

**Empowering Pre-service teachers, Students and
Families through Critical Multiculturalism:
Interweaving Social Foundations and
Community Action**

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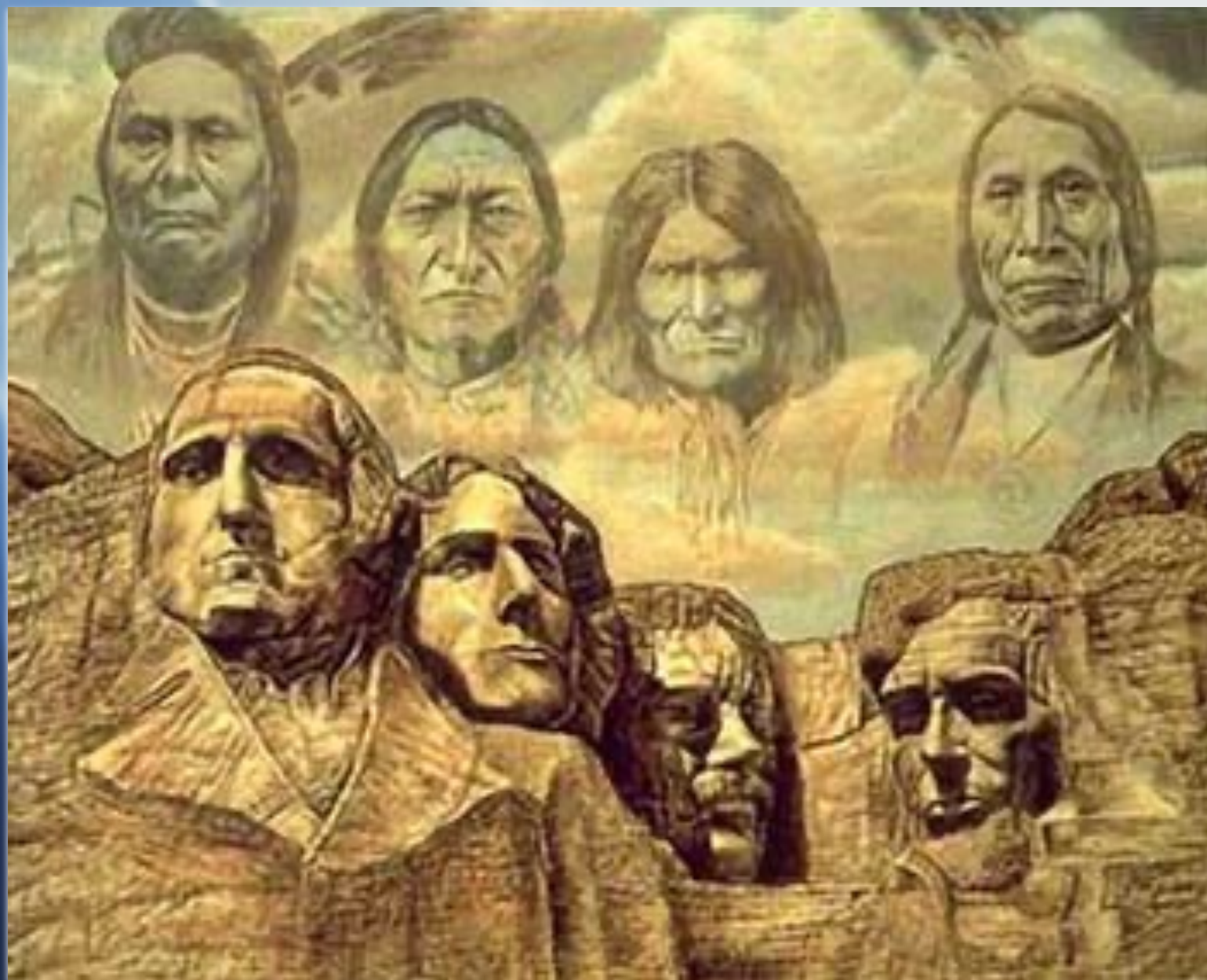
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Historical, Socio-Economic & Political Context

1. Education as a hegemonic practice:
Producing/reproducing docile citizens who come to see as normal/consent to the social order.....
2. Education as the process through which we may come to recognize, re-cognize, and contest hegemonic norms, values, policies and laws.....
3. Counter-hegemonic practices can be domesticated in their turn (Raymond Williams).....

Seeds of Hegemonic Practices were sown long ago....

1. **Jefferson**—proposed a new educational system that would rake a few geniuses from the rubbish...’ (Spring, 2008; *Notes on the State of Virginia 1781/82*)
2. **Noah Webster**—advocated for a national history curriculum for schools, built on legends of the founding fathers
3. **Lincoln**—made it clear that he was not and had never been in favor of racial equality (Lincoln, 1858)
4. **Plessey v Ferguson**—legalized “Separate but Equal” racial arrangements (1896)
5. **Ellwood Cubberly**—proposed assimilating and amalgamating European immigrants into “our American race” (Nunberg, 2007)
6. **Jim Crow Laws**—for one hundred years after slavery officially ended, these laws continued to disenfranchise African Americans (Blackmon, 2008)
7. **Eugenics**—based on the premise that the human race needs to be improved, and some human beings are biologically inferior to others, this system measured this supposed difference in order to support create a hierarchical white supremacist society (Galton 1883; Thorndike, 1927)



Social Foundations Course

- Primary goal:

Help my disproportionately white, upper middle class, and female pre-service teachers recognize and re-cognize the way hegemony continues to play out in schools, the wider society, and themselves, and to learn how to devise equitable, critical multicultural teaching and learning plans to interrupt hegemony in the educational lives of students.

TABLE 1: FROM PERPETUATING TO UNDOING WHITENESS

<p>A. —————→</p> <p>Americo-centric education</p>	<p>B. —————→</p> <p>Sightseeing Americo-centric education</p>	<p>C. —————→</p> <p>Cultural, exchange Americo-centric education</p>	<p>D. —————→</p> <p>Critical, cultural immersion education</p>	<p>E. —————→</p> <p>Critical, educultural education & social justice activism</p>
<p>Monocultural teaching model that functions to reproduce the status quo by attempting to engage in transmitting or banking the existing curriculum in students. No inclusion of non Americo-centric cultural elements.</p>	<p>Cultural reproduction model that encourages some tolerance of non-hegemonic cultural worlds <i>and transmits</i> Americo-centrism through the inclusion of some alternative cultural elements.</p>	<p>Cultural reproduction model that encourages acceptance of non-hegemonic cultural worlds by including more alternative cultural elements. This model allows teachers to engage in transactions with hegemonic curriculum materials.</p>	<p>Inquiry, model of education in which the structure of the curriculum changes to allow a critical, rational analysis of different cultural perspectives that involves respect.</p>	<p>Transformation, problem posing education that affirms students’ cultural knowledge, encourages solidarity over race, class, gender, different abilities, and sexual orientation lines, and critique of self and society</p> <p>1) Finding the “one” through polyrhythms (ch.5); 2) Envisioning transcultural spaces (ch.1); 3) Identifying the adaptive unconscious (ch.2); 4) Engaging the emotions & the spirit (ch.3); 5) Humanistic pedagogy through culturally relevant literature (ch.4); 6) Identifying deficit discourse through critical media literacy and performance (ch.6-9), 7) Rejecting the binaries through multicultural visual art (ch.10), 8) Imaging whiteness (ch.11), 9) Legitimizing multiple identities through imagery (ch.12), 10) Seeing through educultural Black feminist standpoint theory (ch.13); 11) Undoing whiteness through Mesoamerican ancestral culture (ch.14).</p>

Theoretical Premise: Critical Multiculturalism

- Consciousness is embedded in social practice
- Schools are contradictory and contested places
- We know the world through language (verbal and non-verbal)
- The personal and the political are linked/how others see you is related to how you see yourself
- Hegemonic discourses shape/have shaped discourse (how we think, feel, believe, and act)
- The details of every day school practices are linked to wider social structure and social relations
- Meaning is socially constructed. Culture and pedagogy produce/reproduce knowledge rather than “transmit” it

Critical Multiculturalism

- Academic skills and concepts are tools that will help you “read” and solve the problems of the real world (Freire)
- Education is also about empowering students/helping them develop voice, identity, and agency
- Students develop critical reflexivity and critical consciousness through voice and dialogue
- Naming is a precursor to transformation. We need to name the many interlocking systems of oppression, including whiteness, racism, classism, and sexism
- Asymmetrical relationships of power should be identified and addressed (e.g. such as tracking)

Critical Multiculturalism

- Cultural hegemony includes presenting Eurocentric epistemologies as the only “normal” (e.g. individualism, meritocracy/either-or thinking/notions of neutrality); Other epistemologies should be validated/we should allow for the possibility of alternative and hybrid ways of thinking, feeling, believing and acting
- Historical and contextual descriptions offer more meaningful solutions to problems than ahistorical and abstract ones
- Hegemonic master-narratives should be identified; the methodology and pedagogy of counter-storytelling, metaphor and composite characters can generate counter narratives (critical race theory)

THE COURSE

1. ADDRESSING HEGEMONY IN SELF, SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

- Making the socially constructed nature of “normal” unfamiliar;
- Identifying historical master narratives & their socio-economic application (e.g. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability)
- Exploring deficit thinking
- Looking at techniques of power – corporate, state, legal, cultural, educational, discursive.....

The Structure of School: Legitimized by Science?

TECHNIQUES OF POWER	EXAMPLE
Surveillance – Monitoring, regulating function	Students have no privacy, even in the bathrooms; School building structures facilitate surveillance.
Normalization – Through standards	Establishes power relations; Acceptable school pedagogy and practice through comparison
Exclusion/Dividing practices – often occurs with normalization	Tracking; Reading groups; “Sheltered” classroom of ELLs and Special Ed students; Some identities, practices and ways of constructing knowledge
Classification – Sorting function	Language Arts, Science etc. AP, Honors, Special Needs students. “Race,” class, gender.....
Distribution – Controlling the agenda	Reading groups; Grade level groups
Individualization – A form of exclusion	Competition, ‘me’ versus ‘we’
Totalization – Governs and regulates groups	Students commit to various groups like year groups, teachers, fraternities, teams, debating groups, ethnic groups....
Regulation -	Refers to group rules, regulations and sometimes reference to knowledge; related to sanctions, rewards and punishment

Course Experiences

- Video (e.g. Mickey Mouse Monopoly) & Critical Dialogue: Airing and interrupting ideologies such as “color blindness”
- Culture Shock: Recognizing & re-cognizing how students are impacted when their familiar cultural markers are moved
- Oral Histories & Masks: Recognizing & re-cognizing how dominant hegemonic discourses have shaped our private identities

2. GATHERING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT A STUDENT:

- Investing time in getting to know a student from a different cultural background than one's own—**Neri's story**
- Introducing pre-service teachers to critical literacy: The relationship between “reading the word” and “reading the world”—**James**
- Employing ETR (Experience-Text-Relationship): Encouraging student dialogue about meaningful content. Using a variety of “participation structures” (peer discussion, small & whole groups). Teachers' questions in eliciting higher order thinking



Learning the “WORD” to Read the “WORLD”: Teaching applications & the theory behind them

WORD

- **Build** on background knowledge - academic and cultural (culturally responsive/relevant teaching)
- **Explain** - give explicit instruction, how new knowledge connects to prior knowledge & be applied
- **Involve** – Interactional teaching strategies that actively involve the students, meaningfully, in their own learning
- Use all steps with English language learners – step by step, explicit, visual & hands-on
- Comprehensive literacy instruction: read aloud, shared reading, & guided reading
- Students’ cognitive development: Moves from concrete to abstract?

WORLD

(Critical Multiculturalism)

- Building on students’ generative themes
- Engages dialogue, student voice, developing critical consciousness
- Problem-posing education
- Reading “texts” critically (written/film/performance, etc.)
recognition of hidden scripts; analyzing motive and interests; synthesizing two or more “texts”; evaluating in terms of ethical standards; developing hybrid ideas)
- Use real historical & contextual descriptions v abstract ones
- Look at relations of power/hegemony/interlocking systems of oppression
- Developing identity and agency

3. ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS

- Oral histories: Identifying the personal, cultural and historical importance of our stories and memories—**Dora & Maya**
- “Funds of Knowledge”: Identifying significant cultural communal knowledge
- Educultural projects: Clarifying identities, and opening selves up to personally dissonant and potentially “dangerous” knowledge



4. Teaching culturally relevant, critical literacy activities

- Effectiveness depend on teachers really knowing their students
- Culturally responsive, relevant to students' lived experience, and engage creativity and higher order thinking skills
- Problem-posing education, empowering students to move out of their “limit situations” through harnessing “the “word”—**Julio**

Reciprocity: Putting Critical Multicultural Preparation into Practice

I hope the pre-service teachers will carry forward into their teacher preparation program:

- Motivation to consistently check stereotypes and deficit assumptions
- Cognizance of power relations
- Awareness of their “positionality”; how white, upper/middle class/males have been privileged/advantaged by historical and current practices
- Commitment to ongoing dialogue

Ideally, what is left at the door?

- Cultural hegemony, including whiteness!
- One-size-fits all pedagogy and standardization
- Simplistic, quantitative, assessment strategies that fail to give shape to critical, creative and meaningful practice, and inform students of how well they are meeting their goals
- Racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism.....with a view to helping students move beyond internalized racism, etc.

Assessing the Value of the Course

- On-going action research
- Initial feedback from course evaluations: 66% good to excellent; 33% fair to poor
- Field course “structure” depends on the participants turning up; some pre-service teachers experience this as chaos
- Presentations with facilitators
- Student, family and organizational feedback

