are to make these visions reality?

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University

Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands- on practice, complete the [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial](#).

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#). (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.