

Department of Educational Studies
Dickinson College

EDST 391 Teaching Community:
Pedagogies of Connection and Change

[Course Group Me](#)

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PLEASE NOTE: All important course policies (such as accommodations, academic integrity, grading & late work, etc.) [can be found here](#). I reserve the right to alter the syllabus and these policies during the course of the semester.

The Big Questions

This course will pose and seek to answer the following big questions, which will guide our classroom activities, assignments, and assessments: *What educational strategies and practices promote inter- and intrapersonal change?* Each class period will focus on answering a particular question or questions designed to help us answer these big questions.

Course Description

In educational studies courses, we teach you to analyze and critique the ways in which various systems of marginalization, dehumanization, and oppression work to undermine the ability of all students to survive and thrive in our educational system. In this course, we, along with bell hooks, will explore “what works” when it comes to addressing the various forms of inequity and disconnection that plague our world. While we will touch on theory, the focus of this course is on understanding and practicing evidence-based strategies that allow educators (of all forms) to form relationships with and work alongside others to transform our world.

Professors Note: This course was developed thanks to a generous grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation in support of Dickinson’s *Dialogue Across Difference* program. Many of the topics and strategies covered here were learned as a planner, facilitator, and participant in the DxD program. While I will be facilitating and leading many sessions, we will uphold the spirit of this course by looking outside the class and institution to connect with experts who are doing this work in Carlisle and beyond.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the ways in which varying historical, philosophical, and cultural contexts influence educational events and policies and shape how they are interpreted.
- Identify and describe various constructs through which educational policies and practices are perpetuated and challenged.
- Analyze contradictions and inconsistencies between educational values and the policies and practices that emerge from them.
- evaluate and critique how research may or may not inform and improve educational policies and practices.
- find, evaluate, and use scholarly resources pertinent to a particular topic.

Required Text

There are three required course texts:

Evans, K. & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The little book of restorative education: Fostering responsibility, healing, and hope in schools.*

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope.*

Milner, W. R. & Rolnick, S. (2023). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change and grow* (4th Ed.).

Additional course readings will be made available on the course website as PDF files.

Grades Ungrading

Critics have long argued that [grades undermine rather than enhance learning](#). In this course, we will engage in a practice known as [Ungrading](#). The purpose of ungrading is to help you focus your efforts on learning and growing rather than on achieving an arbitrary score on an assignment.

The two key components of ungrading in this class are **feedback** and **self-reflection/self-assessment**. First, for all of your assignments, I will focus on providing useful and actionable feedback and you will not receive any letter grades. I expect you to use this feedback to adapt and grow over the course of the semester. Second, you will start the semester by collaborating with me to set goals and expectations for your performance. You will then track and assess your performance in relation to these goals. Because I am required by the College to submit grades, you will receive a letter grade at the end of the course. However, you will have the opportunity to assign your own letter grade.

Below I describe how ungrading will work in this class. **Please Note:** Because this approach will be novel for most of you, it may cause some concern or anxiety. This is perfectly normal and simply represents an opportunity for you and I to have a one-on-one conversation about how I can support you in my class. Stressing out about my class is a good indicator that it is time to reach out to me.

Determine Personal Course Goals

At the beginning of the semester, you will be invited to set expectations for your engagement with my course. Below are the expectations that I have for you. You also have the opportunity to craft expectations for yourself using an online form. Here are the expectations I have for you:

- **Progress Toward Meeting Learning Outcomes (see above)**
- **Intellectual Curiosity & Growth:** I suspect if you meet this expectation, all the others will follow. This entails, at a minimum, taking an active role in your learning in this course. To start, this includes reading texts closely (or skimming if time does not permit deeper reading), taking thoughtful notes, raising questions in and out of class, and striving to learn from and reflect on the course content. On a deeper level, this entails elaboration, connection, and metacognition. In other words, you must make connections to other courses and your own areas of interest, build new knowledge (as Jerome Bruner says, “go beyond the information given”), and monitor your comprehension and learning. Finally, this entails taking intellectual risks (e.g., sharing an answer even if you aren’t confident it is “right”) and learning from failure. Without grades in the picture, failure can return to its rightful place as an important facilitator of learning.
- **Community Participation:** Learning is a team sport—it is a social and cultural endeavor and in my class you are both a student and teacher. While participation does entail attending class and actively engaging in group activities, it also includes fostering curiosity, learning, and belonging among your classmates. Being a member of our community includes pushing yourself to speak up (or making more space for others), drawing out the best in your classmates, and helping to build a community where people feel a strong sense of belonging, regardless of their identities.
- **Responsiveness to Assignments and Assessments:** Freeing you from the burden of grades is designed to get you more engaged with the actual business of learning. Assignments become *formative*—they are designed to help you practice important intellectual skills and receive useful feedback to further develop those skills. Each assignment or assessment will have clear directions and deadlines for you to follow and you will be expected to follow those directions. This does not mean you will never turn in an assignment late, but you will endeavor to turn in assignments on time and to be communicative with me when this is not possible. Most importantly, you will be expected to read, reflect, and act on the feedback you receive from me and/or peers on those assignments. I am less concerned with your performance on any individual assignment than I am with your growth and improvement from one assignment to the next.

Keeping a Course Journal

Throughout the semester, you will use a document to track your efforts and progress toward fulfilling these expectations. You are expected to update the journal weekly. This journal is designed to make the steps that follow easier (I use a similar process for my bi-annual tenure evaluations).

Assignment Reflections

At the end of each assignment and assessment, you will be asked to write a very brief reflection on what you did well, where you struggled, and how you hope to improve.

Mid-Semester Evaluation

At the mid-semester point, you will write a short reflection that details your efforts towards meeting each of our/your goals. This reflection will be both forward and backward looking—you will also consider what you would like to do differently in the second half of the semester.

End-of-Semester Evaluation & Conference

At the end of the semester, you will submit a more detailed self-evaluation that includes a recommended letter grade for the course. You will then meet with me for a 10-15 minute conference to discuss your reflection and your letter grade. This is a reflective, collaborative conversation not a trial. I will assume that you are evaluating yourself earnestly and honestly. **Please Note:** I reserve the right to alter your final grade. I suspect I will need to exercise this option rarely and most likely to raise a grade for a student who has been too harsh in their self-evaluations.

Course Requirements

Ungrading Activities

A core feature of this class is that we will use feedback and reflection instead of traditional grading to monitor and assess your work in class. Keeping up with the ungrading assignments is central to making this process work.

Class Simulations

While technically part of the “community participation” goal, I want to call out that each unit entails an opportunity to apply and practice what we are learning. Attending and fully engaging in the activity is an essential learning opportunity. Missing this class will require makeup work.

Written Reflections

In response to each unit, you will write a short written reflection following the **Theory to Practice Session** (see below). This reflection will provide an opportunity for you to wrestle with the issues that came out of that session and to push yourself to think in a deep and nuanced way about the topic. Prompts will be posted and responded to our on course Moodle page.

Group Project

Over the course of the semester, you and a small group of classmates will complete an action research project designed to address a specific need for change and connection in our community. As a group, you will first identify that need based on preliminary conversations and research with individuals in the community. Once you submit your **proposal** and it is accepted by me, you will conduct primary and secondary research to build a plan for your intervention. This will include compiling an **annotated bibliography** and **conducting interviews** with relevant stakeholders. A rough draft of your plan will be shared with the class as a **works in progress presentation**, which will allow you to get feedback prior to completing your project. Finally, you

will make your proposal as a 20-minute **podcast**. *With your permission*, I will share these projects with relevant decision-makers and stakeholders in our community. Please note that we will make time in class throughout the semester for your group to meet and work toward completing your project.

Course Schedule

Classroom meetings will follow a regular two week pattern. The first day is an **Overview** session, where you will read a text that introduces you to the practice or strategy. The second day is a **Conversation** session, where we will have a conversation with someone with lived experience and expertise on the topic under discussion. The following week begins with a **Going Deeper** session, where we will use the conversation and further readings to dig into the nuances of this topic. Then, each cycle will conclude with a **Theory to Practice** session that will include some opportunity to practice and apply what we have learned (a simulation, a case study, etc.).

<i>(Readings and assignments are due on the date on which they are stated.)</i>			
Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1.1	Connect Before Content Course Overview		Bring an object to class that holds special significance. Be prepared to share for two minutes about your object.
Week 1.2	Teaching Community Part I	hooks (2003): Preface, Chapters 1 & 4	Be prepared to discuss the kind of classroom community you want to build this semester.
Week 2.1	Teaching Community Part II	hooks (2003): Chapters 7 & 8	Goal Worksheet and Journal Link Due
Week 2.2	Teaching Community Part III	hooks (2003): Chapters 9-11	

Week 3.1	Reflective Structured Dialogue (Overview)	Sarouf & Hyten (2019) Fostering Dialogues Across Divides: Chapters 1 & 2	
Week 3.2	Reflective Structured Dialogue (Conversation)	Fostering Dialogues Across Divides: Chapters 3 & 4	Please come to class with at least two questions for our special guest, Meg Griffiths (Essential Partners).
Week 4.1	Reflective Structured Dialogue (Going Deeper)	Fostering Dialogues Across Divides: Chapters 5 & 6	Written Reflection Due
Week 4.2	Reflective Structured Dialogue (Theory to Practice)	Drury (2019)	
Week 5.1	Group Work Session		
Week 5.2	Rupture & Repair in the Classroom	Myers (2008) Working Alliances in College Classrooms	
Week 6.1	Motivational Interviewing (Overview)	Miller & Rollnick (2023) Chapters 2 & 3	Project Proposal Due
Week 6.2	Motivational Interviewing (Conversation)	Miller & Rollnick (2023) Chapters 4 & 5	Please come to class with at least two questions for our special guest.
Week 7.1	Motivational Interviewing (Going Deeper)	Miller & Rollnick (2023) Chapters 6 & 7	
Week 7.2	Motivational Interviewing (Theory to Practice)	Miller & Rollnick (2023) Chapters 8 & 15	Mid-semester self evaluations due.
Week 8.1	Group Work Session		Written Reflection Due
Week 8.2	Engaged Pedagogy (Overview)	hooks (1994) Hanh (2003)	

Week 9.1	Engaged Pedagogy (Conversation)	Anderson, Landy, & Sanchez (2023) Education Northwest (2017)	Please come to class with at least two questions for our special guests—the Trauma Informed Pedagogy Research Team.
Week 9.2	Engaged Pedagogy (Going Deeper)	Carello & Butler (2015)	Annotated Bibliography Due
Week 10.1	Engaged Pedagogy (Theory to Practice)	Berila (2015)	
Week 10.2	Group Work Session		Written Reflection Due
Week 11.1	Restorative Justice (Overview)	Evans & Vaandering (2016): Chapters 1 & 2	Sign up for presentation timeslots.
Week 11.2	Restorative Justice (Conversation)	Evans & Vaandering (2016): Chapters 3 & 4	Please come to class with at least two questions for our special guest.
Week 12.1	Restorative Justice (Going Deeper)	Evans & Vaandering (2016): Chapters 5 & 6	Interview Summaries Due
Week 12.2	Restorative Justice (Theory to Practice)	Evans & Vaandering (2016): Chapter 7	
Week 13.1	Group Project Works in Progress Presentations		Written Reflection Due
Week 13.2	Group Project Works in Progress Presentations		
Week 14.1	Activism & Organizing (Overview)	Weltron & Bertrand (2019)	
Week 14.2	Activism & Organizing (Conversation)	Reading TBD	Please come to class with at least two questions for our special guest.
Week 15.1	Activism & Organizing (Going Deeper)	Mustaffa & Mayorga (2019)	

Week 15.2	Activism & Organizing (Theory to Practice)	Salwell (2019)	
Podcasts due by 5:00 PM on Final Date.			