

EDUC225: Empowering Learners

The Craft of Education Across Spaces, Contexts, and Purposes

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Tuesday/Thursday 9:55-11:15 AM

Bettws-y-Coed 127

Bryn Mawr College

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[Access to Ongoing Learning Needs & Ideas Survey](#)

OVERVIEW

Course Description

This course examines the field of education studies as conceptualized in the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Education Department and in relation to each enrolled student's experiences and aspirations. The course will explore key theories and philosophical questions; the significance of community-based work; skill-building in conflict resolution and restorative practice; the nature of assessment; and, throughout, retrospective experiential reflection and processing in dialogue with students' future goals.

Additionally, this first iteration of the course will serve as an incubator for a new introductory education curriculum for Education Studies majors and minors. Students in the class will be co-creators of and advisors on what information is most salient in an introductory education course in the BiCo. Thus, the course is an opportunity for any students who are interested in expanding and preparing their engagement with Education within and beyond the classroom and in forging new pathways for students in the Department.

The central questions of this course include:

- *What information/knowledge, skills, and frameworks provide a sturdy foundation for a successful introduction to education studies?*
- *How and where do educational theory and practice take place and matter in our world, both within and outside of the classroom?*
- *How can we facilitate reflection, learning, responsive, ethical, generative relationships, and positive change both within our department and in the greater world?*
- *What aspirations do I carry with me that educational thought, skill, and practice can help me to enact?*

Course Co-Facilitators

Thea Risher: I am a current senior at Haverford! As a Psychology and Education Studies double major, I am interested in the intersections of education with other fields. I was a member of the cohort of students who designed and proposed the Education Studies major, and this course is an extension of the work to continue building this department. I am personally interested in teaching at the elementary level in the future, with secondary goals of teaching abroad and becoming an educational psychologist or guidance counselor. This is my first time co-educating a college course, and I am truly delighted to have this opportunity. My hobbies include creating or looking at art, art, being outdoors in any way, and cooking.

Alice Lesnick: I have been a teacher (preschool-adults) since I graduated from college in 1984 and have taught in the Education Department for the past 27 years, chairing it for much of that time. I'm delighted by the emergence of our new Education Studies major and through it by the opportunity to collaborate with Thea – and you all – on the design and enactment of this course. My passions include dialogue (I am currently writing a book on it), trees (not an expert, but a big fan), painting (I'm a member of an artists' collective in Philly), and qigong (I'm an avid student).

Learning Goals

The learning goals of this course are:

- To co-create a solid foundations course introducing both the field of education and the BiCo Education Department.
- To witness the different forms, spaces, and contexts where educational theory, skill, research, and “praxis” (to be defined through the course) are present, and recognize the lived, embodied, application of educational constructs.
- To understand how educational theory, institutions, and practices influence and may contribute to students' personal aspirations and imaginings for their futures.

Site Visits

As a part of this course, the class will take two field trips to local organizations in Philadelphia that are using education in different ways. This will offer the opportunity to consider the different places and contexts in which education is valuable, and students will create reflections on what they have learned and seen during these visits. If students are unavailable for these field trips, they must communicate with the course co-facilitators to discuss alternative possibilities, as field reflections are required for each visit. [Links to site visits can be found here.](#)

COURSE POLICIES

Honor Code

All standards of academic honesty and integrity upheld by the honor code will also be observed in this course. We as educators fully trust that the ideas, experiences, and work that the work students claim to produce are their own. Generally speaking, the assignments of this course will always have a subjective dimension that involves personal experience and reflection, and as a result, plagiarism will not be a useful or relevant tool. If there are any questions about what constitutes academic honesty, please feel free to reach out.

The proliferation of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, Dall-E, Claude) and non-generative forms (e.g., Google Translate, Grammarly) offer opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to revisit the purpose of education broadly conceived and of learning in any given course. The Education Department takes and advocates an inquiry stance on the ways in which the proliferation of AI can inform thinking, attribution, research, and sharing in the production of knowledge with integrity. AI, like all technologies, can be put to positive/productive or harmful/detrimental use, and its various forms re-raise both new and age-old questions about creativity and ownership in knowledge production. Individual faculty members in the Education Department will explore particular uses of AI in individual courses. As with all scholarly work, appropriate citation is expected. See a useful resource with issues to consider and question about generative AI from the University of Michigan: <https://genai.umich.edu/guidance/students>

Attendance

The success of this course is dependent on students being active co-creators and contributors. Attendance is generally expected every day, with the understanding that life happens and some barriers to coming to class will arise. Students are expected to communicate in any scenario where they are unable to come to class. Missing more than 2 classes could negatively impact final grades because understanding of the course material will be significantly hindered. Missing more than 6 classes could result in failure of the course.

Learning Accommodations

As your co-educators, we are committed to ensuring that all students are equipped with the necessary accommodations to thrive in this course. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course can share their verification letter with Alice, and also make arrangements to discuss their specific accommodations/needs. Documentation is not intended to be a barrier to equitable accommodations; if any circumstances arise that require adjustments to accommodations, we are willing to adjust as needed. If any students don't have formal accommodations or have learning needs that are not fully met, we hope this can be communicated with us, and start the process of receiving ADS accommodations as needed. All

students will take an initial learning survey promoting communication of learning needs.

In addition to specific accommodations, we want to acknowledge that college courses do not exist in a vacuum. The state of the world impacts the ways that we can exist in school and accommodations pertain to global, cultural, shared experiences as well as individual. We intend to adjust the class as necessary to be mindful of global circumstances and hold space for current events that happen around us. The trajectory of this course may be changed by how our world grows and changes, and we intend to respond to new needs that may arise as a result of this.

GRADING AND COURSE COMPONENTS

Grading

In this course, we will think together about the usefulness of grades, and to what extent they are valid measures of progress, improvement, and learning. In some instances, traditional grades can be a hindrance to student success and well-being. At the same time, grades are also a part of life at our institutions and beyond. As a way to work with these tensions, each of the three assignments for this course will receive a numerical grade. However, the course will also have a self-grading aspect, where students will have the opportunity to propose their own grade based on their participation, engagement, and growth throughout the semester. The final course grade will integrate the ungraded pieces and the graded elements, classroom contributions, and self-assessments. Grading criteria are as follows:

- 3.7 to 4.0 - work distinguished by analytic depth, creativity, and engagement
- 3.0 to 3.3 - strong, capable, thoughtful work
- 2.3 to 2.7 - shows a grasp of materials but missing important elements
- 2.0 - missing important elements
- 1.7 and below - not demonstrating having met standards for moving forward

Participation and Discussion

This course will center around discussion, engagement, and being present. It is the daily expectation that students will have completed all required readings and materials thoughtfully prior to each class period, and come to the class ready to contribute to our learning community. Students may be asked to co-facilitate discussions, create discussion questions, or draw connections between themselves and the class materials. We want to acknowledge that participation looks different for everyone, and will honor all forms of engaging with and contributing to the course—we encourage all students to assess and comment on their individual contributions and styles of engagement in the final grading process. Participation and discussion are central to the collective success of this course!

Readings and Class Materials

All readings and course materials for this course will be posted on a shared class Google Drive. There are no readings that will be required for students to purchase or access in advance.

Assignments

The course will include three main assignments:

- [Assignment 1- Experiential Reflection](#): The first assignment of the course is designed to be a multi-modal reflection on the history and positionality of each student who is in our classroom community. It will afford insight into the ways in which identity, background, and (in)equity have shown up in education in the past, providing a personally situated framework for the rest of the course.
- [Assignment 2- Site Visit Reflection/Field Notes](#): This assignment will be a reflection related to the site visit of the student's choice. After engaging in a site visit or education-related event, the student will create field notes and observations about the visit, which will come together in a reflection about the experience of visiting this new site & place. This is designed to be a self-paced and informal way of engaging with the various collaborators of this course!
- [Assignment 3- Final Plan for Engagement](#): In the final assignment for this course, students will imagine a desired career path and choose a text or theory discussed in this class to inform their career aspirations. Students will create a written rationale for how an educational resource discussed in class relates to their imagined career path. This is an invitation to explore how educational theories impact all pathways.

Informal smaller assignments or in-class assignments are to be expected as the course progresses, including leading discussions, small group presentations, and synthesis of class readings or materials. In the case of smaller or in-class assignments, grades will be based fully on completion and these assignments will not receive a numerical grade.

UNITS OF EXPLORATION

This course will have 8 dynamic units that integrate self-study, understanding the Education Dept. within the context of the field of Education Studies, and witnessing how these connect with theories and strategies for impact. The following units are designed to be within the study of Education, but use theories and strategies that could be applied to larger worldly contexts.

Unit 1: Self Reflection: Inheritances & Hindrances of Education

The first portion of this course will allow students to reflect on their positionality, the educational landscape that they have grown up in, and the ways that their educational experiences have shaped their current lives and goals. This segment of the course will focus on power, privilege, and disenfranchisement to paint an accurate and nuanced picture of each individual's educational context.

Unit 2: Education Department/Introduction

The second unit is an introduction to the Bi-Co Education Department. It will include works written and/or by faculty within the department, and visits from the professors to talk about their missions, work, and personal educational journeys. This unit is designed to build an understanding of departmental culture, and the work that our faculty are continuously engaging in.

Unit 3: Subjective Measures of Success and Assessment

Unit three explores our current societal expectations of success, and how grading and standards affect our perceptions of being “well-educated.” Students will examine the current and past grading and testing structures most commonly used in our society, and what grading/testing structures have been most successful and unsuccessful in their own lives. Finally, students will begin to imagine alternatives to traditional grading systems that could be equitable or acknowledge more diverse educational experiences. This is a framework for understanding self-grading in the Educational Department and is designed to be an introduction to new grading forms, with room to discuss the intricacies that come with it.

Unit 4: Education, Technology, and Society

This unit is designed to address the complex and dynamic role of technology – including digital communications, A.I., and data science in education and as part of society – and how to grapple with it in skillful, creative, and critical ways. We will anchor this unit in students’ particular experiences, questions, and goals for using and thinking about digital and Internet-based technologies, and aim to co-construct, in dialogue with voices from the field, a set of flexible principles and tools for this work.

Unit 5: Theory/Research/Practice and the World

The Education Department in the Bi-Co is grounded in research and theory. How do we use research and theory? Why is theory important? How does it constitute, inform, and transfer to usable knowledge and educator skills? This unit is designed to draw and trouble the line between research, theory, and how they interact meaningfully in practice.

Unit 6: Conflict Resolution & Restorative Justice

Approaching conflict and consequences in response to conflict can be one of the most challenging aspects of not only education but also interpersonal relationships and the world. This unit explores ways of framing and responding to conflict and offers an introduction to the growing practice of restorative justice techniques. Students will have opportunities to imagine conflict scenarios and anticipate how they could be remedied through restorative justice practices.

Unit 7: Impact, Hope, and Struggle: Unpacking Hope and Packing for Hope

Education is a challenging field and often reflects and also contributes to societal inequities. A sense of hope and joy gives life to working within such complicated and flawed spaces. Unit 7 challenges

students to think about the emotional capacity and hope that is needed to work in fields that are constantly subjected to intense social disparities as well as public perceptions of the work that misalign with its actual goals and challenges. This unit allows students to understand the need for hope, manage/create expectations of change, and navigate systems of oppression without being defined by them.

Unit 8: Looking Ahead and Back: Weaving in Personal Aspirations, and Self-Assessing Current Strength and Values

The final unit turns to see how educational theory and practices could be applied to other landscapes and purposes. How could students use these skills and ideas outside of purely educational contexts? What contexts are education used in that are not explicitly the classroom? How have past students used their degree in education, and where has it taken them? This unit is a space to learn about how others have wielded education, and how students can in the future.

Semester Schedule

Tuesday/Thursday 9:55-11:15 AM

Note: certain dates' assignments are still in process; others may change as needed.

Week 1

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Jan. 23	Don't Hesitate: Mary Oliver	Introductory Activities Syllabus Review Navigate Course Folder Explanation of Site Visits
Thurs, Jan 25	Fill out EDUC225: Learning Goals & Background Survey Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons From Marine Mammals, pages 129-130.	Start of Unit 1: Self Reflection... Complete a Values Questionnaire & write about lifelong aspirations- to be sealed until end of class

Week 2

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Jan. 30	Self Excavation and Syllabi by Kelly Zuckerman Archeology of the Self- Yolanda Sealy-Ruiz: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmST_lehb_U https://thecorecollaborative.com/the-importance-of-reflection-in-education/	Kelly Zuckerman visits class: (10:30 am) Maurice Rippel visits class (time TBD)
Thurs, Feb. 1	James Baldwin, A Talk to Teachers https://www.edutopia.org/article/treating-reflection-habit-not-event/	Start of Unit 2: Intro to Ed Department

	Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom (selections TBD)	
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Week 3

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Feb. 6	<i>Cook-Sather: Living and Learning Partnerships in Teacher Education</i> Introduction, Ed program self-study	Alison visits class In-class assignment workshop & sharing-collaging, drawing, etc.
Thurs, Feb. 8	https://www.thisamericanlife.org/550/three-miles	Margo visits class
Fri, Feb. 9	ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE	

Week 4

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Feb. 13	What does it mean to be well educated? Alfie Kohn	Start of Unit 3: Assessment
Thurs, Feb. 15	NYC Teacher Evaluations What I've Learned from Ungrading Robert Talbert	Thea will be absent

Week 5

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
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Tues, Feb. 20	Talking With Students About Ungrading	
Thurs, Feb. 22	The Alternative Grading Glossary 7 Alternatives to Standardized Testing	In-class
Friday, Feb. 23	SITE VISIT at UrbEd Office: 1521 Locust Street at 5 pm	

Week 6

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Feb. 27	hooks, Teaching to Transgress, “I came to theory . . .” (audio) Robert Wall Kimmerer, Learning to See Bettina Love Chapter 6 <i>We Want to do More Than Survive: Theory Over Gimmicks</i> , “Finding Your North Star”	Start of Unit 4: Theory/Research/Practice
Thurs, Feb. 29	Michelle Fine discusses Community-Based Participatory Action Research (video on Tripod) Appadurai, The Right to Research	

Week 7

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Mar. 5	Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching, Madeline Grumet , preface and first 2 pp of ch. 10 “Commitment from the Mirror-Writing Box” by Trinh T. Minh-ha (on JSTOR), pp. 20-22	

	Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom (selections tbd)	
Thurs, Mar. 7	AI Guidance from Yale's Poorvu Center (Read overview and select 2 articles to dig into)	Start of Unit 5: Education, Technology & Society Talk by Robert Goldberg
Fri, Mar. 8	SITE REFLECTION #1 DUE	

Week 8: SPRING BREAK

Week 9

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Mar. 19	Clark, Natural Born Cyborgs? Ruha Benjamin, Widening the Lens to Spot, Fix, and Abolish Bias in Data and AI (video)	
Thurs, Mar. 21	Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action Cook-Sather & Lesnick, Engaged Voices, Engaged Beings	

Week 10

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, Mar. 26	Texts TBD	Thea will be absent /Talk by Xerxes Minocher? Text they suggest?
Thurs, Mar. 28	War, Khalil Gibran	Start of Unit 6: Conflict Resolution & Restorative Justice

	Beyond Fix-it or Leave it: Toward Conflict-Centered Theories of Change in Education Work, Curl & Lesnick Can Active Listening Work Without Trust? Lesnick	
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Week 11

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, April 2	The Restorative Journey, Malik Muhammad: Chapter 3: “The Formula for Change” Chapter 4: : “The Amazing Social Discipline Window”	
Thurs, April 4	The Restorative Journey, Malik Muhammad: Chapter 6 “Wielding Affective Language” Chapter 7 “Circles to Connect and Heal”	Restorative Circle Roleplay Activity

Week 12

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, April 9	Pedagogy of Hope: Chapter 3, Paulo Freire	Start of Unit 7: Impact Hope and Struggle
Thurs, April 11	Hope and Healing in Urban Education, Shawn Ginwright Chapter 2: Transforming Trauma into Hope and Power	
Fri, April 12	SITE VISIT: 5 pm at Science Leadership Academy	

Week 13

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, April 16	Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete: Jeffery M. R. Duncan-Andrad	
Thurs, April 18	Poetry is Not a Luxury, Audre Lorde Don't Hesitate: Mary Oliver Red Brocade: Naomi Shihab Nye	Letters of Hope Activity

Week 14

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, April 23	Ruha Benjamin Book Festival Talk Ruha Benjamin Viral Justice	Start of Unit 8: Weaving in Personal... Generate questions for alumni
Thurs, April 25	Read Alumni Panelist Information	ALUMNI PANEL
Fri., April 26	SITE REFLECTION #2 DUE	

Week 15

Date	Readings & Assignments (BEFORE class)	Class Activities & Notes
Tues, April 30	No Readings, In-class Workshop Day	Card game: mixing occupations and ideas from class to generate final assignment brainstorming Final Assignment Workshop

Thurs, May 2	No Readings Final Assignment Proposal Due	Last day of Class Open Lifelong aspirations from the first day of class
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Week 16

Finals Week

Assignment 3 due at the end of finals week