

Recreating the Urban Teaching Cohort Curriculum

Developmental Practice Design

Hailee Gibbons

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Dr. Marcia Baxter Magolda

Miami University

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The Urban Teaching Cohort: Recreating the Curriculum

Numerous studies have demonstrated that highly qualified teachers can help all K-12 students achieve academically, regardless of their race or socioeconomic background.¹ However, early career teachers whom enter urban schools often report feeling underprepared for the unique challenges that these underserved schools face. This has led to a crisis in teacher retention. Graziano laments, “Every year, U.S. schools hire more than 200,000 new teachers for that first day of class. By the time summer rolls around, at least 22,000 have quit. Even those who make it beyond the trying first year aren't likely to stay long: about 30 percent of new teachers flee the profession after just three years, and more than 45 percent leave after five.”² Currently, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has many learning outcomes and required courses for teacher education programs but does not mandate universities and colleges to prepare students to teach in schools that serve predominately marginalized populations.³

The Urban Teaching Cohort (UTC) aims to fill this need and provide teacher education students with the knowledge and skills essential for their success, as well as the success of their students. Unlike the majority of teacher education programs, the UTC does not focus on content area knowledge, teaching methods, or classroom management, because students elect to participate in the UTC in addition to their traditional cohort (elementary, middle childhood, adolescent and young adult, or special education), in which they learn about these aspects of teaching. Instead, the UTC seeks to provide students with knowledge and skills they are not receiving in their traditional cohort, such as how to be inclusive of various student cultures, work with low-income parents and families, recognize and address racism and classism in their

school, ensure they maintain high expectations for all of their students (regardless of race or class), and enact systemic change.

UTC Demographics

There are currently approximately 20 students in the Urban Teaching Cohort. They are a range of majors, but all are in education licensure programs. While a number of them are students of color and low-income and/or first-generation college students, the majority is white and middle-class. Most of the students were admitted their first year of college and officially joined the cohort starting in their second year.

Curriculum Complications

The Urban Teaching Cohort is still a relatively new program. The first UTC seminar was taught last year, with unfavorable results. The 8-week “sprint” seminar was designed to educate students about issues related to racism and classism in the education system. The facilitators of the course reported that many of the class sessions were largely unproductive because the students were unwilling to engage in discussion about the topics. The facilitators expressed frustration with the students’ lack of response and suggested that the students were most likely not doing the readings and thus were unprepared for class.

Students were also unsatisfied with the course. Course evaluations indicated that the class should contain more lectures, and the student felt too much was asked of them since they were relatively new to the material. Students also reported that many of the class sessions made them feel uncomfortable. A few students claimed that when they did voice their opinion, they sometimes felt “attacked” or “shamed” by their peers or instructors. This made them increasingly hesitant to share in class. Lastly, some students indicated that they joined the UTC

because they wanted to volunteer and help people, and did not see what sitting around talking about problems accomplished.

The main goal of the course, as previously mentioned, was to expose students to issues of race and class in education and critically think about their role as future educators in addressing these issues. In the final assessment, many students expressed viewpoints that do not align with the goals of the course or the values of the Urban Teaching Cohort, such as “I am colorblind, I don’t see race,” and “There is a culture of poverty,” and “Anyone can achieve the American dream if they work hard enough.” These statements suggest that they did not achieve the desired course objectives.

Possible Explanations for Course Problems

It is likely that many of the issues the instructors and students experienced were the result of asking students to do too much, too soon. Given that many of our students are second years, it is possible that many of them still hold viewpoints and beliefs based on their parents, teachers, or other authority figures. This would explain why the students requested more lectures in a discussion-based course. Therefore, students need to be supported in creating a classroom culture based on discussion.

Additionally, given that the class is a sprint course, the instructors immediately dive headfirst into the topics. For example, in the current curriculum design, the first session is about privilege and oppression. The students are asked to do an exercise and discuss the ways in which they are privileged. Following this, the course immediately dives into issues of race and class in education. By the third week of class, students are asked to read complex articles such as, “Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education:

Acknowledging the Role of White Privilege and Racism.” Facilitators indicated that they selected this article because it is brief and addresses multiple issues, such as special education, racism, ableism, and white privilege. While this is a great piece, I believe students are asked to read this and other difficult articles before they have had time to build community and trust, reflect on their own experiences, and gain a basic understanding of social justice concepts such as oppression, privilege, social identities, etc. As a result, they lack the foundation necessary to engage in difficult discussions and feel unsure about the topics and what they can contribute. This uncertainty, in addition to concerns about how they might appear to their instructors and peers, decreases their confidence and renders them unable to fully participate in the class.

Lastly, students clearly had different expectations about the course than the instructors did. It is likely that both parties were dissatisfied at the end of the course because what they had imagined the course to be like was not actualized. To address all of these issues, I designed the following curriculum. While doing so, I solicited feedback from students, instructors, and other stakeholders on course structure, assignments, readings, and activities.

Proposed Changes and Justifications

The core goal of the previous curriculum was for students to understand issues related to racism and classism in the education system. Given that this goal appears to be too advanced, I propose that the new curriculum should have the following goals.

Students will:

- Understand foundational concepts in social justice/multicultural education, such as culture, socialization, privilege, oppression, and liberation.

- Foster the skills necessary to engage in respectful dialogue about difficult topics and complex issues.
- Learn strategies to reflect on their own experiences and consider how they impact how they view themselves, how they view their relationships with others, and how they view the world.
- Develop a multicultural outlook and an understanding of how to be more inclusive.

According to best practices, multicultural or social justice education should advance in steps, stages, or phases.⁴ This recognizes how students progress as their thinking and analysis of issues becomes increasingly complex. As a result, the redesigned curriculum is presented in a multi-week format that takes into account how the course should progress (see Appendix A). To assess if the students' achieve the desired learning goals, I designed several assignments (see Appendix B), which I will discuss in further detail, in addition to in-class activities.

Week One

Students often feel that conversations about various aspects of identity (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc.) are high-risk. They worry that they are not knowledgeable about the topics and do not know what language to use (and not use). They also feel concerned that they might appear prejudicial or discriminatory, and they fear being labeled as racist, sexist, classist, etc. Given this, the course should not begin with highly controversial or difficult topics.

Best practices indicate that the first session should begin by setting a foundation for dialogue in the course.⁵ Students should be asked to set "community expectations" that guide class discussion. Again, we should recognize that our students are most likely expecting the

instructors to set the rules. Therefore, to aid students in this process, they should do a short reflective exercise in which they consider the best class or classes they have taken. They should then think about what the teachers and students did and did not do in that class that made it a great learning experience. For example, students may write statements such as “The teacher respected us,” or “All the students listened to each other,” or “No one interrupted anyone while they were talking.” After the students reflect individually, ask them to report to the larger group what they wrote and make a comprehensive list. This list can then be used to set class expectations. If students do not mention certain important expectations, the instructor can introduce them—for example, do not attack peers if you disagree with them or do not repeat what your peers say to others outside of the class.

In addition to the class expectations, the instructors may also want to explain the concepts of comfort zones, learning edges and triggers. Students indicated in the previous course design that they often felt uncomfortable. While this is expected in courses that address topics of identity, privilege, and oppression, it is most likely not consistent with students’ prior experiences and so they interpret their discomfort by thinking that something is “wrong”—either with them or with the course material.

Discussing comfort zones, learning edges, and triggers will help students understand that certain levels of discomfort will be expected in the course due to potentially difficult conversations and that this is a part of the learning process. Many of our students highly value their instructors’ and peers’ opinions of them, and normalizing the discomfort by presenting it as a universal experience will help them be more open and willing to share. Additionally, presenting them with tools on how to respond appropriately to discomfort and triggers will

assist them in engaging in respectful dialogue and also discourage them from resorting to inappropriate reactions such as attacking or shaming.

Weeks Two and Three

In the current course design, little effort is made to support student interaction. Students are simply expected to discuss readings and activities. However, best practices demonstrate that dialogues are most productive when relationships are built and trust is established among students, particularly in diverse groups of students from different social backgrounds.⁶ While some instructors may have concerns that this takes away time from the core course content, it will be more productive to create a classroom community and then delve into course topics because students will be more open to discussion. As previously mentioned, many students place a high value on what their peers think of them, and thus it is essential to create a comfortable environment for students where they feel they can speak their minds without feeling stupid, embarrassed, guilty, ashamed, etc.

Several strategies can be employed to help build course community. For example, the instructors could ask the students to write *This I Believe* essays, based on the National Public Radio series.⁷ In the first or second week of class, listen to a number of diverse *This I Believe* essays. Then, ask the students to write one for the next session and if they are willing, share it with the class. This activity allows students to think about their core values, which are typically based in their personal experiences. Reflecting on their experiences and what they believe in is often powerful for students. Our students are still in the process of trying to figure out who they are, but are often not given enough time and space to reflect on their identities, belief systems, and values.

Furthermore, by sharing these values and experiences, students will better understand their peers. Often, the essays contain stories that are significant to the person, and sharing them with the larger group helps the students begin to trust each other. To start the session and model for the students, the instructors might share their This I Believe essays first. This may encourage some hesitant students to take the risk of sharing, and also helps the students build trust with the instructors.

Given that the focus of the course is education, the instructors might also ask the students to write their personal “Story of Education.” Rather than positioning the instructors as the “experts,” this assignment encourages the students to realize that they are well versed in aspects of K-12 education because they have firsthand experience with it. Possible questions for students to answer might include:

- What type of K-12 school did you attend?
- What was the racial makeup?
- What was the socioeconomic status of the area in which your school was located?
- What was the socioeconomic status of the students in attendance?
- Are you able to access your school’s “report card” during the time you were in high school, and if so, how did your school perform?
- How did your school differ from other local schools?
- What behaviors and values were expected from the students at your K-12 schools?
- What were the best aspects of your school? What aspects of your school were problematic or needed improvement?
- How did you end up attending this university?

- What experiences in school led you to want to be a teacher?

Again, students can choose to share their stories in class, either in pairs or with the larger group. This assignment will help students reflect on their own experiences as well as understand the experiences of others in the K-12 system in the United States. Furthermore, it begins to introduce students to the concepts that will be covered later in the course in terms of race, socioeconomic status, school quality, and disparity between schools. Rather than simply being told or expected to know about certain aspects of education (e.g., there is racism in schools), students will be able to begin to think about these complex issues concretely based on their personal experiences (e.g., I realized all of the students in my Advanced Placement classes were white and wondered why that is).

Weeks Four, Five, and Six

Now that students have had time to set expectations, begin building community and trust, and reflect on their personal experiences, the course should turn to some of the foundational concepts in social justice education. According to best practices, it is essential that students understand culture.⁸ This will provide the groundwork necessary for them to begin to explore concepts of privilege, oppression, agent groups, target groups, and the isms.

One potential way to help students start thinking about culture is to have them explore their own identities and social group memberships. For example, students might be asked to write and/or draw their “Frame” (See Appendix C). “The Frame” activity asks students to think about the things that make up who they are—their life experiences, unique qualities, and their similarities and differences in relation to others. The Frame encourages students to contemplate experiences in which they had a choice as well as experiences over which they had

no choice or control over. Many students who belong to predominantly dominant groups will most likely focus on roles they fill (e.g., brother, friend) or personality traits (e.g., compassionate, outgoing), while students who belong to target groups will focus on these identities as well (e.g., black, low-income).⁹ To push students to consider aspects of themselves they typically do not think about (meaning both their agent and target identities), “The Frame” also asks students to consider their social identities in various categories, including ancestral heritage, family, race, ethnicity, religion, age, profession, economic class, neighborhood they grew up in, neighborhood they live in now, gender, sex, sexual orientation, values, education, language, culture/cultural traditions and abilities¹⁰. Students can then share any aspects of their frame that they wish with their peers.

The Frame is a useful activity for several reasons. For many students, their understanding of culture is very limited and it is important for them to understand that culture is not created by society, but rather mutually produced and reinforced by individuals and institutions.¹¹ The Frame contributes to this by making students initially aware of their social identities and culture. It also helps students recognize commonalities as well differences between them and their peers, which helps them learn about identities and cultures that are different from their own.¹²

Another possible way to help students learn about other cultures is to ask them to attend cultural events on campus.¹³ Students may attend these events in pairs or small groups. This will make them more apt to step outside of their comfort zone, as peers’ support and approval is important to many students. Furthermore, attending events outside of class will

help the students continue to form relationships and strengthen the sense of community in the class.

As a part of understanding culture, it is also beneficial for students to explore socialization, and how we are socialized individually and institutionally to ascribe to a certain culture, belief system, and way of seeing the world. A potential activity to aid in this lesson is called “Act Like A Man, Act Like A Woman.”¹⁴ Five large pieces of poster should be placed around the room. They should be labeled: Act Like A Man, Act Like A Woman, Education, Religion, and Work. Give the student markers and ask them to consider the messages they have received about what it means to act like a man or woman. Also ask them to think of ways that gender plays out in institutions such as in schools, places of worship, and the workplace. Provide examples to get them started (for example, under Act Like A Man, you might write “always act tough, never cry”). After the lists have been compiled, reflect with students on what they see, and use Harro’s Cycle of Socialization to deconstruct the lists.¹⁵ Ask them how they receive these messages, what is considered “normal” or “right,” and what happens when people break these rules or do not fit neatly into categories. Students often generate large, comprehensive lists and find the activity relatively easy when involving gender. However, after this activity, use the same format but focus on race. Students typically find this much more difficult, but this will help students see and analyze Whiteness as a culture and racial identity. Many students, particularly those who are white, have never considered their Whiteness but asking them to reflect on it is an important aspect of multicultural education.¹⁶

Guiding students through these deconstructions in class in an activity-based format will help them process them and feel more confident discussing what they discover and how the

readings support or contradict what they think. After accomplishing this, they can continue deconstructing other dominant and targeted social identities and start to better understand how systems of oppression and privilege work.

Weeks Seven and Eight

In the final two sessions, students should continue furthering their understanding of culture. After recognizing and deconstructing white culture, students should be encouraged to recognize the legitimacy of other cultures.¹⁷ To accomplish this, students can write a cultural reflection or identity narrative in which they list important aspects of their culture (they might refer back to their Frame), consider how each attribute contributes to their identity or sense of self and how that impacts how they perceive and interact with others, and finally contemplate ways in which the attribute impacts their view of the world.¹⁸ Again, these can be shared in class (either in small groups or as a large group). By hearing their peers' stories and reflecting on them, students can understand that cultures can co-exist and recognize the benefits of diverse cultures. We typically assume that our students already know and understand this, but this way of seeing the world is a more advanced mindset and often requires time as well as relationships with diverse others to develop.

Following this activity, students will be prepared to start developing a multicultural outlook.¹⁹ Given that they are all in the Urban Teaching Cohort, a great way to facilitate this process is for them to analyze K-12 institutions and how they support or do not support the expression of diverse cultures. This will aid them in discovering how diverse cultures are present and promoted or absent and hidden. Students can then start to brainstorm ideas on how K-12 schools might enhance cultural inclusiveness. This final activity, which asks them to

apply what they have learned, will help them begin recognizing the ways in which racism, classism, and other isms play out in our education system, which was the overall goal of the initial curriculum.

Multiple Possibilities and Additional Changes

Students were given the opportunity to look over the proposed curriculum changes. They indicated that they preferred structuring the course with planned activities followed by discussion, rather than discussion of the readings alone. Students felt it was more hands on and interactive. While the activities described are possible ways to accomplish the course goals, there are several other ways to do so. These are merely examples. What is more important is that the activities, readings, and discussions help students progress through the curriculum.

After reviewing the revised curriculum, instructors initially expressed concerns about the course's lack of focus on educational issues. While some issues are covered, they felt it did not go as deep as the previously curriculum. However, this proposed framework is necessary for the students in the Urban Teaching Cohort to think critically about the issues presented in the first iteration of the course. To ensure that the students do explore these issues, either a second eight-week sprint seminar should be added or the course should be extended to the full semester. After following the proposed progressive curriculum, students will be better prepared to have difficult conversations on topics like "Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education: Acknowledging the Role of White Privilege and Racism" and other complex issues.

Something else the above curriculum does not explicitly address is the students' desire to "do something" and not just "talk about issues." Service-learning is a great way to provide students with practical experiences that connect to course content.²⁰ For this specific course, given its introductory nature, I suggest students going on 1-2 Urban Plunges. Urban Plunges are weekend experiences during which students learn about the community from community leaders and members, participate in a service project, and reflect. Through reflection, the course content can be connected to their experiences while on the Urban Plunge and the students can begin to understand how the concepts discussed in class play out in local communities. While weekly service is typically more effective for service-learning experiences, students who are not fully prepared to enter community from a social justice perspective can come with a "savior" complex and do more harm than good. Participating in Urban Plunges is a good introductory step that will help the students start to get more involved in the community with necessary support from their instructors and peers.

Final Thoughts

The redesigned curriculum takes into account how students see themselves as individuals, how they interact with others, and how they perceive knowledge. By doing this, the course allows them to build community and trust, contemplate their own experiences, and gain introductory knowledge of social justice concepts such as oppression, privilege, social identities, etc. This class, which is the students' first experience in the Urban Teaching Cohort, will provide the foundation for them to continue reflecting on their identities, building intercultural competence, and developing a commitment to social justice as they progress through the Urban Teaching Cohort.

SUMMARY OF REDESIGNED UTC CURRICULUM

Brief Synopsis of Issues in the UTC:

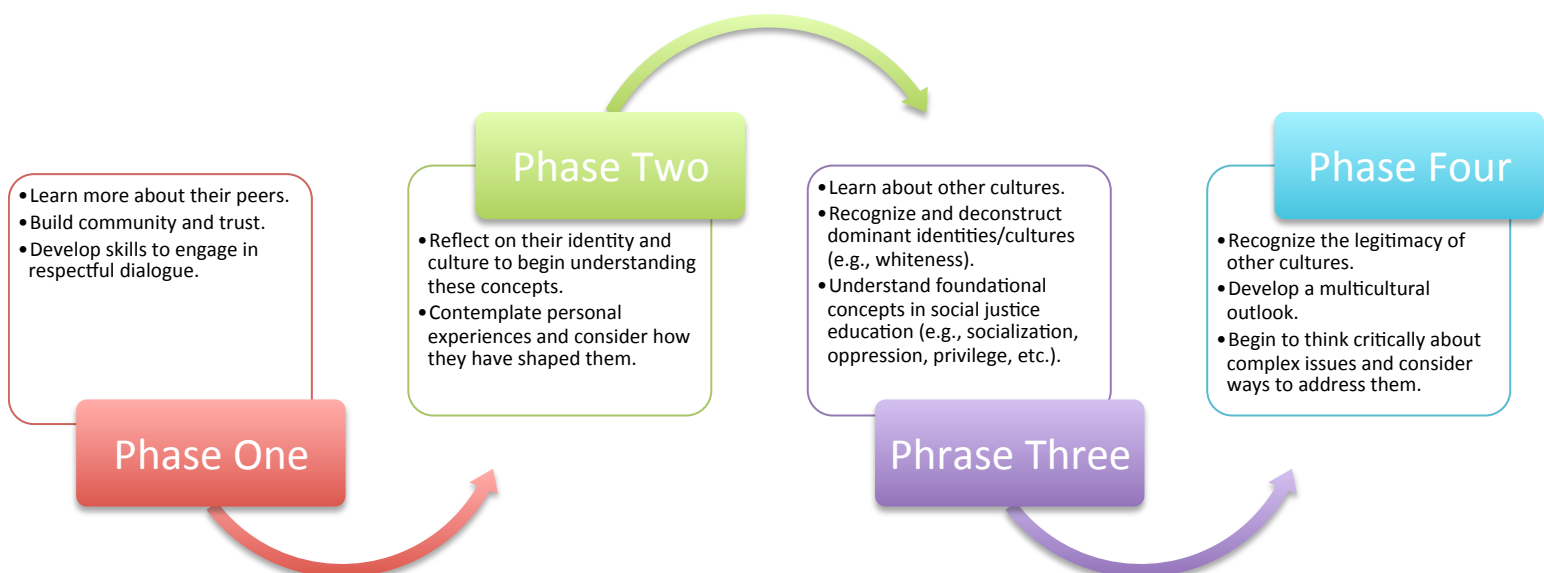
Students and instructors were dissatisfied with the outcomes of the seminar on issues of race, and class in education.

Possible Explanations:

Students and instructors had differing expectations—of the course and of each other. Students are in the process of trying to figure out who they are, and still place a great deal of value on what their peers and instructors think about them. They were expecting the instructors, as authorities or experts, to provide them with the information they needed. Furthermore, they viewed the course as risky and uncomfortable, and did not know how to engage in respectful dialogue about difficult topics, such as racism and classism. Finally, they lacked the foundational knowledge they needed to think critically and reflect on the complex issues introduced in the course.

Recommendations:

The previous curriculum dived headfirst into difficult topics. It assumed students were already mature enough to engage in discussions and understand complex problems. I propose a redesigned curriculum. To simplify the explanation of this curriculum, I created a diagram of the phases in the new course. The previous curriculum was developed with the idea that students were already in “Phase Four.” The redesigned curriculum, however, attempts to move them toward Phase Four in a progressive series of readings, activities, and discussions. The redesigned curriculum takes into account how students see themselves as individuals, how they interact with others, and how they perceive knowledge. By doing this, the course allows them to build community and trust, contemplate their own experiences, and gain introductory knowledge of social justice concepts such as oppression, privilege, social identities, etc. This class, which is the students’ first experience in the Urban Teaching Cohort, will provide the foundation for them to continue reflecting on their identities, building intercultural competence, and developing a commitment to social justice as they progress through the Urban Teaching Cohort.



Disclaimer: This is a partially true, partially fictional case that is based on my experiences in the Urban Teaching Cohort at Miami University.

Notes

¹ Haycock, K. (2001). Helping all students succeed: Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, 58(6), 6-11. / Holland, R. (2001). How to build a better teacher. *Policy Review*, 106, 1-5.

² Graziano, C. (2005). Public education faces a crisis in teacher retention. Retrieved 25 February 2012 from: <http://www.edutopia.org/schools-out?page=2>, para 6.

³ National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2010-2012). Standards. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncate.org/Standards/tabid/107/Default.aspx>

⁴ King, P. M., & Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2005). A developmental model of intercultural maturity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(6), 571-592.

⁵ Schoem, D., & Hurtado, S. (2001). *Intergroup dialogue: Deliberative democracy in school, college, community, and workplace*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ National Public Radio. (2012). This I believe. Retrieved from: <http://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe>

⁸ Ortiz, A. M., & Rhoads, R. A. (2000). Deconstructing whiteness as part of a multicultural education framework: From theory to practice. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(1), 81-93.

⁹ Tatum, B. (2010). The complexity of identity: "Who am I?" In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfield, C. R. Castaneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice*. (2nd ed.) (pp. 5-8). New York, NY: Routledge.

¹⁰ University of Minnesota. (n.d.). Get up, get into it, get involved! Pre-entry training for community involvement. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ohiocampuscompact.org/resources/services/>

¹¹ Ortiz, A. M., & Rhoads, R. A. (2000). Deconstructing whiteness as part of a multicultural education framework: From theory to practice. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(1), 81-93.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Adams, M., Bell, L. A., Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

¹⁵ Harro, B. (2010). Cycle of socialization. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfield, C. R. Castaneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice*. (2nd ed.) (pp. 5-8). New York, NY: Routledge.

¹⁶ Ortiz, A. M., & Rhoads, R. A. (2000). Deconstructing whiteness as part of a multicultural education framework: From theory to practice. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(1), 81-93.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ways, M.P., McMahon-Klosterman, K. M., Gibbons, H. G., Feldman Barr, T., Dutton, T., Hebard, A., Klatt, S., Leafgren, S., Matsuda, K., McGravey, M., Montgomery, K., Slotten, C., Smith, B. (2009). Service-learning at Miami University: Terms of engagement for academics in action [PDF document]. Retrieved from:
<http://www.units.muohio.edu/servicelearning/node/19>

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE CLASS SCHEDULE

Class	Topic	In-Class Activities (Subject to Change)	Assigned Readings and Homework (Due at the Start of Class)
Week One	Welcome, Course Overview, and Setting Expectations	Introductions Syllabus Overview Community Expectations Discussion about Learning Edges and Triggers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Week Two	Building Community: This I Believe	This I Believe Reading Discussion Where I'm From Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read 10 This I Believe Essays of Your Choice This I Believe Essay Due
Week Three	Reflecting on Our Educational Experiences	Share My Story of Education Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kozol (2004), Still Separate, Still Unequal My Story of Education Due
Week Four	Beginning to Understand Culture and Identity	The Frame Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tatum (2000), The Complexity of Identity: "Who am I?" Kirk & Okazawa-Rey (2010), Identities and social locations: Who am I? Who are my people?
Urban Plunge			
Week Five	Understanding Socialization and Deconstructing Dominant Cultures	Act Like A Man/Act Like A Woman Activity Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harro (2010), The Cycle of Socialization Johnson (2010), The Social Construction of Difference Blumenfeld & Raymond (2000), Prejudice and Discrimination Pincus (2000), Discrimination Comes in Many Forms: Individual, Institutional, and Structural Reflection Paper Due on Attending 2 Cultural Events of Your Choice
Urban Plunge			
Week Six	Understanding Oppression: Focusing on Race and Class	Discussion of Readings Deconstruction of Whiteness Activity Deconstruction of the American Dream Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young (2010), Five Faces of Oppression Wildman & Davis (2000), Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible Urban Plunge Reflection Paper Due
Week Seven	Recognizing the Legitimacy of Other Identities and	Read Identity Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harro (2010), The Cycle of Liberation

	Cultures and Developing a Multicultural Outlook	Discussion Explore the Cycle of Liberation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love (2000), Developing a Liberatory Conscious • Identity Narrative Due
Week Eight	Course Wrap-Up	Group Project Presentations Final Reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Group Project on Making K-12 Schools Culturally Inclusive Due • Final Individual Reflection Due

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments

Each of the following assignments places an emphasis on reflection. Reflection is an invitation to think deeply about our actions so that we may act with more insight and effectiveness in the future. It is probably something you do already: processing, analyzing, and integrating your experiences through writing, discussions with friends, art, etc. As related to service, reflection is the use of creative and critical thinking skills to help prepare for, succeed in, and learn from service experience, and to examine the larger picture and context in which service occurs (Jim and Pam Toole, Compass Institute).

1. This I Believe Essay (10%) (Due Week Two)

After reading essays from the *This I Believe* website (<http://thisibelieve.org/top/>), please write your own "This I Believe" essay. Guidelines can be found at this website: <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/>. Your essay should be approximately 500 -- 1,000 words / 2 double-spaced pages. Although you focus primarily on one core value when writing this essay, I hope this exercise inspires you to think deeply about the many values you hold. We will read these essays out loud in class. If you are not comfortable sharing your essay, you have the option to not do so. I encourage you, though, to take the risk of doing so.

2. My Story of Education (20%) (Due Week Three)

This assignment is meant to provoke self-reflection. Use this assignment to describe your own story of education. If you are able to articulate the ways in which privilege, race, and socioeconomic status have affected your own experience with education, you will be better able to understand the readings and contribute to class discussion. Papers should be at least 4 pages, double-spaced. Please answer the following questions in your paper:

- What type of K-12 schools did you attend? What was the racial make-up? The socioeconomic status of the area in which your school was located? The socioeconomic status of the students in attendance? Are you able to access your school's "report card" during the time you were in high school? How did your school perform?
- How did your school differ from other local schools?
- How did your race and socioeconomic status affect your attendance at that institution?
- What behaviors and values were expected from the students at your K-12 institution?
- How did you end up attending Miami as an institution of higher education? How was your decision to attend Miami affected by your own race and socioeconomic status?
- How have the readings you have completed in this class, EMPOWER I, and other courses informed your understanding of the education you have received?

3. Urban Plunge Reflection Paper (10%) (Due Week Six)

Write a reflection of your Urban Plunge experience. It should be 3 – 6 pages. Questions to consider when reflecting may include (but are not limited to):

1. Describe your experiences in the community. What have you observed or learned?

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2. What educational issues or other social issues did you come across while serving?
 3. How did these issues impact your work in the community? How did they impact you personally? How do they impact society?
 4. How does your experience relate to the academic knowledge you have gained in this class and others?
 5. What can you personally do to address educational and social issues in the future?
 6. What have you learned about yourself?

Your reflection should incorporate your own experiences in addition to course readings and course discussions.

4. Identity Narrative (10%) (Due Week Seven)

Write a personal voice narrative about your identity. Write this essay as if it is going to be included in one of the identity anthologies that we used in this course (*Readings for Diversity and Social Justice; Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*).

Focus on the aspect(s) of identity of personal choice. This essay may be written in any style that best conveys identity (e.g., prose, poetry). Based on the comfort level of each student and the class as a whole, these narratives may be shared during class. Before writing this narrative, read the narratives assigned for the readings to get a sense of some possible approaches. You can be as creative as you like!

5. Final Project and Reflection (20%) (Due Week Eight)

For your Final Project and Reflection, students will form small groups and will visit 2-3 local K-12 schools. The schools should be different – for example, rural vs. urban, predominately white students vs. predominately students of color, high performing vs. low performing. Look around the school and observe teacher-student and student-student interactions. Talk to administrations, teachers, and students. Look at their publications (mission statements, brochures, etc.). Then analyze each school based on how culturally inclusive you believe it is. What cultures are present and supported? Which cultures are absent and hidden? Provide recommendations on how K-12 institutions could become more culturally inclusive.

In addition to your final group project, write an individual reflection. Consider what you have learned and the experiences you have had (in and out of the classroom) over the past semester as you write. Questions to consider include:

1. What have you learned?
2. What have you learned about yourself?
3. Have you changed and if so, how?
4. How will this impact your future educational and career goals?
5. What are you passionate about? Has this class inspired any new passions or strengthened any previously existing ones?
6. What social issues do you hope to address in the future and how?

Your final reflection can be in the form of a paper, song, video, PPT or Prezi, a piece of artwork (such as a painting) or any other form you choose.

6. Attendance, Participation, and In Class Discussion (20%) (Ongoing)

This is a discussion (not lecture) based class. Achieving the goals of this course requires students' voices and experiences – thus, participation is a crucial way to share these voices and process thoughts and feelings.

Attendance will be tracked each week. You are only permitted one excused absence, after which points will be deducted from your grade. Since we meet for a short time, each week is important.

Guiding Discussion Questions for Readings

Consider the following questions as you read. Our discussions will not be limited to these questions; however, we will continuously revisit them.

1. What major insights did you gain from the reading?
2. What connections did you make between the readings and your own personal experiences?
3. What did you learn from the readings in regards to the concept of identity, privilege, and oppression?
4. What did you learn from the reading in regards to educational issues or other social issues?
5. Did anything from the readings strike you as pertinent or applicable to your future practice in whatever career you may choose?

APPENDIX C

THE FRAME (SAMPLE ACTIVITY)

FRAME EXERCISE

Use this blank piece of paper to create your "FRAME." Think about the things that make up who you are- your unique qualities, similarities and differences you have with other people, etc. Use the handout entitled "Valuing Differences" as a guide. This exercise will allow you to write down and reflect on your culture and history, the givens of who you are, the things you grew up with (some that may have been in your control and others that you had no choice about), and your values.

Adapted from Project for Pride in Living's "Diversity" training (1999)

Valuing Differences

Discovering Your FRAME

All the things that make up who we are and how we view situations can be referred to as our FRAME. Our FRAME is made up of values we hold, our culture and background, and life experiences. Life experiences include both things that we choose to do and things that we do not have any choice about or control over.

Things that make up our FRAME include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| -History/ancestral heritage | -Neighborhood grew up in |
| -Family | -Neighborhood live in now |
| -Religion | -Gender/sex |
| -Age | -Sexual orientation |
| -Profession | -Values |
| -Economic class | -Education |
| -Language | -Culture/cultural traditions |
| -Ethnicity | -Physical abilities |
| -Nation/region | |

****Individual experiences cause everybody to view the world in a different light. These experiences, or our FRAME, lead us to make assumptions about others and the world around us. Sometimes this leads us to make judgments or have feelings of uneasiness and mistrust toward other people. The FRAME approach challenges us to address our "fears" which are embedded in our assumptions - fear of the unknown, fear of what we don't understand, or fear of what we haven't experienced. Some ways in which to challenge this fear are:**

F - Figure out the facts - Not just what is apparent to you, but all the facts.

Seek more information, ask questions, and listen.

E - Expand your experiences - Explore, expose yourself, and encounter differences, increase your cultural competence.

A - Acknowledge and challenge assumptions - Check out what your expectations are and whether they are appropriate. Are you making assumptions based on your FRAME?

R - Reflect on reality - Is it my reality or their reality? Am I looking at this through my FRAME or trying to see it through their FRAME?

*Adapted from Elias Batiza's presentation on Cultural Diversity by Two-Gether Program/YWCA. PPL version for vol training 8/00.