ED 775
Research in Teacher Education: Conceptual Foundations
Winter 2004

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Class Meetings:

Room 4212
School of Education Building

Wednesdays
4:00 – 7:00 pm

Exceptions:
No class on Wednesday, January 14

Office Hours: By appointment

Class email list: ed775@umich.edu

I will use email extensively to communicate with you; I encourage you to do the same with me, and with others in the class. Please check your email regularly.

Note: To make the management of email easier and more reliable, attachments should be titled with a conventional label, e.g.: <fieldproj_name.doc>, <assign1_name.doc>, or <midterm_name.doc>.

Course Focus and Goals

Teacher education is replete with terms and concepts that too often remain under-examined. Examples include *method, practice*, and *equity*; *experience*, *inquiry*, *profession*, *knowledge*, *role*, *apprenticeship*, and *identity*. Despite the fact that particular terms are popular and widely used, what is meant by their use is often both various and underspecified. The central purpose of this course is to investigate and reconsider foundational concepts of teacher education, and to learn how and when to carry out such investigations.

The core premise of this course is that the careful thinking required to do good research, as well as to be a thoughtful practitioner, depends on being careful with foundational concepts and the labels we employ for them. Concepts and words are crucial tools. Learning to deploy them with sensitivity, analytic clarity, and rigor matters for disciplined work. This involves learning to scrutinize language for its connotative as well as denotative meanings, developing sensibilities for the possibilities and consequences of the terms we use, and looking past taken-for-granted assumptions about ideas and the labels we use to capture or communicate about them. Words have "auras"; their meaning arises in linguistic contexts. If you want to study beginning teachers' subject matter knowledge of science, you will need to probe what you mean by "knowledge" and "subject matter." If you are reading about how teacher education programs can promote reflection, you will want to consider what might be meant by "reflection" as well as, perhaps, what it means to think about a "program."

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The course is designed to afford opportunities for learning in three main domains. A first is to learn about some **particular concepts** central to research and practice in teacher education. We will investigate concepts that have enduring importance for the professional education and learning of teachers, as well as ones that are in prominent contemporary use. Provisionally, candidate concepts for our collective inquiry are *community*, *method*, *reflection*, *professional,* and *knowledge*.[1] Our investigations will help us develop more fine-grained ability to think about and name the ideas indicated by these terms.

A second arena of learning will be **skills and resources for the analysis of concepts**. Throughout the term, we will work on three sets of practices:

1) How to probe the linguistic and etymological dimensions of a term, exploring its roots, history and conventions, common uses, risks, and possibilities, in relation to the concept to be named. We will work on heightening awareness of when this is important to do, and cultivating the disposition to do so.

2) How to unpack a concept, considering what there is to probe and analyze, and developing a collection of strategies for doing so.

3) How to compare how different scholars or practitioners, engaged with nominally similar ideas, define and use those ideas.

Third, our work will involve studying a variety of **classic and less-well-known texts** important to thought and practice in teacher education. In exploring the course focal concepts, we will examine how different authors have treated these, and use a variety of writing to enhance our understanding of those particular concepts.

To extend the reach of the course, you will select and work on a concept central to your own work in addition to the concepts we investigate together. Just as we will do collectively, you will explore terms used for your chosen concept, probe its roots and linguistic elements, unpack its constituents, and explore and critically analyze work in which that concept plays a central role. You will work toward becoming more clear about the concept, and more precise and deliberate in your use of terms for it. You are encouraged to work with a partner on this project.

In addition to these specific substantive goals, the course is designed to help you cultivate practices and stances important for disciplined scholarly and professional work. These include how you think, analyze, argue, and write, how you keep track of your ideas as well as others' and ours, and how you use texts, discussions, interactions, people, and experiences, to help yourself develop. Graduate study involves, in part, learning to participate in new communities of discourse. Hence, the course is designed to focus explicitly on methods and forms of thought and expression – particularly methods of interpretation, analysis, and argument, as well as approaches to reading and forms of writing – that are part of participating in these communities. It also involves developing new practices as a learner.

The course is intended to serve as an opportunity for you to build and participate in an intellectual community with others in the doctoral program. The nature of the course work

[1] These may change as a result of your interests as well as our work and progress across the term.

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will involve interpreting and analyzing texts, observations, experiences, and other materials, framing and revising questions, making conjectures, and testing alternative assertions. All this involves taking new intellectual risks, and developing a culture in which that is valued, encouraged, and supported is part of our collective work. Further, each of you comes to this class with different experiences, interests, perspectives, and expertise. The opportunity to have your ideas questioned and challenged is crucial to doing good work. Who we are and what we bring to the class can be resources for the course, if we learn to make use of them, and of one another.

The course itself is also a case of teaching and learning which can become one more resource for our inquiry. Collectively, we can examine and analyze what each of us — as teachers and students— does as we construct the curriculum, discourse, relations, and culture of the class. Doing that requires attention to practices of teaching and learning, and making that attention part of the course work.

Reading

We will read a wide variety of texts, including empirical and conceptual work about teaching and teacher education; writing about other professions and practices; fiction and journals of culture and ideas; philosophy, and even dictionaries. The work of the class will depend on reading interactively, on bringing both collective and individual goals to reading, considering, and reconsidering texts. In its most straightforward expression, this involves bringing questions to think about while preparing to read something, reading a text, and reflexively placing what one has read in the context of both evolving scholarship on a subject and one's own development as a scholar.

The following sets of questions offer a framework for reading generously and critically:

- *What is the author trying to say?*
  What are the author's principal and subsidiary arguments or theses? What are the important conceptual terms? What does the author seem to assume? What sorts of evidence and methods are used? Can you identify specific passages that support your interpretation? Are there other passages that either contradict or appear less consistent with your understanding? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument? Can you make sense of, or account for, these differences?

- *How has the author constructed the text?*
  How does the author treat the words and concepts central to the work? What clues can you get from the text's structure? Does the organization give you insights into the argument? Are there patterns in the author's presentation that help you to locate and understand the most valuable material? What can you do to concentrate your attention to and interrogation of the text?

- *What is the author's purpose?*
  Why was this work written? To whom was the author speaking and why? What can you know or infer about the author's motivation?

- *What is the relationship between the author's assumptions and ideas and your own understanding?*
  How might your response to the work be affected by your values, beliefs, and commitments? Can you read and make sense of the work on its own terms? How does the author's treatment of a particular concept or word interact with yours?

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• *How do the author's arguments fit within various communities of discourse?*
How is a piece of work connected to the efforts of others dedicated to similar purposes? In what community or communities does the author locate him or herself?

Discussion

Creating thoughtful arguments requires making conjectures and offering justification for them. Sometimes justification comes from the texts -- specific references to an argument that an author has made well. At other times, justification is based on the logical analysis of a term or set of ideas. And sometimes arguments are more empirically-based, grounded in data.

Because the course will be run as a seminar, your participation in discussions is important not only for your own learning but also for others. What you learn in this course will be influenced by the degree of everyone's engagement in and contributions to the discussions. Preparing the readings and coming to class with questions, insights, and issues is crucial to making the course work; we rely on everyone's contributions and participation. Building the culture of the class so that genuine inquiry is possible will take all of our efforts to make the seminar a context in which in which people communicate and are listened to, in which evidence matters, in which thoughtful questioning of one another's claims is desirable, and in which alternative perspectives and interpretations are valued. Because we will investigate a complex topic, we will need to try out ideas that are only partially developed. Doing so is an important part of developing the capacity to think in disciplined way. How we listen to one another, assist with the formulation of an interpretation, question, and challenge will affect the quality of what we can do together. How we listen to others' reactions to our ideas, accommodate critique and questions, change our minds and revise at some times, and reinforce our analyses at others -- all of these things will affect the intellectual culture of the class.

We therefore will need to work attentively on norms for the class. Listening carefully, treating ideas with respect and interest, raising and responding to questions, sharing the floor -- all these will matter in constructing an environment where satisfying and challenging intellectual work can take place. One part of exploring an idea or an argument is to attend closely to it to understand its logic, intention, meaning. Listening generously, assuming that ideas and claims are made for good reasons, is crucial to thinking well. Another part is to be skeptical, to consider what is missing or logically flawed. Using both – generosity and skepticism – contributes to careful unpacking of ideas and to good thinking.

Making records

The kinds of work we are doing this term can be thought of as a kind of "philosophical field work" (J. L. Austin). As such, I would like you to experiment with ways to keep a "field notebook" of your investigations. This notebook will be a site for you to make records of our class discussions, of your reading and thinking outside of class, alone and with others. These might be by hand in a single handwritten notebook, with numbered pages, or on your computer with dated or categorical indexing. The important element is to make explicit records of what would otherwise be thinking and talk elusive for ongoing scrutiny. We will talk together about ways to make useful records, and ways to use them productively. Considering how such records are indexed and created is not a minor point, and I urge you to talk with others about how to make usable records –

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including links among readings, class discussions, and individual or other out of class work. We will also take this up from time to time explicitly in class.

We will also make records in class. So much whizzes by in class discussions; reading often precipitates an overflow of thoughts and ideas not yet processed. In discussions, sometimes we lose track of important points, or develop only one aspect of an idea. Potential connections are lost because we forget an earlier point. To enable closer consideration of the "text" we produce as we work in class, we will make collective public records of our discussions, texts to which we can all refer, and that we can modify and extend as we continue to work.

Writing

Writing is a fourth important vehicle for exploring and clarifying ideas, for trying out interpretations and arguments, and for representing ideas and communicating with others. Writing plays a central role in graduate work, and in educational scholarship and practice. It is an important part of learning to participate in a community of educational scholars and practitioners who have a specialized discourse. The course will provide occasions to focus on and develop these new aspects of your writing, and the writing assignments are structured to provide guidance and resources, as well as the opportunity for comments and suggestions.

Course Requirements

Field project on "experience": Due January 21

You will explore the concept of "experience" (or "experienced"), trying out a number of different strategies to consider what might be involved in the idea. You will keep a field record of your explorations, describing what you did, and what you saw, thought about, or learned about the concept of "experience." Specific guidelines for the project will be distributed in class on January 7.

Short (2 – 3 pp.) writing exercises and assignments (Due February 4, March 10, April 7)

These one-week short assignments will provide opportunities for you to experiment with particular ideas, develop methods of inquiry, and to get comments on your thinking and writing. I strongly encourage you to talk with and get feedback from one another on these assignments.

Midterm exam: Investigation of concepts: Due February 18

The midterm exam will be distributed on February 11 and due on February 18. It will be a take-home assignment, designed to be written in a few hours like an exam, but with a week's window in which to complete it. The exam will focus on a particular concept and will engage you in using the skills and resources you are developing to explore and analyze the idea, and its associated terms.

Whereas your individual project will involve you in staged experience in developing a piece of work, the midterm bounds your work to a short period. Both these kinds of writing are common to the demands and expectations of academic work.

Individual/collaborative conceptual project: Due April 21

Using the skills and resources we are developing together in the course, you will investigate a concept important to your own interests and work. We will develop a list of candidate concepts together to help you choose, and to consider specific strategies and resources for certain

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concepts, as well as to identify possible partners with whom you might work. Your project will include investigation of the concept, the term(s) used for it, significant work related to this concept, and ways you are currently thinking of sorting out and using the concept in your own work. In addition to writing about your inquiry, you will develop a poster or exhibit to help others explore some of its key aspects and connect the idea to important work in teacher education.

Grading and Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

Fieldwork project	15%
Short assignments	30%
Midterm exam	25%
Individual/collaborative project	30%

A few comments about evaluation in graduate work: I want your experiences in this course to contribute to your growing capacity to do excellent work. To support that, I am asking you to write frequently, and often will ask you to revise. I will comment on your writing, offer examples of good writing, and help you with rewriting. Grades are intended to give you a sense of the quality of a particular piece of work: roughly speaking, a B means that you have done a good job with the writing, the ideas, and the organization of the work. A C conveys that the work lacks some important qualities and has some problems, while an A means that the work is exemplary in some key ways: the writing is particularly clear, the ideas thoroughly treated, the organization of the presentation well-considered and effective.

You can use your work in this course, with one another and with me, to help you to improve your sense of what good work consists of, and how to produce it. This includes writing good sentences and paragraphs, using words carefully, treating ideas with discipline and respect. We will strive to make these standards as concrete as possible, and to make visible strategies for achieving them. As you develop your sensibilities, you will be able to do more and more as your own critic and editor.

One obvious reason to take writing seriously is that your career as a graduate student depends on it. Whether you are a master's student or a doctoral student, you will not be able to earn your degree unless you can write good papers, exams, and theses. I think of evaluation as a tool in learning and teaching. Providing scaffolding for your work, and direct and focused feedback on what you produce, are concrete ways to help you develop skills and sensibilities, and to be successful in the program.

A second, and perhaps even more important, reason to take your work seriously is that you intend to work as a professional in a field in which the overarching objective is helping students to learn, including learning to write. Moreover, improving the quality of the educational enterprise depends on communication among educators and with many publics. Good writing is unfortunately not something at which most professionals in public education have excelled. Current educational debate, like U.S. educational history and much teaching and writing in schools of education, is littered with jargon-filled, clumsy, and obscure writing. Some of the problems are technical or literary: incorrect grammar, a passion for the passive voice, and needless words. Many other problems are intellectual: arguments that wander, implausible assumptions, paragraphs that do not cohere, and a failure to consider other

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views respectfully. Professionals who communicate in such ways are in no position to help students learn to write, to help teachers learn to teach them to write, or to communicate well with the publics on which public education depends.

Please bear in mind that my comments are directed towards particular things you have produced, not about you. Improving your work is a joint endeavor, composed of what I can offer you by way of help and feedback, and how you use my guidance and that of your classmates.

COURSE OUTLINE
Weeks 1 - 7

Reading and writing assignments are listed with the class for which they are due.

Date	Class	Reading	Assignments due
PART I			
January 7	Introductions to the course and to one another		
	Overview of course scope, purposes, and work; guiding orientations to our work together Examination of Schwab's essay: Do some of the work on his essay that he says is entailed in "reading as enquiry."	Schwab, J. J. (1978). Enquiry and the reading process. In I. Westbury and N. Wilkof (Eds.) *Science, curriculum, and liberal education* (pp. 149-163). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.	January 9: Send **email response to syllabus** to me: Include comments, questions, suggestions
January 14	No class		
	Philosophical fieldwork on "experience" Work on fieldwork project on "experience" or "experienced"	Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by* (pp. 3 – 13). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* (pp. 9 – 50). New York: Macmillan.	
January 21	Experience: Text study, fieldwork, concept analysis		
		Becker, H. (1998). Concepts. In *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you are doing it* (pp. 109-145). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.	**Fieldwork project** See separate assignment sheet.
January 28	Experience and learning to teach		
		Dewey, J. (1916). Experience and thinking. *Democracy and education.* (pp. 139-151). New York: Macmillan. Feiman-Nemser, S. (1983). Learning to teach. In L.	

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		Shulman & G. Sykes (Eds.), Handbook of teaching and policy (pp. 150-170). New York: Longman.	
February 4	Experience and learning to teach		
		Schon, D. A. (1983). The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action. New York: Basic Books. Barzun, J. (1985). Simple and direct: A rhetoric for writers. New York: Harper & Row. Preface, Introduction (pp. 1 – 8); Chapter 1 (part: pp. 9 – p. 28).	**Assignment #1**: Part 1: Using Dewey's ideas about *educative experience*, reflect on the fieldwork assignment as an "experience." (*See assignment sheet.)* Part 2: Exercises: pp. 15 - 16: #6, 14, 20 p. 20: #2, 3 pp. 27-28: #2, 14, 18, 19
February 11	Experience and learning to teach		
		Dewey, J. (1904/1965) The relation of theory to practice in education, In M. Borrowman (Ed.), Teacher education in America: A documentary history (pp. 140-171). New York: Teachers College Press. Hoy, W. & Reese R. (1977). The bureaucratic socialization of student teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 28(1), 23-26. Mason, J. (1999). The role of labels in promoting learning from experience in teachers and students. In L. Burton (Ed.), Learning mathematics: From hierarchies to networks (pp. 187-208). London: Falmer Press. Lortie, D. (1975). Schoolteacher: A sociological study. (pp. 25-81). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Zeichner, K., & Tabachnik, R. (1981). Are the effects of teacher education washed out by school experience? Journal of Teacher Education, 32, 7 – 11.	

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February 18	Experience and learning to teach		
		No new readings this week.	**Midterm exam**

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