

“EXCELLENCE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS”

AURORA UNIVERSITY SYLLABUS

Course Number: OEDP 5117
Course Title: Teaching Controversial Issues

2 Semester Hours Graduate Credit

1. Catalog Description

The McCormick Foundation Civics Program presents its initial “Teaching with Controversy” course, exploring one of the six pillars of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition’s Democracy Schools Initiative, “Structured Engagement with Current and Controversial Issues.” Participants will learn from experts in the field, partake in related lesson plan, program, and resource demonstrations, and develop materials and pedagogical guidance for immediate use in secondary classrooms.

2. Course Overview\Course Teaching Methods

This course is oriented toward social studies teachers at the secondary level, with the overarching goal to integrate the teaching of current and controversial issues across the curriculum, so other disciplines are encouraged to enroll. It delves specifically into proven methodologies for teaching controversial issues, with lesson plans modeled to illustrate their execution. The work of a handful of Illinois civic education organizations will also be featured. Methodologies addressed include concept formation, structured academic controversies, primary sources, and news literacy.

The course will offer a mixture of large group lectures (both by the lead instructors and content experts), with questions fielded throughout; small group discussion; partner pair-shares; teacher-led lesson plan demonstrations; and McCormick Foundation Civics Program school program and resource demonstrations. Technology will be incorporated throughout, with PowerPoint slide shows used to facilitate all activities.

3. Student Learning Objectives\Illinois Content or Teaching Standards Addressed

As a result of this course participants will:

- Recognize the benefits of controversial issues discussions in heterogeneous classrooms.
- Understand how to structure student engagement with current and controversial issues.
- Learn about the work of the McCormick Foundation Civics Program and the programs and resources they offer to students, teachers, and schools.
- Observe pedagogy in a classroom setting through related peer-tested lesson plans and activities demonstrated throughout the course.
- Synthesize proven methodologies within the parameters and curriculum of courses they currently teach.

Illinois Learning Standards Addressed

Social Science

Goal 14: Understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

Standard D: Understand the roles and influences of individuals and interest groups in the political systems of Illinois, the United States and other nations.

Standard F: Understand the development of United States political ideas and traditions.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations.

Standard A: Apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation.

Standard B: Understand the development of significant political events.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

Standard b: Understand the roles and interactions of individuals and groups in society.

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/ Social Studies

Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Reading History 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading History 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Reading History 3: Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/ social studies

Reading History 4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text;; including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/ social studies.

Reading History 10: By the end of grade 8, 10, and 12, read and comprehend history/ social studies texts in the grades (respective) text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Writing History 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Writing History 9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Social Emotional Learning

Goal 2

Standard A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.

Standard B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.

Standard C: Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Standard A: Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.

Standard B: Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.

Standard C: Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

4. Units of Work/Text and Required Reading

Session 1 - Introduction to Controversy in the Classroom

Content Sessions:

Shawn Healy, Resident Scholar and Director of Professional Development

Diana Hess, *Controversy in the Classroom*, University of Wisconsin

Jessica Frogge, Associate, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

Classroom Activity/Lesson Plan Demonstrations

Breakout Groups/Lesson Plan Activity

Session 2 - To Keep and Bear Arms

Content Sessions:

Shawn Healy, Resident Scholar and Director of Professional Development

Nina Vinik, Gun Violence Senior Program Officer, Joyce Foundation

Classroom Activity/Lesson Plan Demonstrations

Breakout Groups/Lesson Plan Activity

Session 3 - What is an American?

Content Sessions:

Shawn Healy, Resident Scholar and Director of Professional Development

Josh Hoyt, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Classroom Activity/Lesson Plan Demonstrations

Breakout Groups/Lesson Plan Activity

Session 4 - Teaching with Controversy

Civic Reflection Activity - Adam Davis, Project on Civic Reflection

Panel Discussion

Classroom Activity/Lesson Plan Demonstrations

Breakout Groups/Lesson Plan Activity

Lesson Plan Presentations

Pre-readings

CIRCLE and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. 2003. *The Civic Mission of Schools*.

Available Online: http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/site/campaign/cms_report.html.

Hess, Diana. 2009. *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion*. NY: Routledge.

McCormick Foundation. 2009. *Educating for Democracy: Creating a Civic Blueprint for Illinois*. Available Online:

<http://mccormickfoundation.org/publications/McCormickFoundationEducatingforDemocracy.pdf>.

Lesson Plans

McCormick Foundation. 2010. *Structured Engagement with Current and Controversial Issues: The McCormick Post-Exchange*.

McCormick Foundation. 2009. *To Keep & Bear Arms: An Individual or Collective Right?*

McCormick Foundation. 2007. *What is an American? An Immigration Policy Seminar*.

McCormick Foundation. 2006. *A Burning Issue: A Structured Academic Controversy Concerning Flag Desecration*.

5. Class Assignments

A two-page **reflection paper** on the assigned pre-readings to be collected at the beginning of the first course session.

Daily discussion questions (two (2) each session for the first three sessions) prepared for content experts/speakers.

A **single lesson plan** for use in a middle or high school, where students encounter a current and controversial issue through one of the methodologies presented in the course. Due at the last course session, prepared for initial topic/ methodology brainstorm in small groups session - outline due at Session 3, and presentations to the class members at Session 4.

A **culminating essay** will be required, at least five pages in length, that expands upon the lesson plan designed for a class you currently teach (see above), incorporates supporting themes from the readings, reviews the information sources used to support this lesson plan, and details means by which teaching with current and controversial issues can be employed in your classroom moving forward, includes taking into account potential challenges to this approach. Due one week after the course is complete.

6. Evaluation and Procedures

Grading will be based upon quality of work with components weighted as follows. Grades are differentiated on the basis of quality. Quantity alone is not a significant factor for grade differentiation.

10%: Course attendance and participation

20%: Reflection paper

10% Discussion questions

25%: Current and controversial issue lesson plan

35%: Culminating essay

Aurora University
College of Education
Graduate Grading System

The graduate grading system was reviewed by Deans' Council and forwarded to the Academic Standards Committee for deliberations. This was approved by the Academic Standards Committee as of 5 May 1992 for presentation to the Faculty Senate on 12 May 1992.

At the end of the course, letter grades are awarded as defined:

- A (4 quality points per course unit) Excellent. Denoted work that is consistently at the highest level of achievement in a graduate college or university course.
- B (3 quality points per course unit) Good. Denotes work that consistently meets the high level of college or university standards for academic performance in a graduate college or university course.
- C (2 quality points per course unit) The lowest passing grade. Denotes work that does not meet in all respects college or university standards for academic performance in a graduate college or university course.
- F (0 quality points per course unit) Failure. Denotes work that fails to meet the graduate college or university standards for academic performance in a course.

Revised 5 May 1992

Approved 12 May 1992

Rubrics specific to the major assignments of the course

Reflection Paper

- A** In two type-written pages, the paper briefly summarizes the content of the assigned readings, analyzes the quality of the authors' arguments, and applies these ideas to everyday classroom use specific to one's teaching assignment.
- B** Addresses all of the aforementioned components of the paper, but lacks the crisp, efficient detail of "A" quality work. Analysis is less provocative or fails to make concrete classroom connections.
- C** One or more of the aforementioned components of the paper are missing or incomplete. Analysis lacks substantive ties to current teaching assignment.
- F** Three or more of the aforementioned components of the paper are missing or incomplete. Analysis is uninformed or lacking altogether.

Discussion Questions

- A** The two questions encourage dialogue between speaker and participants and show critical engagement with the content.
- B** Addresses all of the aforementioned components of the questions, but lacks the thoughtful, reflective element of “A” quality work.
- C** One or more of the aforementioned components of the questions are missing or incomplete.
- F** Three or more of the aforementioned components of the questions are missing or incomplete.

Current and Controversial Issue Lesson Plan

- A** Lesson addresses a contemporary, controversial issue. It begins with a “critical engagement question” and also provides a lesson overview, a list of lesson objectives, and ties to state and national social studies standards. Teacher materials are listed and, if applicable, developed, including any primary documents that may be incorporated. The specifics of the lesson are then detailed, along with associated homework and potential extension activities.
- B** Addresses all of the aforementioned components of the assignment, but the lesson plan lacks absolute clarity, is not readily usable in a secondary social studies (or related discipline) classroom, and/ or fails to engage the learner at the highest levels of learning.
- C** One or more of the aforementioned components of the lesson plan are unclear, missing or incomplete. The lesson requires significant revisions for use in a secondary social studies classroom.
- F** Three or more of the aforementioned components of the lesson plan are missing or incomplete. The lesson is not worthy of use in a secondary social studies classroom.

Culminating Essay

- A** A culminating essay, at least five pages in length (12 point font, 1.5 line spacing or less), that expands upon the lesson plan designed for a class you currently teach (see above), incorporates supporting themes from the readings, reviews the information sources used to support this lesson plan, and details means by which teaching with current and controversial issues can be employed in your classroom moving forward, includes taking into account potential challenges to this approach.

- B** Addresses all of the aforementioned components of the essay, but the information review, the description of the lesson plan, and/ or plans for future employment lack(s) detail.
- C** Connections to the literature wanting, as is information sources review.
- F** Connections to the literature incomplete, as is information sources review. Future classroom employment plan incomplete or missing altogether.

Given that the length of the course, late work will not be accepted. Make-up work will be accepted the day immediately following an approved absence.

7. Attendance Policy

Course participants are required to attend all course sessions and to actively engage in class discussions, small group activities, and experiential group exercises and projects. Absences of more than one day will result in automatic withdrawal from the course with no refund or course credit awarded.

8. Academic Honesty and Integrity Statement

Students are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity as students at Aurora University by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the student's receiving a zero for that test, assignment, or paper.

9. Final Examination Policy

In lieu of a final examination, a culminating essay will be required, at least five pages in length, that expands upon the lesson plan designed for a class you currently teach (see above), incorporates supporting themes from the readings, reviews the information sources used to support this lesson plan, and details means by which teaching with current and controversial issues can be employed in your classroom moving forward, includes taking into account potential challenges to this approach.

10. American Disability Act Compliance

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this course, are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Adaptations of teaching methods, class materials, including text and reading materials or testing, may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

11. Bibliography

CIRCLE and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. 2003. *The Civic Mission of Schools*.

Available Online: http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/site/campaign/cms_report.html.

Hess, Diana. 2009. *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion*. NY: Routledge.

McCormick Foundation. 2010. *Structured Engagement with Current and Controversial Issues: The McCormick Post-Exchange*.

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<http://mccormickfoundation.org/publications/McCormickFoundationEducatingforDemocracy.pdf>.

McCormick Foundation. 2009. *To Keep & Bear Arms: An Individual or Collective Right?*

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