

Sam Houston State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling

ASE-587: Cultural Proficiency for School Leaders
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Course Description: This course explores how culture and historical-political-social factors influence people. Emphasis is placed on how this knowledge and awareness can positively influence school leaders' understanding of the importance of cultural proficiency as a guide to long-term improvement in schools and classrooms by determining which policies, programs, and practices best address diverse student needs and develop global citizenship.

Textbook: Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N. & Terrell, R. D. (2003) *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders* (2nd ed.) . Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Course Objectives: Students will

1. Recognize biases and the potential for discrimination in all people.
2. Develop an awareness of their own attitudes, values, and behaviors toward different groups.
3. Collect data on school culture through observations, document analysis, and review of existing school data.
4. Use a model of cultural proficiency for school improvement.
5. Design an action plan to improve cultural proficiency in their school or organization.
6. Understand the roles of formal and informal leadership in promoting cultural proficiency.
7. Explore culturally appropriate approaches to teaching, learning, and community outreach.

Course Assignments and Performance Assessment:

Grades in this course will be given using contracts that specify specific outcomes and expectations for a "B grade" (Meets Expectations) or an "A grade" (Exceeds Expectations). You will be given the opportunity to determine which expectations you believe you can meet and contract for the grade that matches those expectations.

Meets Expectations (B grade) *These represent the minimum requirements for this course.

1. **Attend every class. Arrive on time and stay for the entire class time.**

Due to the highly interactive nature of this class, regular attendance and participation in all class meetings is important and expected. As graduate students, you are expected to be on time and stay in class for the entire meeting session. Attendance is mandatory unless medical or extreme personal emergencies arise. In this case, please notify the professor in advance. Missed assignments must be emailed to the professor and must be received within 24 hours. According to university policy [800401], a student may not be penalized for three or fewer hours of absences (one class) when exams or other assigned class work has not been missed. However,

when a student misses more than three hours of class, the student must complete an instructor-approved make-up assignment and may risk receiving a reduced final grade.

2. Complete all assigned readings prior to class.

Additional readings will include articles that will be distributed in class by the professor. In-class written and oral responses will be based on these readings so it is essential that you be prepared. Turn in ALL assignments ON TIME.

3. Participate fully in every class session.

All students are expected to fully participate in each class. Specific group norms will be established and should be respected at all times. Norms play an important role in this course since sensitive social and personal issues will be explored and discussed.

4. Maintain reflection journal.

Please bring an 8 1/2 x 11 inch spiral notebook to class to use as an in-class reflection journal. Near the end of each class session, you will be asked to briefly reflect on what was discussed and its impact on you and your views of leadership. You may be asked to share parts of your reflections that you feel comfortable sharing.

Use the following questions to guide your reflections : (a) What was difficult? What was enlightening? What are some of the implications for educational leadership? The professor may occasionally collect the reflection journals to check for learning/understanding.

5. Complete 2 short personal essays/reflections as assigned.

Essay #1: Think about your life...How have you been affected by your diversity? When did you become aware of the diversity around you? Identify significant points in your life that reflect your awareness of diversity? Think of a time when you did not respond well to the diversity in your environment. Prepare a 1-5 page paper (narrative style, double spaced) to address the questions/statement above. Graduate-level writing is expected. Share parts of your life experiences that you feel comfortable sharing in class. If writing does not meet graduate standards, you may be asked to re-write and re-submit your paper.

Essay #2: What did you learn about yourself from your participation in this course? How will you use what you have learned? Prepare a 1-5 page paper (narrative style, double spaced) to address these questions/statements. Graduate-level writing is expected. Share parts of your life experiences that you feel comfortable sharing in class.

6. Conduct a Culture Audit in your school or organization. (Dr. Bustamante will provide more detail and instructions).

A "culture audit" is a tool for assessing school culture by examining policies, programs, practices, artifacts, history, traditions, events, quantitative data, etc. Like a financial audit, it can be used to reveal strengths and weaknesses in the way schools address the needs of diverse groups. Based on this data, school improvement action plans can be developed that can more effectively support the success of all students by enhancing organizational cultural proficiency.

The culture audit that you will conduct contains 2 phases:

- a. A demographic study.
Use the demographic study that you are completing for ASE 662/672 Practicum for Administration (Internship).
- b. Two participant observations (“walk-throughs”).

You will be a participant observer in assessing how culturally proficient your school currently is. You will be given a cultural proficiency observation checklist to guide you in your walk-through observations and anecdotal note-taking. “Walk-throughs” must be made on two separate occasions and in different places (teachers’ lounge, hallways, cafeteria, playground, classrooms, etc.). This will be practiced in class. Copies of your observational checklists and notes must be turned into the professor.

7. Complete a Cultural Proficiency Leadership Action Plan based on your audit findings.

Once data has been collected and analyzed from your culture audit, you will use this information to identify strengths and weaknesses in your school’s policies, programs, and practices, and create an Action Plan to improve cultural proficiency in your school and school community. Your total action plan should not be more than 12 pages. The format of the final action plan will be discussed in class but should essentially contain:

- Introduction (minimum 2 paragraphs)- include definition of cultural proficiency and describe school
- Culture Audit Findings
- Essential Need Areas
- Barriers to Cultural Proficiency
- Proposed Action Plan to Address Needs and Barriers (chart or bullets with timelines for implementation)

Exceeds Expectations (A grade)

- Perfect attendance. 0-1 excused absence with make-up assignment.
 - All of the requirements for a B grade must be fulfilled, plus the following additional requirements:
1. Select and **read an additional book** that would broaden your understanding of cultural competence and proficiency. Every student must select a different book. After reading the book, **write a 2-3 page essay** that (a) summarizes the book, (b) discusses how it personally enlightened you, and (c) describes its implications for educational leadership. Then, give a 5-10 minute “book talk” on the book. Sign-ups for presentations will be made available in class.

OR

2. **Select a film or training video.** Give a class presentation by briefly summarizing the film (5 minutes) and highlight how it could be used as a training tool to teach others about cultural proficiency. Pick out a 5 minute clip or clips to illustrate your points. The total presentation should not exceed 15-20 minutes. Sign-ups for presentations will be made available in class.

Below Expectations (C grade)

Failure to meet the requirements of *any 2 of B grade expectations 1-4.*

Failure to Meet Expectations (F grade)

Failure to meet the requirements of *expectations for B and C grades.*

For Your Information

1. All cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off or placed on vibrate during class. This includes computers.
2. All work is due on the date specified. Late work will **not** be accepted or awarded credit, unless the student and the professor have made an agreement regarding an unusual circumstance.
3. Participation is both expected and required in this class. Attendance is expected at **all class** sessions. Two absences may be taken without penalty. More than two absences will result in lowering of the grade by a letter for each absence above two. If you find it absolutely necessary to be absent, please be sure that all other alternatives have been explored before taking an absence. **Do not notify the professor via email regarding an absence on the day of class, unless there is an extreme emergency.** Arriving to class on time is equally important. Entering the classroom after class has begun is disruptive to the learning environment. Three tardies of 15 minutes or more will count as one absence. Make every effort to arrive to class on time.
4. The professor(s) reserves the right to alter course requirements and/or the class schedule to better address the learning needs of the students.
5. Academic honesty is expected in this course. Plagiarism is a violation and will result in course failure. Papers will be run through "turn it in" to check for potential plagiarism. A report will be made to Dr. Beverly Irby, Department Chair and Dr. Genevieve Brown, Dean.
6. Students desiring to be absent for observance of a religious holiday must be aware of the following:
 - Present a letter to the professor regarding absence for observation of religious holiday. A request form will be made available to you.
 - The request must be made within the first 15 days of the semester or the first 7 days of summer session.
 - The student will receive a timeframe in which the work will be completed.
 - Both professor and the student must sign the request form with each party keeping a copy for their files.
 - Any violation of the said agreement may be appealed to the department chair.
7. If you are a student with a disability that may affect your academic performance, please contact the professor as soon as possible or you may contact the Director of the Counseling Center as chair of the Committee for Continuing Assistance for Disabled Students at 936-294-1720.

8. Graduate students are governed by the SHSU's policies related to student conduct. Any student with questions about grievances, ethical behavior, etc., should review the SHSU Graduate Catalog and the Texas State University System Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Student Services and Activities, Section 5 Student Conduct and Discipline. Those rules may be found at http://www.tsus.edu/pubs/Pubs/rules_regs.html. Particular attention should be paid to the sections on plagiarism and theft of library materials.
9. Students should practice self-discipline in classes. Courtesy should be extended to all students. Thought should be given to the value of all conversation in class to all students in class. Classes will be more enjoyable and beneficial to all involved if graduate students conduct themselves as conscientious professionals.
10. Please see the professor if there are any concerns before consulting the department chair or other program administrator.