

COURSE TITLE: "WHY ARE THEY PICKING ON ME?" Understanding & Responding to Social Cruelty
WA CLOCK HRS: 30
OREGON PDUs: 30
PENNSYLVANIA ACT 48: 30

NO. OF CREDITS: 3 QUARTER CREDITS
[semester equivalent = 2.00 credits]

INSTRUCTOR: Lori Gibson
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Are kids at your school mean to each other? Of course they are. When kids are cruel to other kids not only does it do direct harm to the victims, it also affects the learning environment for everyone. Over the years schools have responded with strong, no bullying policies and these are important because they show solidarity with the victims. Dr. Carl Pickhardt suggests in his book, *Why Good Kids Act Cruel*, that it's time for a more effective approach.

He believes that while we do need to deal decisively with acts of social cruelty, that most of these acts, especially in the teen and early adolescent years, are caused by deeper issues that should be addressed. This course aims to provide educators with a more complete understanding of social cruelty and encourages a proactive approach for addressing it.

This course is appropriate for Pre-K through grade 12 teachers, administrators, support staff and parents.

Note: The book was written mainly for educators and parents of middle-schoolers. However, regardless of the age group you work with this information is crucial so we can be part of the solution.

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

1. Defined social cruelty, its emotional and academic consequences for the victims and how social cruelty undermines the social safety of *all* students.
2. Learned why "good kids" engage in social cruelty and how the normal developmental tasks of childhood/adolescence play a significant role in the dynamics of social cruelty.
3. A sense of the five (5) major tactics of social cruelty, including the unique adolescent fear that gives the tactic power and the unique cruel message each tactic sends when it is used against the victim(s).
4. Learned what educators and parents can do pro-actively to prepare students to deal with social cruelty, as well as what steps can be taken to hopefully prevent, or at least limit such acts.
5. Acquired some specific strategies that educators and parents can employ to help students cope with social cruelty when it occurs.

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%
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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

The required text is *Why Good Kids Act Cruel*, by [Carl Pickhardt Ph.D.](#), 2010: Source Books. New York, NY. 320 pages. ISBN 978-1402219443.

None. All reading is online.

MATERIALS FEE

Text, *Why Good Kids Act Cruel*, is approximately \$5 approximately from Amazon.

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

Read **Chapter 1: Social Cruelty** in the course text and write a 250 – 500 word response to the following questions:

- Briefly introduce yourself, your current work situation, and why you chose this course.
- Summarize Dr. Pickhardt's definition of social cruelty and the potentially damaging consequences for the perpetrators, victims, and all students - both emotionally and academically.

Assignment #2: Early Adolescence

Read **Chapter 2: Early Adolescence** in the course text, and reflect on the following quote: "Self-consciousness makes it easier to be hurt, and social awareness makes it easier to hurt others." In 250 -500 words:

- Describe the changes that occur in self-consciousness and social awareness from childhood to adolescence.
- Reflect on how these changes make adolescents more "developmentally equipped" to be the victims of social cruelty or to engage in it.

Assignment #3: Teasing & Exclusion

Read **Chapter 3: Teasing** and **Chapter 4: Exclusion** in the course text. Choose one of these social cruelty tactics, and in a 250 – 500 word paper, address the following:

- Identify and give an example (from one of your students is preferred) of the tactic you chose.
- Identify at least two (2) of the messages that are being sent to the victim by using this tactic.
- Identify the adolescent fear(s) that the tactic exposes in either the victim(s) or the perpetrator(s)

- Identify and reflect on at least two (2) strategies that caring adults could implement to effectively support the victim and/or the perpetrator.

Assignment #4: Bullying, Rumoring & Ganging Up

Read **Chapter 5: Bullying**, **Chapter 6: Rumoring**, and **Chapter 7: Ganging Up** in the course text. Choose one of these social cruelty tactics and, in a 250 - 500 word paper, address the following:

- Identify and give an example (from one of your students is preferred) of the tactic you chose.
- Identify at least two (2) of the messages that are being sent to the victim by using this tactic.
- Identify the adolescent fear(s) that the tactic exposes in either the victim(s) or the perpetrator(s)
- Identify and reflect on at least two (2) strategies that caring adults could implement to effectively support the victim and/or the perpetrator.

Assignment #5: What the School Can Do

Read **Chapter 8: What the School Can Do**. 250 -500 word paper:

- Summarize and reflect on the reason(s) it is important for school personnel to not “turn a blind eye” and instead intentionally rise to the challenge and confront issues of social cruelty.

Assignment #6: The Gifts of Adversity

Please read the chapter **Conclusion, The Gifts of Adversity: Good Lessons From Bad Treatment**. In a 250 – 500 word paper, address the following:

- Identify the five (5) powerful lessons that can be learned from the adversity of social cruelty.
- Describe your reaction to this perspective as it is put forth by the author.

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 #7: Developmental Challenges

Chapter 2 deals with the developmental challenges for children entering adolescence and how the impact of those changes can contribute to meanness in the social world. In a 500 – 750 word paper, create a case study of a student (based on an actual student, if possible) who has been a victim or a perpetrator of social cruelty. Be sure to include how these developmental challenges (i.e., the student's experience of loss and/or feelings of insecurity) contributed to the “perfect storm” conditions for social cruelty.

Assignment #8: The Roles of School Personnel

In the course text (pg. 120), it is stated, “If parents and teachers leave young people alone to figure out the rules of social conduct at this sensitive and impressionable time, they allow social cruelty to reign free.” In **Chapter 8** the roles of school personnel are discussed. Meet with one (1) or more of your teaching partners (or another similar grouping of colleagues) and discuss the following information:

- The role that your position (teacher, administration, etc) can play in reducing social cruelty at your school.
- Specific strategies (2-5 pro-active and/or reactive strategies) and how they could be implemented to address social cruelty with your students.

Write a 500 – 750 word paper summarizing the content of the discussion and your reflections on the interaction and likelihood of the

strategies being implemented by you and your teaching partners.

Assignment #9:

Using the knowledge you gained in Assignment #8, implement at least one (1) of the strategies that you listed. Write a 250 – 500 word paper detailing your experience, and be sure to include:

- Your assessment of the frequency and impact of social cruelty in your school.
- A summary of the strategy (or strategies) you chose to implement and the reason for your choice.
- A reflection of the implementation (i.e., what went well, what you would do differently next time).

Assignment #10: (500 Level ONLY)

In addition to the 400 level assignments, complete **one (1)** of the following:

Option A)

Interview another educator about his/her perspective and thoughts on the topic of social cruelty. To document completion of this assignment, write a 500 – 750 word summary highlighting key insights, include the following:

- the date of the conversation
- the role of the person with whom you spoke (colleague, supervisor, friend, etc.)
- why you chose to interview this person

Send to instructor: loribgibson@hotmail.com. Subject line to read 'Why Are They #10A'.

OR

Option B)

In **Chapter 2** the course text states, "This is the power of early adolescence: It disconnects the young person from childhood and creates an enormous sense of insecurity that is comprised of equal parts loneliness, uncertainty, and anxiety." The purpose of this assignment is to interview a high school or college-aged student and discuss his/her experience with these issues. Please organize your interview around one (1) of the following topics:

- The seven (7) hard trade-offs that must be made in order to grow up.
- The insecurity of adolescence and its three (3) equal parts.
- Adolescent experience with social cruelty, how they believed it shaped them and the adults' reactions to social cruelty at that time.
- Other content that you deem appropriate based on the student you are interviewing.

As evidence of assignment completion please submit a 1-2 page summary of your interview and reflection on the content that was covered based on your learning from this course.

Send to instructor: loribgibson@hotmail.com. Subject line to read 'Why Are They #10B'.

OR

Option C)

Another assignment of your own design with prior approval from the instructor.

Send to instructor: loribgibson@hotmail.com. Subject line to read 'Why Are They #10C'.

C. INTEGRATION PAPER

Assignment #11: (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:

Lori Gibson, M.A., E.S.A., is a dedicated school counselor with a wealth of experience in the field of education. She holds a Master's degree in counseling psychology from Gonzaga University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in both education and psychology from Whitworth University. With a career spanning 31 years, Lori has contributed her expertise to various educational institutions, including North Chicago High School in Illinois, Lake Washington School District and Spokane Public Schools, both in Washington state. For the past 21 years, Lori has been an instructor at The Heritage Institute, where she is deeply passionate about empowering fellow educators to excel in their noble work within schools. In today's evolving educational landscape Lori understands the shift on many fronts - including the mandates to integrate technology, embrace neurodiversity, foster social and emotional growth and dig deep to understand the neurological basis for challenging behaviors. Lori recognizes that our students, pre-K to 12th grade face an array of challenges, from learning, social and emotional gaps due to the ripples of the pandemic, family stressors, poverty, the impact of social media and entitlement issues, among others. She firmly believes that educators must be equipped with the latest research and practical strategies to address these multifaceted needs effectively. In her courses, Lori's primary aim is to provide educators with respectful and encouraging guidance to navigate these challenges. Her courses and workshops are designed to empower teachers and administrators with the knowledge and tools necessary to create a supportive and inclusive environment that prioritizes the well-being and development of every student so they can be about the business of learning!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“WHY ARE THEY PICKING ON ME?” Understanding & Responding to Social Cruelty

Coloroso, Barbara. *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander.* HarperCollins Publishers. New York, NY. 2009. 272 pages. ISBN 978-0061744600. This book is a classic that explores the dynamic between all of those caught in what the author and others in the field of social cruelty refer to as the “bully circle”. Looking at each role in the “tragic play,” as the author puts it, has been an important step in understanding the roles of everyone involved when social cruelty occurs. She suggests a range of methods that parents and educators can use to identify bullying behavior and deal with it in a constructive manner.

Greene, Ross. *Lost At School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges Are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them*. Scribners. New York, NY. 2014. 317 pages. ISBN 978-1501101496. This book is revolutionary in the philosophy, approach and strategies it presents for working with students who have behavioral challenges. It questions the traditional school discipline plans, discussing why they do not work for the students who fail to meet the expectations of the system. The methodology that is presented for getting “buy in” from students regarding their behavior could be very beneficial when it comes to addressing acts of social cruelty.

Holtham, Jeannette. *Taking Restorative Justice to Schools: A Doorway to Discipline.* 2009. Del Hayes Press: Allen, TX. 2009. 90 pages. ISBN 0982270615 This is a short, practical book on the theory of restorative justice and how it applies in a school setting. This thinking should be a consideration when exploring how to work with students who have been involved in perpetrating social cruelty. What makes this book a gem are all of the implementation tools that are part of this resource.

Kriete, Roxanne. *The Morning Meeting Book, Expanded Edition.* Center for Responsive Schools, Inc: Fitchburg, MA. 2014. 232 pages. ISBN 978-1892989603. This book is a “must-have” for all K-8 classroom teachers. It clearly explains the purpose and gives detailed instructions in how to conduct a morning meeting. The investment of time that you give to the morning meeting format will pay off in the dividend of a respectful, safe and caring classroom community.

Pickhardt, Carl. *Why Good Kids Act Cruel.* Source Books. New York, NY. 2010. 320 pages. ISBN 978-1402219443. This is also a “must-have” book and the course text. It describes not only the symptoms of social cruelty, but also the deeper causes, which include the anxiety, uncertainty and insecurity that come with adolescence. These developmental issues contribute to the “perfect storm” that can lead to social cruelty. This book gives many strategies for caring adults to employ and includes the roles that educators must play to increase the social safety of all students.