

COURSE TITLE: WRITING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: Engaging Students In Literacy
NO. OF CREDITS: 3 QUARTER CREDITS
[semester equivalent = 2.00 credits]

INSTRUCTOR: MEGAN FREEL
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WA CLOCK HRS: 30
OREGON PDUs: 30
PENNSYLVANIA ACT 48: 30

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Writing is an invaluable skill for our students. Literacy directly correlates with better student outcomes, including higher wages and more formal education (AAFP). Unfortunately, educators are rarely taught how to make writing engaging for their diverse classrooms. As a result, teachers struggle to motivate students who have internalized failure at writing.

In this course, you will learn how to engage all students in mastering writing standards. We will examine the best practices of award-winning educators who have made writing accessible in their classrooms. We will learn how to create writing units based on social justice issues that center student voices and reflect their lived experiences. You will have the opportunity to create a usable writing unit for your class that examines current social justice issues (racism, sexism, the prison system, LGBTQIA + rights, etc.).

REQUIRED TEXT

None

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Upon completion of this course, participants will have:

- Defined social justice education
- Critically examined student voice and how it impacts engagement
- Analyzed current anti-bias literacy frameworks
- Reflected and chosen best practices to incorporate into their own pedagogy
- Created writing prompts specifically for their students

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Completion of all specified assignments is required for issuance of hours or credit. The Heritage Institute does not award partial credit.

HOURS EARNED:

Completing the basic assignments (Section A. Information Acquisition) for this course automatically earns participants their choice of CEUs (Continuing Education Units), Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or Pennsylvania ACT 48 Hours. The Heritage Institute offers CEUs and is an approved provider of Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, and Pennsylvania ACT 48 Hours.

UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT INFORMATION

REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

Continuing Education Quarter credits are awarded by Antioch University Seattle (AUS). AUS requires 75% or better for credit at the 400 level and 85% or better to issue credit at the 500 level. These criteria refer both to the amount and quality of work submitted.

1. Completion of Information Acquisition assignments 30%
2. Completion of Learning Application assignments 40%
3. Completion of Integration Paper assignment 30%

CREDIT/NO CREDIT (No Letter Grades or Numeric Equivalents on Transcripts)

Antioch University Seattle (AUS) Continuing Education Quarter credit is offered on a Credit/No Credit basis; neither letter grades nor numeric equivalents are on a transcript. 400 level credit is equal to a "C" or better, 500 level credit is equal to a "B" or better. This information is on the back of the transcript.

AUS Continuing Education quarter credits may or may not be accepted into degree programs. Prior to registering, determine with your district personnel, department head, or state education office the acceptability of these credits for your purpose.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

REQUIRED TEXT

No text is required. All readings are online.

None. All reading is online.

MATERIALS FEE

None

ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED FOR HOURS OR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

A. INFORMATION ACQUISITION

Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators who have or are taking the course independently. Feel free to read and respond to others' comments.

Group participants can only view and respond to their group members in the Forum.

Assignment #1: Introduce Yourself

Welcome to Writing for Social Change!

Create a word cloud using the following link: <https://www.freewordcloudgenerator.com/> in order to introduce yourself.

- Include at least 20 words that represent some part of who you are; repeat words that are more significant. Words could represent your interests, education, passions, personality, etc. Post a PDF of your completed word cloud to this assignment and write a 200-300 word summary on what you realized about yourself during this activity.

OR

- You may create a written introduction (300-600 words, single-spaced). Be sure to include your interests, background, and why you've chosen to take this course.

Post your response in the **group forum** and respond to at least one participant taking this course.

Assignment #2: What Your Students Need Most

In many ways, it has never been more challenging to be an educator. Most teachers argue that their workload is unmanageable and is not reflected in their compensation. Meanwhile, our students are dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges focusing in class, and a multitude of other issues that have made school more anxiety-provoking.

Read the following article, "[Six Things Students Need Today](#)," From the Washington Post. After reading, write a 1-2 page (1.5 spaced) response to the article. Discuss the following questions in your response:

- Which of the six things mentioned in the article do you find most significant for your students? Why?
- Which of the six things do you feel least confident about? Brainstorm a way in which you could incorporate it into your classroom.
- Brainstorm ways in which you could begin to incorporate more of the six things in your classroom.
- What would you add to this list of things students need most today?

Post your response.

Assignment #3: Creating a Community of Conscious

Read the following articles: "[How to Teach Social Justice in Theory and Practice](#)" by Caitrin Blake and "[What is Social Justice Education](#)" by Lee Anne Bell.

In the first three paragraphs, Blake shares a variety of examples of what social justice can look like in the classroom. She argues that classrooms, at their core, should be places where students learn the critical thinking skills needed to express their views on the world. In the second article, Bell addresses how diversity is a cornerstone of a social justice education.

- Based on both readings and your own understanding of the topic, create your own definition of social justice education. Be sure to write your definition in student-friendly language so it could be used in your classroom. Write 1-2 paragraphs on your definition of social justice education.
- In addition, write 400-500 words addressing the following question: What rules, systems, and practices can you incorporate into your classroom to foster a classroom community of conscience?

Post your response to the **group forum** and respond to at least one participant's definition.

Assignment #4: Speak Up: Your Students Are Listening

In 2022, almost 70% of our public school teachers in the United States identified as White (ZIPPA). At the same time, our student population continues to grow more diverse. It has become critical that all educators learn how to talk about race, identity, and social justice with their students. As you begin to create more social justice curricula for your students, you must also practice speaking to your students about moments of racial tension or violence.

Read the following article, "[Don't Say Nothing](#)," and write a 400-500 word reflection (1.5 spaced) discussing the following questions:

- What biases and privileges do you hold?
- Are you comfortable talking about race in your classroom? Why or why not?
- Do you think your students would appreciate you sharing more about your own beliefs and experiences?

Post your response.

Assignment #5: Student Voice

Since the 1990s, student voice has become a growing initiative in our school system. Student voice is the practice of centering student input while allowing them to become more active participants in their learning. In order to incorporate social justice education into your classroom, it is often necessary to shift the roles of teacher and student. When you allow students more space to share and lead in the classroom, they learn it is a place where they can safely express their identity and speak out against oppression.

- Listen to this powerful spoken word poem, "[Simon Says](#)," which was written and performed by Ashley Davis and Oompa. Their poem emphasizes the silencing and policing of our Black and Brown students.
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/zatHOwWBPEI?si=p6uv9bYDe5RWnKdP>
- Next, listen to [Donovan Livingston's powerful commencement speech](#) given at the Harvard School of Education graduation.
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/9eUI4gF0ED4?si=XJwjbxeh-8sOnH98>
- After listening to both videos, write a list of promises you want to make to your student. Each sentence should begin with "I promise" and should emphasize an action you will take to center student voice in your classroom. Your list should include at least 10 promises.

Post your response.

Assignment #6: Writing as Resistance

Writing has consistently been a tool for activism and resistance throughout the course of modern history. Writing has been particularly critical for communities of color who have historically used their words to expose oppressive systems while provoking change.

Examine the following article, "[Writing\(s\) as Resistance...](#)" By Morehouse professor Nathaniel Norment.

Choose one of the poems or civil rights texts listed at the end of the article and examine it closely. In a 1-2 page (1.5 spaced) paper, state which source you read and answer the following questions.

- How is the text an example of writing as resistance?
- What oppression or injustice does the text examine?
- What changes (if any) does the text propose?
- If you had your students read this text, what potential writing prompts would you give them afterward?

Post your response.

Assignment #7: Exemplar Lesson Plans

Review the following exemplar lesson plans that engage students in writing while teaching them about systemic injustices.

- [Facing History: Dr. King's Legacy](#)
- [Facing History: The Concept of Race](#)
- [Facing History: LGBTQ History and Why it Matters](#)

Next, specifically look at the writing prompts included at the end of each lesson plan. Based on the same lesson plans, write a new writing prompt for students that is both highly engaging and connected to the content they learned.

- (Note: You should have 3 new writing prompts, one for each of the 3 lesson plans attached.)

Post your response to the **group forum** and give feedback to at least one participant's response.

Assignment #8: Social Justice Frameworks

In recent years, educators have created new frameworks for teaching literacy that center on student voice and social justice education. Read the following articles on Historically Responsive Literacy, a new framework created by the genius of Dr. Gholdy Muhammad.

1. [Article #1 - Cultivating Genius](#)
2. [Article #2 - Historically Responsive Literacy: A More Complete Education for All Students](#)

After reading the above articles, write a 2-3 page, 1.5 spaced reflection on this new framework. Discuss the following questions in your response:

- What concerns did Dr. Gholdy Muhammad have with traditional literacy curriculum?
- Where did Dr. Gholdy Muhammad find inspiration for her new framework?
- What are the main tenets of Historically Responsive Literacy?
- Do you agree with Dr. Muhammad that a framework specifically designed to support students of color will benefit all students?

Post your response.

Assignment #9: Exploring Sources that Confront Injustice

Examine the following free social justice resources that have lesson plans and tools for educators.

- [Facing History and Ourselves](#)
- [Learning for Justice](#)
- [Zinn Education Project](#)
- [CommonLit](#)

After exploring the resources above, find one lesson plan or text from each site that you could incorporate into your classroom. Paste the link to each of the three resources as well as a 1-2 sentence summary of why you chose it for your classroom.

Post your response to the **group forum**.

Assignment #10: Change the Audience

Far too often, teachers are the only "audience" students have the opportunity to write to. As a result, students tend to get bored with writing assignments that often feel repetitive and insignificant. One easy way to change this dynamic is by changing the target audience. Read the following article, "[5 Authentic Audiences to Ramp up Students' Interest in Writing.](#)"

In 400-500 words, reflect on the reading. Use the following questions for guidance:

- Do students often write to the same audience in your class?
- Which of the audiences will you consider using more in your writing assignments? Why?
- Think of at least one assignment that would be engaging for your students that uses a unique audience. Describe it.

Post your response to the **group forum** and give feedback to at least one other participant's response.

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

B. LEARNING APPLICATION

In this section, you will apply your learning to your professional situation. This course assumes that most participants are classroom teachers who have access to students. If you do not have a classroom available to you, please contact the instructor for course modifications. Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators who have or are taking the course independently. Feel free to read and respond to others' comments. Group participants can only view and respond to their group members in the Forum.

Assignment #11: Social Justice in Your Classroom

Learning for Justice created these [social justice standards for K-12 students](#). These transformational standards focus on identity, diversity, justice, and action. Read through each set of anchor standards and choose which ones you would like to include in your classroom.

In a short slideshow (4-8 slides), explain the social justice standards you chose for your classroom. Include at least 2 standards chosen from each of the four domains. Be sure to make the slideshow student-friendly. Add elements for student voice by including reflection questions on the slide, such as, "Which diversity standard do you think is the most important in our classroom? Why?"

Post your slideshow.

Assignment #12: Lesson Plan

Complete **one** of the following:

Option A)

Adapt/create a unit consisting of at least two lessons reflecting what you've learned in this course, with appropriate discussion strategies.

- Before implementing, create a pre-survey for your students about their confidence and enjoyment in writing.
- Implement your lessons with students in your classroom.
- Use your own template (or the standard [lesson planning template](#).)
- Implement your lessons with students in your classroom.
- Write a 400-500 word analysis on the data, include charts, and commentary on what worked well and what could be improved.
- Include any student feedback or noteworthy student products.
- Submit your unit plan to your instructor via the lesson tab.
- Share what you've learned with other teachers taking our courses by checking the [lesson library box](#) when you submit your lesson.

OR

Option B)

Use this option if you do not have a classroom or students available.

Adapt/create an article of at least three lessons to reflect what you've learned in this course. (Do not implement it.)

- Please refer to the [guidelines](#) for our blog What Works: Teaching at its Best prior to writing your article.
- When you submit your article to your instructor, please email a copy to Renee Leon (renee@hol.edu), the THI blog curator.
- Please indicate whether or not you are OK with having your article considered for publishing on our website.
- Submit your article to your instructor via the Response field and the modified lesson via Submit Lesson.
- As you submit your article, consider sharing it with other teachers taking our courses by checking the [lesson library](#) box.

Post your lesson plan.

Assignment #13: Create Your Own Writing Prompts

In addition to the 400-level assignments, complete **two** of the following:

Option A)

Create two writing assignments for your students based on a social justice topic that pertains to your class. Complete the following document describing the writing assignment you will create: [Writing Assignments Doc](#). Read this article from [XQ Institute](#) for great topic ideas (high school level).

AND/OR

Option B)

Create a mini social justice unit for your students based on your learning in this course. Create an outline for the daily learning targets and content.

- Use your own template to create your unit or use [this unit planning outline](#)
- Implement your lessons with students in your classroom.
- Write a 400-500 word reflection on the unit describing what worked well and what you would adapt in the future. Include any student feedback in your reflection.
- Submit your unit plan to your instructor [via the lesson tab](#).

AND/OR

Option C)

Choose one of the following books to read and summarize. Include the author's background and the key concepts and recommendations from the work in 3-4 pages (500-800 words).

Textured Teaching by Lorena Escoto Germán (168 pages)

Literacy is Liberation: Working Towards Justice Through Culturally Relevant Teaching by Kimberly N. Parker (165 pages)

The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How to Decolonize the Creative Classroom by Felicia Rose Chavez (216 pages)

C. INTEGRATION PAPER

Assignment #14: (Required for 400 and 500 Level)

SELF REFLECTION & INTEGRATION PAPER

(Please do not write this paper until you've completed all of your other assignments)

Write a 400-500 word Integration Paper answering these 5 questions:

1. What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?
 2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
 3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
 4. How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
 5. How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?
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INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS ON YOUR WORK:

Instructors will comment on each assignment. If you do not hear from the instructor within a few days of posting your assignment, please get in touch with them immediately.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:

Megan Freel, M.Ed., received her Master's in Education from Johns Hopkins University while teaching in Baltimore City through Teach For America. She has taught in various title 1 schools across the country and worked primarily with disadvantaged communities. Megan specializes in developing anti-racist instruction for diverse students. She has created multiple curriculums for middle and high school students that use a social justice lens to confront history. She has been trained in Restorative Practices, Trauma-informed Teaching, and student-centered learning. Currently, Megan is teaching at Cesar Chavez k-8, a DLI school in North Portland.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WRITING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: Engaging Students In Literacy

CommonLit

www.commonlit.org

CommonLit is one of the sites I use the most in my own classroom. Their materials are all free and offer hundreds of reading lessons for students on engaging topics. Their texts all include annotation tools, reading guides, and assessments.

Cult of Pedagogy

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/>

Cult of Pedagogy is a site made by former teachers who hope to offer resources and strategies to those still in the classroom.

Edutopia

<https://www.edutopia.org/>

Edutopia is a foundation, created by George Lucas, that is working to transform education in the United States. The site offers everything from how to videos for teachers to articles on the newest theories and practices.

Facing History & Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/>

Facing History & Ourselves is another resource that I use constantly when building curriculum. This site has so many different resources, but my favorite is the free lesson library. They offer American history lessons that are both highly engaging and challenging for students.

Free Word Cloud Generator

<https://www.freewordcloudgenerator.com/>

Word Cloud generator is a free site that allows you to make word clouds and save them to your computer. Students love using word cloud as it provides an opportunity for creative expression.

Learning for Justice

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/>

Learning for Justice, previously Teaching Tolerance, is an organization working to dismantle white supremacy through their educational resources. The site offers free lesson plans and texts on important social justice topics. Many of the readings discuss critical moments in U.S. history that are often omitted from other sources or textbooks.

Morehouse Faculty Blog

<https://facultyblog.morehouse.edu/>

Morehouse College is a prestigious historically Black college in Atlanta, Georgia. The Morehouse Faculty Blog is a space where professors at the university are able to publish articles for the public on relevant topics. Often these articles discuss important equity issues.

Resilient Educator

<https://resilienteducator.com/>

Resilient Educator is a site dedicated to supporting all teachers. It is made for teachers, by teachers and includes a wide variety of tools, articles, and strategies.

The Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com>

The Washington Post is a highly respected news organization that publishes daily articles on current events, relevant research, and thoughtful opinion pieces.

XQ Institute

<https://xqsuperschool.org/>

XQ Institute is working to transform high school education so that it better prepares students for college or a career.

Youtube

www.youtube.com

Youtube is a free online video sharing website that has roughly 800 million videos.

Zinn Education Project

<https://www.zinnedproject.org/>

The Zinn Education Project was created after the success of Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States. The site offers easy to use readings and lesson plans for history teachers, organized by time period and topic.