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C&I 407E.03: Ethics and Policy Issues

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C&I 407 Ethics and Policy Issues
Spring 2007

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Office Hours:	As posted or by appt.	Class Hours:	T/R; 2:40-4:00

"In true education, it is always the teacher who learns the most." ~ Martin Heidegger

Required Readings:

In the UC Bookstore:

C&I 407 Faculty Pack and one text:

Essex, N. (2006). *A teacher's pocket guide to school law*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Course Description

This is a course in applied ethics for pre-service professional teachers. We will also study American public schooling within its historical, political, and sociological contexts. During the term, we will consider a number of major policy issues, framing each by ethical considerations. These issues include governance, equity, law, and purposes of public schooling.

Following this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a strengthened sense of commitment to the obligations of the teaching profession;
- Recognize and apply the rights, responsibilities, and ethical standards of practice for the teaching profession;
- Demonstrate awareness of the governance, financing, and legal principles of American education;
- Identify the operation and purpose of American education within its political and historical frameworks;
- Analyze and interpret selected education policy as it affects practice; and
- Show understanding of the issues of class, race, gender, and culture in the public school classroom.

Expectations

Lecture, case study, and discussion are the primary means of instruction used in this class. The success of our work, particularly our discussion, depends on the quality of preparation for each class. With this in mind, I expect everyone to be prompt to class, participate appropriately in discussion and activities, and read assigned material in preparation for each class. I try to be aware of the special needs of individuals as well as the needs of the group. Let me know of any accommodation you may require.

All written assignments should be double-spaced and include page numbers. Use a 12-point font, one-inch margins on all sides of each page, and a letter-quality printer. Indicate assignment **title, date and your student ID number** at the top of the first page. Assignments are due in class on the dates listed. Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Assignments will be graded using criterion-referenced methods, i.e., a specific set of standards. As a general guide, a “C” grade represents average work. It means that all assignments are done as described. A “B” grade represents above average work. It indicates that self-initiative has been taken to research topics and bring more to the assignment than just required. An “A” grade represents a high level of mastery with evidence of reflection and research as well as personal innovation, relevant applications, and extensions. **Should you have any questions concerning a grade, I am always happy to discuss them but ask that you make an appointment so I can give the matter careful consideration and maintain confidentiality.**

It is important to remember that effort alone does not necessarily guarantee above average grades; rather, high quality thought and products ensure above average grades.

Graduate Students

The Graduate School assumes that graduate students are taking this course for graduate credit. Please see me by the end of the first week to discuss the graduate project required for graduate credit. If you do not want graduate credit, please contact the Graduate School immediately to make the necessary changes in your registration.

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umn.edu/SA/VPSSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

Attendance/Participation: This is a course in which all students will be active participants. Your attendance and participation are highly valued. I take roll each class session and give one point for each full class attended. Your participation in class will involve discussion, reading the assigned materials and developing short presentations assigned either to individual students or small groups.

Two exams: The exams are intended to evaluate your understanding of major concepts presented in class. The format may include multiple choice, identification of terms, true/false correct the false statement, and short essay. Exam one is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 27th.

Case Analysis: This assignment asks you to analyze one of the ethical case studies in the Faculty Pack that we do not discuss in class. I will identify those early in our discussion of professional ethics. Limit your case analysis to five pages, following the general writing guidelines above. Answer each of the questions listed below. Note that only questions 2 and 8 invite personal opinion responses. Criteria for evaluation are ability to identify and explain the elements as requested, reason coherently, and write clearly within the five-page limit. The case analysis is due April 17th.

1. Name the case you have chosen and state the ethical question(s) that the teacher faces. Make clear the dilemma in the case, that is, the negative implications of each choice.
2. What are your initial thoughts about what the teacher ought to do or should have done?
3. What do the students in this case need and have a right to expect from the adults involved?
4. What is this teacher's duty? What can the other people in this case reasonably expect in relationships with this teacher?
5. What are the contextual details related to this case that the teacher should keep in mind? This might include legal requirements, rules and policies, and reporting hierarchies.
6. What does the professional code of ethics (NEA or Montana) indicate this teacher should do to resolve the dilemma? In case of conflict, what gets priority?
7. Did the teacher act ethically or not? Support or challenge the actions of the teacher in this case based on the use of ONE of the following:
 - Virtue based
 - Non-consequentialism (Equal respect for all persons)
 - Consequentialism (Benefit maximization)

Be sure to first defend your choice of an ethical framework before you begin a discussion of the case analysis.

8. What concrete moral communities have shaped your actions with students so far? Summarize and explain the approach you will use in your own future professional ethical decision making. In other words, what principles or virtues will direct your decision making?

Reflections: These are short papers (500 words or less) that you email to me the day before class. The reflections will be anonymously shared in small groups as a mechanism for generating discussion and reflection on class materials. Due dates will be announced in class.

- In your experience, in what ways do schools prepare students to participate in a democracy and take control of their lives? In what ways do schools teach students to be unthinking followers of rules?
- Describe in detail an event or personal experience at a school or college where you were not sure what the right course of action was -- where a difficult ethical or philosophical question was raised.
- Give one example in which it is right for a teacher to impose his or her moral views on children, and another in which is wrong to do so. Justify both examples.
- What understanding do children have of their own cultures, and how does exposure to other cultures change their perspective? Try to draw on your own experience from your youth or as a teacher.

Identity, Diversity, and Social Justice Exploration: This assignment has several parts. It is designed to help us begin to understand each other's important social and cultural identities, to generate a dialogue among ourselves about the meanings of our cultural and social identities. We will also explore similarities and differences that surface.

Culture Chest (Due March 6th)

Choose a small box or a paper bag as your "chest". Choose three items that describe your membership in various social/cultural groups, specifically **race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, social class and/or age**. These items may be things that are or are not close to your heart. Those items could be a photograph, piece of art, book, music, or anything that describes aspects of who you are or what is meaningful to you. Place these items inside your "chest". Decorate the outside of the box or bag with images (pictures, your own drawings, words/phrases) that describe how you think other people see you **as a result of your different group memberships**. We will share these cultural chests with each other in class.

Multicultural Map (Due March 13th)

Development of the multicultural map is designed to help you understand and recognize your locations in social groups and to reflect on how these social group memberships have affected your life. As you develop a multicultural approach to teaching, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which each of us is "multi-cultural." That is, we are all members of many different cultural groups (or social identity groups) that influence our lives strongly or subtly. The groups of which we are members are themselves located within a societal context; in our case this would be the Montana and U.S. societies.

Based upon our group memberships and how we identify with (or are identified within) each group, we have similar or different experiences than do other people. All people have things that are unique about them arising from individual temperaments, families, and socialization experiences. We have many elements we share with others because of the groups we belong to, some of which we choose and some of which are assigned to us by law or the assumptions of

others. These group identities affect how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. We can use our knowledge in one category to help us see and understand more about another category, and also by sharing our understanding and perceptions with others who occupy similar and different categories.

A visual map of multiple group memberships in a societal context and the formation of a sense of “self” will be provided in class. The innermost circle of the multicultural map represents your “self,” the middle ring of circles represents different cultural groups, and the outermost circle is the societal (U.S.) context. For at least six of the eight cultural groups (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender etc.), note the specific identity group(s) (e.g., African or African American, East Indian, European American, Irish American, Japanese or Japanese American; female or male; etc.) of which you are a member. Then list on the “map” some of the commonly-held values, beliefs, behaviors, and any other aspects of this group’s culture of which you are aware.

Written Narrative (5-7 pages; Due April 6th)

Part I:

Begin your narrative by reflecting on your multicultural map, discussing which of your group memberships you believe are **most important in their influences** on you. Explain **why** you believe this to be the case. If you believe or feel that all are equally important, discuss **why** you believe this is so.

Think about your personal experiences and your own approach to life and its challenges.

Describe how key influences—family, friends peers, schools, teachers, communities, ideas, values, aspects of your upbringing, your culture(s), and/or the wider society—have been formative in your thinking about your key memberships in the different groups and your own identities. (For example, what have key influences taught you about what it means to be female/male? To be working class/upper-class? To be of color/white?)

Describe the values that you associate with U.S. society. Think about the “American Dream” and icons that are portrayed to be “all-American”. How do these “standards/values/images affect who you are? **How do you see members of your identity groups treated within this societal context?** (For example, if you are from the working class, how do you perceive that those who are members of this group are perceived or treated within the larger U.S. society? If you are female, how do you perceive that women are perceived or treated within the larger U.S.? What about members of your racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, age etc. groups?)

Part II:

Taking Action to Address Personal and Social Change

In part one of the written narrative, you reflected on your own cultural background and the influence of various social identity groups and society. In part two of your written narrative, we move to identifying ways in which we can take action, individually and collectively, to address personal and social change in our lives, our schools, and society.

1. Form a group

For this part of the assignment you will participate in a group project with four or five other students. The focus is on change and the central question is what actions can I take NOW to effect personal and social change in our schools and communities?

2. Select a change activity.

You may select an activity from the list below, or you may participate in a personal or social change activity that is not on the list. **If you choose to participate in an activity that is not on the list, please be sure to discuss this choice with the instructor prior to your participation.**

- Attend a cultural event held by and for members of a social identity group of which you are not a member (e.g., Powwow). Attending a religious celebration does not count.
- Participate in a social justice event (e.g., rally, protest, picketing) to demonstrate your support for social change.
- Wear a lapel pin for one week to demonstrate your support for the rights of a marginalized community group (e.g., gay/lesbian/bisexual individuals)
- Create a media presentation depicting images of oppression and/or liberation.

Because one purpose of this experience is to increase your learning and/or skills, the activity you select **must be one that is new for you and one that is connected to social change.** For instance, if you've been active in Immigrant Rights activities in the past, you must select a new activity for this project.

3. After participating in the activity, meet as a group and consider each of the following five items.

What are the most important things you learned about yourselves as individuals? about yourselves as members of particular social identity groups? About other people?

What were some of your thoughts and feelings as you participated in this activity? In particular, in which ways did you feel comfortable, and in which ways uncomfortable? Why do you think you felt comfortable/uncomfortable?

In what ways did the social group memberships of your work group members influence your group's selection of activities, each group member's reactions to the activities, and your ability to work together as a group? If you encountered any particular difficulties, how did you work together as a group? If you encountered any difficulties, how did you work through them?

In what way(s) do you see group selection contributing to personal change and social change? Be sure to consider changes that occurred within individual group members, between or among group members, and between group members and others.

Reflecting broadly, what interconnections do you see between personal and social change?

4. In part two of your written narrative, address the questions above and include any final thoughts about the activity that indicate your current goals for addressing diversity and social justice in your teaching. What has happened to you as a result of exposure to this material? What sources of support will you utilize to continue your dialogue about difference? Include at least three citations from the literature to support your points.

Grading Policy

Final grades will be calculated based on the following percentages of total points:

		Assignment	Value
A	95-100	Participation	10%
A-	92-94	Two Exams	30%
B+	90-91	Case Analysis	20%
B	87-89	Reflections	10%
B-	84-86	Diversity Exploration	30%
C+	81-83		
C	78-80		
C-	76-77		
D	68-75		
F	Below 68		

Please note that this document serves as a guide for course content and student evaluation. I welcome student input and reserve the right to be a learner as well as a facilitator. Thus, I may adjust this guide as the semester proceeds. Any changes will be announced in class.