

## **COMS 580: COMMUNICATION EDUCATION**

Instructor: Christie Logan, Ph.D.  
Office: MZ 343  
Phone: 677-2859  
E-mail: christie.logan@csun.edu  
Office Hours: Tues 2 - 3; Thursday 1 - 2 or by appointment

Education is less and less a preparation for life and more and more a part of it.

--Mary Catherine Bateson

### **Course Context**

Welcome!! This class is about discovering and experiencing the excitement and challenge of the teaching/learning process. Your willingness to be open to new ways of thinking, your capacity to be creative and improvisational, and your desire to be moved, inspired and transformed are all important assets. In this course, we are all learners and teachers. Your experience and capacities as human beings are valuable resources for us all. Respect for yourself and others is essential for creating a positive learning environment in this class. I look forward to working with you to make this happen.

### **Course Description and Objectives:**

COMS 580, designed for graduate and upper division undergraduate students, addresses the communication dimension of adult education. The two primary goals of the course are to explore instructional communication issues and to improve the communication competence of students who function in instructional roles in a variety of settings.

The course combines theories and models from research in communication education, critical pedagogy, instructional communication, and multicultural education with practical, skill-based application. A foundational assumption of this course is that learning and teaching involve much more than the transfer of information. Drawing on theoretical and methodological frameworks from critical pedagogy, the course explores how instructional communication can be a form of critical intervention in society leading to personal, community, and societal transformation. Particular attention will be given to the ways in which race, culture, class, gender and sexuality intersect in educational institutions and instructional settings. Through praxis, the course serves to improve the communication competence of practitioners who function in instructional roles in a variety of settings.

Knowledge and skills gained from the class are applicable in a wide range of instructional settings including teaching in college and university classrooms, training in non-profit and for-profit business environments, and facilitating educational programs for community organizations. The course assignments and readings are theoretical and practical. We begin the course by questioning assumptions about the educational process and examining theorists who provide critical perspectives on education in the current global context. These readings are followed by selections that help students design learning experiences for different types of learners and various educational environments. Theory, practice and reflection are integrated throughout the semester to advance the goal of transformational learning.

As we progress through this course we will work to accomplish the following:

1. Foundational Knowledge
  - understand that teaching/learning is reciprocal
  - recognize how cultural notions/constructs of knowledge, learning, life take place
  - explain various models of learning styles
  - explain how conation affects decision making and learning
  - analyze assumptions about teaching
2. Application Goals
  - design meaningful learning modules
  - facilitate a training session for a selected adult audience
  - analyze and evaluate teaching/learning process
  - assess teaching/learning strategies
3. Integration Goals
  - recognize the relationship between experience and learning
  - understand the nature and function of narratives in learning
  - identify connections among the various writers' notions about teaching
  - incorporate materials from this course into their own teaching and learning
  - articulate a philosophy of education
4. Human Dimension Goals
  - understand how whiteness constructs privilege in the classroom
  - use knowledge of this course to transform society
  - empower others as they teach
  - develop a sense of confidence and purpose in teaching
5. Valuing Goals
  - understand the political nature of education
  - accept the importance of thinking and feeling with your body, mind, spirit and soul as you teach
  - develop sensitivity to multiple visions and experiences that affect learning
6. Learning How to Learn Goals
  - reflect on their own learning style
  - use learning about learning in everyday life

### **How will we achieve the goals we set?**

Dialogue and discussion are the primary modes of instruction. Each week you will be assigned readings which serve as the basis of journal writing and class discussion. Use your journal to reflect on what you read as well as to pose questions that arise in your mind.

My role is to help make this learning experience valuable for all of us. My role in this classroom community can best be defined as "knowledgeable critical facilitator." I will challenge you and hope you challenge yourself. You can assume that I will grade rigorously and fairly and provide feedback on your work.

Your role as students in this course is to engage fully in your own learning and to expect the same from other class members (including me). Participation means coming to class prepared and participating fully in class activities, including discussions, group exercises, and/or as an audience for your peers.

Some questions we'll consider:

- What assumptions guide the teaching/learning process?
- How do our assumptions reinscribe hegemony?
- What is the relationship between communication and pedagogy?
- What is the nature and function of communication in educational settings?
- What is the relationship between power and knowledge? How does power influence what counts as knowledge?
- How do we make the learning environment safe?
- How do we create meaningful learning? How do adults learn?
- How do we know when learning has taken place?
- How can we as educators promote positive personal and societal change?
- and other questions that arise. . .

#### **Required Texts & Relevant Readings/Resources:**

- Alexander, Bryant K., Anderson, Gary L., & Gallegos, Bernardo, eds (2005). Performance theories in education: Power, pedagogy, and the politics of identity. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Friere, P. (1998). Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- hooks, b. (1994). Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. Boston: South End.
- COMS 580 Reader - available only at Northridge Copy Center, 9130 B Reseda Blvd, 775-0255) at the Northridge Copy Center

#### **Course Policies**

Due Dates are firm. Assignments are due as designated in the syllabus. Late papers will be reduced one grade for each day they are late.

Writing Mechanics and Style: All papers should be typed and presented according to guidelines for each assignment. **PROOFREAD YOUR PAPERS.** If you need assistance with your writing, please use the resources available to you on campus including the Writing Lab of the Learning Resource Center. All work should be cited using either APA or MLA style.

Academic Honesty is assumed!! Academic dishonesty defrauds all those who depend on the integrity of University courses and is a serious offense covered by Section 41301, Title 5 of the California Administrative Code. This section of the Code is covered in the campus Student Conduct Code - also published in the University Catalog, Schedule of Classes, and the Student Handbook. Any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty is grounds for dismissal from the graduate program and disciplinary action by the university.

## **Course Requirements**

### **Class Preparation and Participation (10%):**

This is an interactive, experiential class. Students are expected to engage actively in class discussion, learning exercises, and group activities. There are many ways to participate including active listening, thoughtful inquiry, as well as verbal and non-verbal communication. Attendance is absolutely critical to meeting the overall requirements of the course. Your participation grade will be evaluated based on the *extent and quality* of your contributions to all class activities.

Class discussions and activities will build from the reading and your journal reflections, so it is assumed that these have been completed by the assigned date. You are expected to come prepared to proactively contribute to the intellectual and practical work of the class. In our interactive format, all are expected to be present and participate with vigor and mutual respect.

### **Scholarly Journal (20%):**

The journal is a space for you to reflect on yourself as a learner and teacher, respond to readings and in-class discussions, to connect theoretical material to your everyday life, and to develop a creative “posture” towards learning and teaching. Students are expected to write a reflective response essay (approximately two typed pages in length) each week (WEEKS 2-11).

Journal entries will be posted and/or collected periodically. In addition to the response essay, I encourage you to work with creative forms of expression, research inquiries, etc. I advise you to keep all your journal entries on a flash drive or in a notebook that allows you to detach the pages to turn them in, if you prefer hard copies (I don't). I will periodically provide feedback to you; you may ask for feedback any time.

### **Creativity Project (5%):**

Each week, a student will facilitate a brief (15-20 minutes) learning exercise aimed at teaching the class something that is exciting, creative and engaging. Possibilities for topics are open to your imagination. For example, you may introduce us to salsa dancing, finger painting, making origami or juggling. Obviously, the point of this is not to become proficient in this short period of time. Rather, the purpose of the assignment is to help all of us reconnect with the excitement and pleasure of learning, as well as the position of vulnerability and fear that accompanies venturing into the unknown.

### **Teaching Observation/Analysis Paper (10%):**

This assignment requires that you observe a teacher/trainer in an educational or professional setting of your choice and write a paper analyzing the experience. Students will be responsible for finding an appropriate learning situation to observe. It will be most informing and beneficial if you select an instructor/trainer working in the field/area in which you expect to teach. If anyone needs assistance, we will brainstorm options and opportunities in class. Following the observation, you will write a paper in which you analyze the communication dynamics observed in the classroom/teaching setting, apply concepts/issues related to critical pedagogy addressed in the course, and formulate

constructive criticism of the instructor/classroom. Further guidelines for the paper will be discussed in class.

### **Celebration of Knowledge (25%)**

The exam will consist of essay questions that require students to synthesize material covered in class and develop creative responses to issues in communication education. Students will participate in the construction of the exam questions.

### **Community-site Teaching/Training Project (30%)**

In order to accomplish this task, you must develop a relationship with a external community or educational site for the purpose of designing and implementing a teaching/training unit at the site. The site in the community will be selected based on students' areas of application and interest. The relationship with the site provides the opportunity to

1.) investigate a critical issue, 2.) design a workshop or training, 3) practice and experience the art of facilitation and 4) utilize your scholarship in a productive manner.

The project is divided into five phases and documentation of each stage will be completed at intervals throughout the semester. Students will work with a partner to assess each other as they present/teach their respective workshop/training at their community site. An evaluation form will be developed collaboratively by students and instructor during the semester. Each part of the project will receive a grade:

Phase 1: Research Project Description	(credit/no-credit)
Phase 2: Needs Assessment	( 5 points)
Phase 3: Teaching/Training Plan	(15 points)
Phase 4: Assessment of Partner	( 5 points)
Phase 5: Roundtable Discussion	( 5 points)

for a total possible of 30 points.

### **Overall Course Evaluation:**

Participation	10%
Scholarly Journal	20%
Creativity Project	5 %
Teaching Observation/Analysis Paper	10 %
Exam	25 %
<u>Community-site Teaching/Training Project</u>	<u>30 %</u>
Total	100 points

Grading: Plus/minus grading will be used, applied to percentages.

A = 94-100%	A- = 90-93%;	
B+ = 87-89%	B = 84-86%	B- = 80-83%;
C+ = 77-79%	C = 74-76%	C- = 70-73% etc.

**Note:** I would like to meet individually with each of you during the first 5 or 6 weeks of the semester. Please schedule with me.