AGS 820 | Culturally Responsive School Leadership for Deep Change

Spring 2024 | Tuesday, 5:00-8:00 | Blended, Online

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Course Description

Taking a culturally responsive approach to school leadership is crucial for leaders hoping to enact deep change within diverse school settings. Schools need leaders who can shape culture in ways that improve the lives of all children. This requires careful attention to culture and to the processes that lead to deep and lasting organizational change. This course will equip future school leaders with the tools to enact deep change that is driven by a culturally responsive stance.

Course Goals

In this course, students will:

1. Explore and develop their identities as culturally responsive school leaders.
2. Demonstrate an ability to enact the core behaviors of culturally responsive school leadership and will take an equity stance in their leadership work.
3. Explore a number of models of deep change within schools and other organizations.
4. Demonstrate an ability to create a targeted plan for deep change within an educational setting, framed through a culturally responsive lens.
5. Develop the ability to enact and sustain change processes in order to promote anti-oppressive, culturally responsive school experiences for all learners.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the ways that educational leaders can take on a culturally responsive stance in order to empower all students, with a particular focus on minoritized student populations.
2. Develop familiarity with cultural responsiveness from the position of an educational leader.
3. Develop familiarity with leadership approaches that lead to deep and lasting organizational change.
4. Discover concrete strategies for enacting a culturally responsive leadership stance.
5. Discover concrete strategies for leading and sustaining deep change within school communities.

Required Text

There is one required text:

> Tracey A. Benson & Sarah E. Fiarman. (2019). *Unconscious Bias in Schools: A Developmental Approach to Exploring Race and Racism*. Revised edition. Harvard Education Press. [Harvard Education Press] [Bookshop.org]

The book is available as an e-book through the Berry Library with your SSU login. However, licensing restrictions limit the page numbers that can be printed and the number of users who can access the e-book simultaneously, so I'd still recommend purchasing the text.

Note on Teaching and Learning (Online) in the Wake of COVID-19

I am excited to teach and learn with you (again!). As you may remember, one enduring legacy of Covid for me has been a shift in my priorities as a teacher: *my first priority is still your well-being*, both physically and mentally. If you experience any challenges affecting your work in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. I only need to know that you need to discuss alternative arrangements to help you get the most from the course. And if you experience challenges more generally, I am happy to serve as a point of contact to connect you with the resources you need.

Also, a word about online learning. Thankfully, our comfort with online learning has increased since the early days of the pandemic. Nevertheless, I understand distractions may impose at times. As such, I welcome children, siblings, roommates, pets, or wandering guests and understand if/when you need to step away to take care of yourself or others. However, please make every effort to be fully present during synchronous sessions. Keep your cameras on as much as possible. Do not attend class while driving or attending a swim meet or making dinner. We all benefit when you bring your full self to class.

Course Format (Blended, Online)

This course meets five times via Zoom, with the rest of the work completed asynchronously online. Our synchronous sessions will be held from 5:00-8:00 pm, on the dates below.

- Tuesday, March 5
- Tuesday, March 19
- Tuesday, March 26
- Tuesday, April 9
- Tuesday, April 30

Crew

As with your first course in this program (and maybe others along the way), you will be assigned to a 3-4 person "crew." As a crew, you will be responsible for the learning of the group and for the learning of each individual member. Your online reflections will be posted to a crew discussion board. Small group conversations during will be held in crew. Consider these colleagues your first sounding board and your support network. As a crew, plan to model "expedition behavior" for each other.

Course Requirements

In addition to attending our synchronous sessions, you should expect to spend an average of two (2) hours per week on reading, written reflections, and other course assignments. It may be slightly more or less, depending on the week. However, if you find you are consistently spending more time than this each week, please let me know so that we can discuss it and – if necessary – make adjustments.

A Note About Resistance and Learning

Having spent many years in school myself, my best learning did not happen when I was comfortable. Rather, my best learning happened when I spoke up or asked hard questions or challenged what I was hearing. I often resisted these impulses, whether out of shyness or deference to authority, but *that impulse is important*! During this course, you may have moments when you feel yourself pushing back against ideas that I share or that you read about. That resistance holds something important for you to learn and to make sense of. In your spoken or written contributions, please speak or write about *that* – that resistance – and not what you think I want to hear. Doing so will benefit your learning and mine.

Specifications Grading

In this course – as with all courses in this program – the focus of your efforts should be on *your learning*. I want you to take chances, to be unsure and uncomfortable (and to be okay with that), to challenge what you may have previously thought, to challenge what I think and what the authors we read think, and to struggle when using new ideas for the first time.

In line with these values, I use *specifications grading*, which is designed to shift attention away from grades and towards learning and risk-taking. For each assignment, I provide guidelines to help you know what is expected. I will also give you substantive feedback on your work throughout the course. Each task will be graded "complete" or "incomplete," and the following list outlines tasks you must complete to earn particular grades. All listed criteria need to be met within a grade category to earn that grade.

Note that both the Core Values Speech and the Entry Letter must be completed to pass the course.

To receive an A
- Attend all six synchronous sessions (excused absences don't count as missed)
- Complete all five reading reflections (with responses)
- Submit your racial autobiography
- Present your Core Values Speech
- Complete the Entry Letter for Equity

To receive an A-
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than two of the following:
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

To receive a B+
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than three of the following:
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

To receive a B
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than four of the following:
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

To receive a B-
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than five of the following:
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

To receive a C+
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than six of the following:
  - Your racial autobiography
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

To receive a C
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than seven of the following:
  - Your racial autobiography
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

To receive a D
- Complete all work required of an A, except for no more than eight of the following:
  - Your racial autobiography
  - A reading reflection
  - A reading reflection response

If you are interested in learning more about this form of grading, here are a couple of books and a blog post that detail the logic and logistics:

- Blum, Susan D. (2020). *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*. West Virginia University Press.
- Nilson, Linda B. (2015). *Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time*. Stylus Publishing.
- Stommel, Jesse. (2018). How to ungrade. Retrieved from https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/

Using and Citing AI

AI tools like ChatGPT or Google Gemini can be helpful when gathering information, generating ideas, and crafting and refining your writing. I encourage you to make use of these tools, not only in your work for this course but in your professional life. You will practice with these tools in this course.

That said, it is critical to distinguish *your ideas* from ideas generated by AI. When submitting work in this course, you must identify any writing, text, or media generated by AI. You are responsible for information you submit based on an AI prompt, which means you are responsible for fact-checking and verifying information. In addition, any use of AI must be documented and cited to stay within university policies on academic honesty. See this blog for advice on proper citation of AI tools: https://www.grammarly.com/blog/ai-citations-apa/. Any text or ideas generated by AI should include a citation.

Please contact me before submitting coursework if you have questions about AI use or citation. Submitting AI-generated work without identifying it may be a violation of SSU's Academic Integrity Policy, which could negatively impact your grade on affected assignments or in the course overall.

Course Requirement Details

Weekly participation and engagement

The quality of your learning depends on your (and your colleagues') full participation. Whether engaging in online discussions, small group discussions, or whole class reflections, your perspectives and your voice are crucial to our learning community. To the extent you can, please bring your "whole self" to these learning environments. Participation and engagement do not mean knowing the right answer or putting only fully polished thoughts on the table. Rather, it means bringing questions, worries, skepticism, partially-shaped ideas, or dilemmas to the conversations – both in person and online.

Racial Autobiography

Understanding how your personal experiences and identities have shaped your assumptions about the world is essential for culturally responsive leadership. For this assignment, you will compose a brief autobiography in which you reflect on the development your racial identity. Specifically, you should recount one or more significant events in your life that involved you asking questions about your racial identity or your reaction to the racial identity of someone else. Your autobiography does not need to be exclusively about education (or about education at all), but you should reflect on the implications of what you write for your work. I will offer you model autobiographies, including my own.

Core Values Speech

As future educational leaders, you may be called upon – either in a job interview or in faculty meetings or in community conversations – to initiate and/or facilitate conversations about race and equity. An

important part of these conversations is laying out your core values or beliefs as they relate to race and equity. For this assignment, you will be asked to prepare a short and extemporaneous speech (no more than 5 minutes) in which you name and explain up to three (3) core values and how they shape your thinking about culturally responsive leadership. More details on this assignment will be given in class.

Entry Letter for Equity

For your final project – for this class and the CAGS program overall – you will prepare an "entry letter" in which you introduce yourself, your values, and your leadership priorities to a hypothetical school community where you have been hired as a leader. The work done for this letter will be useful in your job search or when you assume your first leadership position. At the center of this letter will be a statement of your core values and an emphasis on equity. In addition, you should identify a selection of strategies (and equity-based rationales) that will help you enact your values. You will submit a draft, generated with AI, before you submit the final. For the draft, you should include the prompt, the output, and any edits you make. For the final product, you will have a choice of format: either (a) a two-page maximum, single-spaced letter, or (b) a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation of at least 4 but no more than 10 substantive slides, with voice-over narration. Any material generated by AI for the final product must be noted. More information about this project will be shared in class.

There is no final exam in this course.

Course Rhythms

This course uses learning modules on Canvas. New modules open after class each week, with work generally due the following Tuesday. Accompanying each module will be a short overview of the week's readings and assignments. I recommend you read these first. Occasionally there may be intermediary deadlines. Recognizing your busy lives as educators, please be in touch ahead of deadlines if you require an adjustment. Staying on track with the course is particularly important given our compacted schedule.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

This overview is a guide for the semester. I may adjust the syllabus to respond to your needs across the semester. Rows shaded grey represent asynchronous weeks, when we will not meet in person.

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Session 1 Mar 5	Re-introductions & Looking Back to Move Forward	*Before anything else: post a video response to the pre-course discussion prompt on Canvas* *Then, please read/watch/listen to the following before our first session:* • *Unconscious Bias*, ch. 1 (pp. 13-29) • Video: "Racial Wealth Gap," *Explained* (watch) • Podcast: "Skulls and Skin," *Scene on Radio* (S2, Ep. 8, listen/read) *Recommended* • Ladson-Billings, "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt" • Kendi, "Why the Academic Achievement Gap is a Racist Idea"	*Before class* Video response

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Session 2 Mar 12	Starting With Self	• Tatum, "The Complexity of Identity" (pp. 99-108) • *Unconscious Bias*, ch. 2 (pp. 31-50) • Video: at least two video(s) in this series of short NY Times Op-Docs (watch) *Recommended* • Smith, "Counterfactual" & "Your National Anthem" • Irving, *Waking Up White*, ch. 6-9 (pp. 29-45) • Gooden, "Why every principal should write a racial autobiography" • *Entry Planning*, ch. 2 (pp. 27-43)	Reading Reflection #1 Racial Autobiography
Session 3 Mar 19	Core Values and Public Narrative	• Ganz, "Why Stories Matter" • Video: Ganz, "Public Narrative", Lesson 6: How to Tell a Story" (watch) • *Entry Planning*, ch. 7 (pp. 123-138) *Recommended* • Video: Ganz, "Public Narrative", Lessons 5, 7-9 (watch) • Ganz, "Public Narrative: Self, Us, Now"	Reading Reflection #2
Session 4 Mar 26	Leading Race Talk	• *Unconscious Bias*, ch. 3 (pp. 51-72) & 5 (pp. 89-99) • *Race Talk*, ch. 13 (pp. 226-244) *Recommended* • *Unconscious Bias*, ch. 4 (pp. 73-87) • Video: Henry Turner & Kathy Lopes, "Best Practices: How to Speak With Your Staff About Race" (watch)	Reading Reflection #3 Core Values Speech
Session 5 Apr 2	Leading Culture: Racial Climate & Relationships	• *Unconscious Bias*, ch. 7 (pp. 117-133) • Podcast: "Just a Word," *Southlake* (Ep. 2, listen/transcript), especially 21:30 to 28:53 *Recommended* • Love, *Punished for Dreaming*, ch. 9 ("The Trap of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion," especially pp. 214-224) • Lewis and Diamond, *Despite The Best Intentions*, ch. 3 (pp. 45-81)	Reading Reflection #4
Session 6 Apr 9	Leading Change	• *Unconscious Bias*, ch. 10 (pp. 163-175) • Gorski, "Avoiding Racial Equity Detours" *Recommended* • Video: Marty Linsky & Jeff Duncan-Andrade (watch) • Heifetz & Linsky, "When Leadership Spells Danger"	Reading Reflection #5 Core Values Speech
Apr 16 (vacation)		SCHOOL VACATION – NO CLASS	

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Session 7 Apr 23	Writing Your Entry Letter	• *Entry Planning*, ch. 4 (pp. 63-81) *Recommended* • Blog post: "Getting started with prompts for text-based Generative AI tools" (link) • *Entry Planning*, ch. 8 (pp. 139-159) • Browse: *Entry Planning*, Appendix C & D (pp. 185-220)	Entry Letter Draft (AI prompt, output, and edits)
Session 8 Apr 30	Final Reflections	• TBD	Response to pre-course video
Final Project Due: Tuesday, May 7, 11:59 pm			

Acknowledgments

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Attribution

This syllabus—its policies, assignments, and sequencing—is by James Noonan and licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC 4.0 (Attribution-NonCommercial). You are free to share and adapt it, with attribution and only for non-commercial purposes.

OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

COVID-19 Safety Protocols

Students must comply with any university health and safety protocols for the current academic term. Students should review the updated Covid-19 information found at www.salemstate.edu/covid19.

Equal Access Statement

Salem State University is committed to providing equal access to the educational experience for all students in compliance with Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act and to providing all reasonable academic accommodations, aids and adjustments. Any student who has a documented disability requiring an accommodation, aid or adjustment should speak with the instructor immediately. Students with Disabilities who have not previously done so should provide documentation to and schedule an appointment with Disability Services and obtain appropriate services.

Critical Emergency Statement

In the event of a University declared critical emergency, Salem State University reserves the right to alter this course plan. Students should refer to www.salemstate.edu for further information and updates. The course attendance policy stays in effect until there is a University-declared critical emergency. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the alternative educational plans for this course, which will be posted on Canvas. Students should review the plans and stay up to date via Canvas.

The Mary G. Walsh Writing Center

The Mary G. Walsh Writing Center offers writing support to the entire Salem State community. Writing center staff will talk with students about any kind of writing for any audience, host writing events and workshops, and provide students with a supportive space in which to write. Center staff have worked with students who come from over 30 different majors and who speak over 50 different languages. Professionally trained tutors can assist with topic development, brainstorming, organization, sentence-level writing issues, citation, oral and/or visual presentations, conference abstracts, proposals, presentations, and professional documents (cover letters, resumes, personal statements). Click here to watch a video with instructions for how to make an appointment.

Citations and Attribution

Please ensure that all work you submit is your own and cite your sources when you use them. The work of education involves creativity and being resourceful. Often, this means looking elsewhere for ideas. That is encouraged in this course. However, you must attribute those ideas to the original authors when you use them. Failure to do so, in the form of plagiarism (even if unwitting) can result in a grade of 0 or further action with the SSU administration. Please visit this site for further information about citation and attribution: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/

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Lee, Enid, Deborah Menkart, & Margo Okazawa-Rey. (Eds.). (1998). *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development* (2nd ed.). Teaching for Change.

[1] Not all of these sources are used in the course, but they are all helpful resources for culturally responsive and antiracist leadership.

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