COURSE TITLE: **TEACHING THROUGH CURIOSITY: Bridging Divides in Education**

WA CLOCK HRS: **60**
OREGON PDUs: **60**
NO. OF CREDITS: **6 QUARTER CREDITS** **PENNSYLVANIA ACT 48:** **60**
[semester equivalent = 4.00 credits]

INSTRUCTOR: **Alison Beanblossom**
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course explores the role of curiosity as a transformative practice in education, rooted in the work of Mónica Guzmán's I Never Thought of It That Way. Educators today face increasingly polarized classrooms, staffrooms, and communities. This course equips teachers with tools to listen deeply, hold complexity, and build bridges across difference—skills that are essential for creating inclusive and engaging learning environments. Participants will learn to model and foster civil discourse and empathy in their classrooms, while also applying these strategies in conversations with colleagues, navigating challenging dynamics with parents and caregivers, and supporting young children in developing their own communication and problem-solving skills. By centering curiosity, educators can strengthen relationships and foster more compassionate, connected school communities. This course is suitable for educators, counselors, coaches and building leaders from PK to 12.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Upon completion of this course, participants will have:
1. Examined how curiosity can disrupt assumptions and reframe challenging conversations

2. Practiced communication strategies that foster trust and perspective-taking

3. Analyzed the impact of political, social, and cultural divides on educational practice

4. Applied book principles to real-life situations in teaching, family engagement, and school leadership

5. Designed classroom or professional experiences that promote constructive dialogue

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

The use of artificial intelligence is not permitted. Assignment responses found to be generated by AI will not be accepted.

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
Guzmán, M. (2022). I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times. BenBella Books

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: Introduction

1. Read: Introduction and Chapter 1
2. Answer the following question (2-3 pages)

- Pick a sentence from the chapter that resonates with you and explain why it stood out.
- Reflect on how this line connects to your role as an educator and your experiences in communication or conflict

Assignment #2:

1. Read: Chapters 2 and 3
2. Answer the following questions (2-3 pages)

- Reflect on a time when you felt yourself “sorting” or “othering” someone in your work environment. Have you seen others do this?
- How did this affect communication, and what role might curiosity have played in shifting the dynamic?

Assignment #3:

1. Read: Chapters 4 and 5
2. Answer the following questions (2-3 pages):

- Create a visual or written map of your “information diet.” Who and what are you listening to or influenced by?
- Identify missing voices or perspectives and describe how you could intentionally expand your awareness.

Assignment #4:

1. Read: Chapters 6 and 7
2. Answer the following questions (3-4 pages)

- ?Chapter 6 introduces a key principle: "Ask What, Not Why." Guzmán explains that while “Why?” questions can feel like accusations or challenges, “What?” questions open space for reflection and reduce defensiveness. For example, instead of asking, “Why would you think that’s appropriate for our students?”—which may put someone on the defensive—you might ask, “What experiences led you to feel strongly about that?”
- Identify a recent or upcoming conversation with a colleague, caregiver, or student that could become emotionally charged.
- Write down 2–3 “Why?” questions you might be tempted to ask. Then rewrite them as “What?” questions that aim to foster curiosity and understanding.
- Reflect on the impact:
  ? How do the revised questions feel different?
  ? How might they shift the tone or outcome of the conversation?
  ? If you used one in real life this week, what did you notice?

Assignment #5:

1. Read: Chapters 8 and 9
2. Answer the following questions (2-3 pages)

- Think of a recent tense moment in your work or personal life.
- How could applying “Get Curious, Not Furious” or “Listen for What’s True” have changed the experience?

Assignment #6:

1. Read: Chapters 10 and 11
2. Take the values quiz referenced in the book at https://www.idrlabs.com/human-values/test.php
3. Answer the following question (2-3 pages)

- Reflect on your top 2–3 values. How do these shape your work as an educator? How do they show up when you’re in difficult conversations?
- How does recognizing the values behind someone’s beliefs help make their perspective more understandable, according to Guzmán?

Assignment #7:

1. Read: Chapters 12 and 13
2. Answer the following questions (2-3 pages)

- Reflect on how your language either invites or shuts down curiosity in your role as an educator. Analyze your listening style. Do you listen to understand or respond?
- Identify one shift you can make to open up more generative conversations.

Assignment #8:

1. Read: Chapters 14 and 15
2. Answer the following prompts (2-3 pages)

- Create a simple preparation tool or checklist for engaging in a difficult school-based conversation.
- Include mindset reminders or phrases from the book that you want to carry into your professional practice.

Assignment #9:

1. Read: Epilogue
2. Answer the following questions (2-3 pages):

- The conclusion of Guzmán's book is a call to keep choosing curiosity, not just as a strategy, but as a mindset and way of being in the world. She reminds us that bridge-building is ongoing work that requires courage, humility, and repetition. What insight or phrase from the conclusion resonated most with you, and why?
- Identify one concrete commitment you're making to practice curiosity in your work (with students, families, or colleagues).

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 #10:

1. Listen: Podcast, The Empowering Teacher: "Leaning on the 7 Habits During Difficult Conversations." Link
2. Answer the following questions (2-3 pages)

- Reflect on how ideas from the podcast reinforce, challenge, or extend Guzmán's approach to curiosity and communication.

Assignment #11:

1. One of the key ideas in *I Never Thought of It That Way* is that recognizing our own biases is essential to practicing authentic curiosity, especially when tensions or misunderstandings arise. Biases are not inherently "bad," but unexamined, they can narrow our thinking, affect how we treat others, and reinforce divisions in our classrooms and communities.
2. Answer the following prompts (3-4 pages):

- Reflect on your experiences as an educator and individual. Identify three personal or professional biases you hold. These could be based on age, race, language, behavior, parenting styles, educational background, political views, or even personality traits (e.g., assumptions about "difficult" colleagues). For each one, describe when and how it tends to show up in your work—especially in interactions with students, families, or coworkers.
- For each bias, reflect on: How does it affect your tone, assumptions, or decision-making in those moments? How might it unintentionally reinforce division or exclusion in your classroom or school?
- Choose one of the biases you identified. Describe a specific strategy you will use when that bias is triggered.

Assignment #12:

1. Design a lesson plan:
2. Design a complete lesson plan that introduces and teaches one core idea from Mónica Guzmán's I Never Thought of It That Way (e.g., "Ask What, Not Why" or "Get Curious, Not Furious") to your students. This lesson should be developmentally appropriate for your teaching context (grade level/content area) and emphasize respectful, curiosity-driven communication.

Format Options

1. Submit as a written Word or PDF document (2–3 pages),
2. Create a visual presentation (8–10 slides) in PowerPoint or Google Slides, OR
3. Use Heritage Institute's Lesson Plan template

Your lesson plan must include:

- Grade and subject area
- Title of the lesson
- Duration of the lesson

- Learning Objectives
- Core idea being taught and a brief explanation of how it connects to the book
- Materials and resources needed
- Step-by-Step procedures for the lesson including: opening activity or question, main teaching activities, guided and independent practice, opportunities for student reflection
- Assessment strategies to evaluate both student understanding and emotional safety

Assignment #13: (500 Level ONLY)

1. Watch: Brenee Brown's Anatomy of Trust Video - Link
2. Answer the following prompts: (2-3 pages)

- Compare Mónica Guzmán's approach to bridge-building through curiosity with Brené Brown's framework around vulnerability, empathy, and trust.
- Where do they align? Where do they diverge?
- How could you combine their approaches to support school culture, team dynamics, or restorative practices?

Assignment #14: (500 Level ONLY)

1. In this assignment, you will design a 60–90 minute professional development (PD) session for educators at your school or organization. The goal is to create a meaningful learning experience that introduces staff to the key principles of I Never Thought of It That Way by Mónica Guzmán and equips them with curiosity-based strategies for navigating difficult conversations, fostering inclusion, and building stronger relationships with students, families, and colleagues. This session should reflect an understanding of the book's core ideas (e.g., "Ask What, Not Why," "Get Curious, Not Furious," "Listen for What's True") and show how they can be applied in school settings to support both individual and collective well-being.

- Format: Submit your session as a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation (10–20 slides recommended).
- Length: Designed for a 60–90 minute in-person or virtual PD session.
- PD should include at least 2 interactive components

Assignment #15: (500 Level ONLY)

1. Create a Community Resource:

- Choose a short podcast, article, or resource for a parent/caregiver audience about talking across differences. This could be a video or podcast featuring Monica Guzman.
- Design a one-pager, video script, or slide show for parents or caregivers about how to use Guzmán's strategies at home—with children, family members, or neighbors.
- Include 3 key tips and 2 "what to say instead" examples inspired by the book.

C. INTEGRATION PAPER
Assignment #16: (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?

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:
Alison Beanblossom, LCSW, earned her master's degree from the University of Chicago in 2003 and has over 20 years of experience as a school social worker. She is currently the Early Childhood Mental Health and Wellness Manager at Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon, where she supports educators, students, and families in fostering social-emotional well-being. Throughout her career, she has held multiple roles in Head Start, including Home Visitor, Program Manager, and Mental Health Consultant, giving her a deep understanding of early childhood development and family engagement. In addition, she serves as an adjunct professor at Portland State University, contributing to the development of future professionals in the field.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Guzmán, M. (2022). I never thought of it that way: How to have fearlessly curious conversations in dangerously divided times. BenBella Books.

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The Empowering Teacher. (2022, March 21). Leaning on the 7 habits during difficult conversations [Podcast episode]. In The Empowering Teacher Podcast. NWEA. https://www.nwea.org/resource-center/resource/the-empowering-teacher-podcast-leaning-on-the-7-habits-during-difficult-conversations/