

THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES

**ECUR 898.3 (09) RE/PRESENTING FAMILIES IN SCHOOLS
Summer, 2010**

Monday, July 19th through Saturday, July 24th 9 - 11:50 a.m.
Thursday, July 22nd or Thursday, July 29th 5 – 9 p.m.
Monday, July 26th through Friday, July 30th 9 – 11:50 a.m.
Tuesday, July 27th 6 - 9 p.m.
Room 2001, Education Building

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As teachers, we must be concerned with, and work to better understand, the families of the children we teach. In order to educate the whole child, we have to be part of a community of learners that includes the family of that child. When we understand that, then we can begin to work at developing educational programs that do not deny what those closest to the child have to offer. We can develop the climate in our classrooms that embraces parents rather than shuns them.

(Brock, in Miller Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010, p. 142)

Course Description

Representations of families exist everywhere – in literature and media, in our lived experiences of family and stories of others’ experiences, in curriculum documents and subject matter materials. Together we will explore dominant social, cultural and institutional narratives about families which underpin these representations and consider the influence they have on curriculum-making and decision-making in schools. Through interrogating course readings alongside experiences with families, we will work to interrupt our living out of these dominant narratives as we discover ways to use knowledge that resides in families to co-construct educational experiences for children.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to enhance your understanding of discourses and representations of families and the influence of these representations on curriculum-making in schools. It is further

designed to challenge you to rethink and remake your curricular practices in light of this new found understanding. In this course, you will:

- gain a depth of experience in family contexts,
- understand that each family has unique knowledge, culture, rhythm and context,
- learn ways to respond to the social and learning needs of First Nations and Métis students, as well as students from a variety of other cultures, including immigrant and refugee populations, within a culturally-affirming and family and community-based approach to education,
- explore the practical implications of racism, privilege, oppression and poverty in educational settings,
- develop a sound philosophy regarding the knowledge that resides in families; learn the benefits for students, families, communities, and staff in schools and child care settings of using parent/family knowledge in decisions regarding teaching, learning, and care; enhance your knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to translate this philosophy into practice,
- re-conceptualize the schooling and care of children in the context of family and community; learn ways as an educator/child care provider to step out of the school into the community.

Course Texts

(Texts are currently available for purchase in the University of Saskatchewan Bookstore, Marquis Hall.)

Cowhey, M. (2006). *black ants and buddhists*. Portland, Main: Stenhouse Publishers.

Miller Marsh, M. & Turner-Vorbeck, T. (2010) (Eds.) *(Mis)understanding families: Learning from real families in our schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Turner-Vorbeck, T. & Miller Marsh, M. (2008). (Eds.) *Other kinds of families: Embracing diversity in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Proposed Class Schedule

Class 1: What is “family”? (Monday, July 19th)

- notions of family
- “good” mother/”good” father
- dominant narratives of families
- portrayal of families in literature and media

Required readings:

Introduction *Other Kinds of Families*: pp. 1-3

Chapter 7 *Other Kinds of Families*: Kroeger, J., Doing the difficult: Schools and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer families.

Chapter 3 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Steinberg, S.R., Not the real thing: A history of Hollywood's TV Families.

Class 2: Telling and unpacking our own family stories (Tuesday, July 20th)

- narrative writing
- Where I'm From poems
- word images
- artifacts

Required readings:

Chapter 5 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Huber, J., Graham, D., Murray Orr, A., Reid, N., Literature conversations for inquiring into the influence of family stories on teacher identities.

Chapter 6 *Other Kinds of Families*: Miller Marsh, M., Evolving images: Crafting family lives in Colonial Pennsylvania, pp. 103-104 only

Chapter 6 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Miller Marsh, M. & Turner-Vorbeck, T., A tale of two adoptive families.

Chapter 9 *black ants and buddhists*, Seeing ourselves and our families through students' eyes.

Class 3: Interrogating family stories (Wednesday, July 21st)

- beliefs and assumptions
- bias and stereotypes
- othering

Required readings:

Chapter 1 *Other Kinds of Families*: Heilman, E., Hegemonies and "transgressions" of family: Tales of pride and prejudice.

Chapter 3 *Other Kinds of Families*: Rishel, T.J., From the principal's desk: Making the school environment more inclusive.

Chapter 1 *black ants and buddhists*, Prologue and Introduction.

Class 4: Elder teachings (Thursday, July 22nd)

- With elders Maria and Walter Linklater
- First Nations view of children/family

Required readings:

Chapter 7 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Graue, E. & Hawkins, M., "I always feel they don't know anything about us": Diverse families talk about their relations with school.

Class 5: Participation in a Sweatlodge (Thursday, July 22nd or Thursday, July 29th – evening class. It may be required for us to split into two groups.)

- as a way of knowing more of First Nations culture
- Sweatlodge begins at 6 pm
- We will meet for teachings by the elder's helper at approx. 5:20 (I will confirm the time)
- Please see *Details of the Summer Sweatlodge* at the end of the syllabus.

Class 6: Explicit, null and hidden curriculum of families (Friday, July 23rd)

- formal and informal curriculum
- considering the total school experience
- planned and unplanned outcomes

Required readings:

Chapter 10 *Other Kinds of Families*: Turner-Vorbeck, T., From textbooks to the teachers' lounge: The many curricula of family in schools.

Chapters 5 through 8, *black ants and buddhists*: Talking about peace, Learning through activism, Teaching history so children will care, Nurturing history detectives.

Class 7: Viewing *Born into Brothels* (Saturday, July 24th – 9 -11:50 a.m.)

- examining the discourse of family in the documentary
- examining Zani's beliefs and assumptions
- examining the explicit, null and hidden curriculum of "Kids with Cameras"

We will view the following documentary together and discuss our thoughts, responses, reactions:

Kauffman, R. & Briski, Z. (2005). *Born into brothels* [Documentary]. United States: Think Film Company Inc.

AFTER the viewing, please read:

Shah, S.P. (2005, Spring). *Born into saving brothel children*. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from: <http://www.samarmagazine.org/archive/article.php?id=190>

Sharpe, P.L. (April 30, 2005). "*Born into Brothels*" stars the good fairy, really, not the kids. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from: http://whirledview.typepad.com/whirledview/2005/04/born_into_broth_1.html

Wikipedia. (n.d.) *Born into brothels*. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_into_Brothels

Class 8: Learning Photo/Voice (Monday, July 26th)

- continue our conversation about *Born into Brothels*, in light of the readings
- discuss photo/voice as a methodology
- discuss photo/voice as a way of knowing families

Required readings:

Library Resource Page: Allen, J., Fabregas, V., Hankens, K. H., Hull, G., Labbo, L., Lawson, H. S., et al. (2002). Pholks lore: Learning from photographs, families, and children. *Language Arts*, 79(4), 312.

Library Resource Page: Giovacco-Johnson, T. (2009). Portraits of partnership: The hopes and dreams project. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37, 127-135.

Looking Out/Looking In: Women, Poverty, and Public Policy, at http://www.pwhce.ca/program_poverty_photovoice.htm

Please peruse this website on photo/voice, at www.photovoice.org. Be sure to read about what it is, its purposes, the ethics of doing photo/voice and some of the articles which speak about the ideological and methodological premises on which it is based. (Please excuse the promotion of the organization and requests for donations, as there is good information on the site.)

Class 9: Exploring Formal Curriculum Documents and Resources (Tuesday, July 27th)

- curricular aims, goals, objectives, foundational principles
- specific curricula/units of study
- resource materials
- children's literature

Required readings:

Chapter 8 *Other Kinds of Families*: Colabucci, L. & Conley, M.D., What makes a family?: Representations of adoption in children's literature.

Chapter 4 *(Mis)Understanding Families*: Lindsey, T.P. & Parsons, L.T., Messages protagonists send us: Families in young adult literature.

Saskatchewan Curriculum. https://www.edonline.sk.ca/webapps/curr-english-bb_bb60/index.jsp (Please review one grade level of curriculum in light of our course readings and discussions on family and on curriculum. What are your observations and insights?)

Class 10: Urban Families and Issues of Poverty (Tuesday, July 27th evening class – 6:00 - 8:50 p.m.)

- presentation of Poverty 101, facilitated and debriefed by BettyAnne Person, Past Chair, Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition
- poverty statistics in Saskatoon
- homelessness, health, psycho-social impacts
- actual budgets of a single person and a family living on social assistance
- poor-bashing
- hope

Required readings:

Chapter 8 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Brock, R., Debunking the myths about the urban family: A constructed conversation.

Chapter 10 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Li, G., Social class, culture, and “good parenting”: *Voices of low SES families*.

Chapter 2 *black ants and buddhists*, Compassion, action, and change.

Class 11: Rethinking Practice (Wednesday, July 28th)

- identifying specific practices
- interrogating them through the lenses of explicit, null and hidden curriculum
- re-imagining/re-planning these practices

Required readings:

Chapter 4 *Other Kinds of Families*: Rieger, L., A welcoming tone in the classroom: Developing the potential of diverse students and their families.

Chapter 11 (*Mis)Understanding Families*: Chung, S. & Clandinin, D.J., The interwoven stories of teachers, families, and children in curriculum making.

Class 12: Seeing Families as Strength-Based (Thursday, July 29th)

- Presentation by Hosiendad Alizadeh
 - father, educational assistant, Afghani refugee
 - Hosiendad’s personal story
 - cultural responsiveness, working with culturally-diverse children
- parent knowledge
- funds of knowledge
- cultural knowledge
- other kinds of families

Required readings:

Chapter 4 *black ants and buddhists*, It takes a village to teach first grade.

LRP: Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., González, N. (1992.) Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31, 132-141.

Class 13: Toward a “curriculum of family” (Friday, July 30th)

- considering what is needed in teacher education (content and process) to prepare teachers to work with families and to engage in curriculum-making alongside them

Required readings:

Pushor, D. (2009, May). The situation of parents in the curricular commonplaces: A

place of equal rank? *LEARNing Landscapes*, 2, (2), 139-154.
http://zegapi.com/view/?book_name=LearnSpring09

Chapter 11 *black ants and buddhists*, Building trust with families and weathering controversy.

Course Assignments

To arrive at a final mark, students must attend and participate in classes, and complete the course requirements as outlined in this syllabus. Descriptors provided by the College of Graduate Studies and Research will be used to assess the nature of your work (<http://www.usask.ca/calendar/gradstudies/additional/grading/>).

Photo/Voice Project (30%) Due date to be determined together as a cohort.

The curriculum of photo/voice is the photographic images of daily life as depicted by family members. In our context, it will involve you:

- selecting a family, different from your own, with whom to work and learn in relationship (I will help connect you with a family. If you have a family in mind, through your own network of relationships, please talk with me about your choice. I will provide you with an official letter for the family, detailing our project.)
- providing a camera for parents and perhaps other family members, so they can record images of aspects of their home and community which they deem important (I have 5 College of Education digital cameras for our cohort to use.),
- talking with them about their photographs so they can share their knowledge, perspectives, and understandings with you,
- creating with them a form of presentation of the photo/voice, which includes both images and voice (e.g. photo album with text, photo display with text, iMovie, Powerpoint, installation)
- during the process, interrogating with one or two other class members, the process and product of the photo/voice projects in relation to how family and community contexts can inform your understanding of curriculum and schooling.
- after the process, submitting to me both your photo/voice project and a written copy of your interrogation (see above), approx. 5 pages in length.

The photo/voice projects will provide an opportunity for course members to see families, homes, and communities through the eyes of family members – rather than through their own eyes as outsiders looking in.

For more information on photovoice, please visit www.photovoice.org.

To view a photovoice project done locally, *Looking Out/Looking In: Women, Poverty, and Public Policy*, please visit http://www.pwhce.ca/program_poverty_photovoice.htm

Rethinking Curriculum-Making (30%)

You will examine a recent experience of curriculum-making within your own practice, in relation to notions of family and curriculum implicitly and explicitly being lived out within it. Such experiences could include:

- a planned unit of study, inquiry focus, theme or big idea
- your selection of children's literature
- activities to get to know students at the beginning of a new school year
- your use of curricular resources.

In light of course readings, discussions, and activities, please interrogate this curriculum experience, attending to family structures depicted, discourses of families, un/conscious beliefs and assumptions, biases, stereotypes, and taken-for-grantedness. Then reconsider and re-imagine/re-plan the experience in a way that opens spaces for families to be viewed and positioned in ways that are complex, multiple, knowing, visible and present. What is different in your remake of this element of your curriculum? Why did you make the changes you did?

Reading Responses (40%)

1. *Family stories/stories of families*
2. *Explicit, null and hidden curriculum in relation to families*
3. *Other kinds of families*
4. *A "curriculum of parents"*

For each of the above four course topics, please:

- detail what you believed, felt, knew and understood about the topic before you began the readings/course
- write a five page synthesis, making direct connections to course readings, discussions, experiences, that makes explicit your growth in understanding about this topic
 - how have your beliefs been shaped/influenced/challenged/affirmed?
 - what greater knowledge/understanding/skill do you now have to translate these beliefs into practice in family and school contexts?
 - what have your most significant learnings been and why?

This is intended to be an honest account of your personal and professional growth and your shifts in thinking and identity as teachers. The purpose of the responses is to give you the opportunity to examine the philosophical, theoretical and pedagogical concepts presented in the readings in relation to your contextual, practical and personal understandings of families and schools.