**Visions and Practices in Middle School Education**

**Fall 2014**

**0809-550**

**Meeting Days:** Wednesdays (see below)

**Dates:** September 3 – December 10

**Time**: 4:30-6:20pm

**Room:** Harvey Hall / Room 010

**Instructor:** Dr. Whittney Smith **Website:** www.whittneysmith.com

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**Office Hours:** By appointment; 516-237-2650

**Course Readings**

**Required:**

1. [Learning How to Kiss a Frog](https://www.fa.org/uploaded/MS_Attachments/Frog.pdf) by James Garvin
2. [This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents](http://www.amle.org/Shop/ProductDetails.aspx?productid=%7bB8E51055-988B-4910-A3AC-97F70BDE4973%7d)

**Recommended:**

* How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms by Marilyn Friend
* The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners by Carol Ann Tomlinson
* Differentiated Instruction and Achieve Success with All Learners by Judith Dodge
* What Great Teachers Do Differently: Seventeen Things that Matter Most by Todd Whitaker
* Mindset by Carol Dweck

**Websites:** Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org) Association for Middle Level Education: <http://www.amle.org/>

Edutopia: [www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org)

**Course Overview**The course goals aim to answer the essential questions surrounding 1) The nature of adolescent; 2) key beliefs of middle school philosophy; 3) best instructional practices for the middle level education and; 4) operational practices of middle schools. **Rationale:** This course provides candidates with a deeper understanding of the nature and instructional needs of the pre-adolescent and adolescent child, the regulations that drive Middle Level education and best practices for teaching and learning. Topics include home/school communication, middle school structures including scheduling, teaming, technology integration, data and classroom management. This course will partially fulfill the NYSED requirement towards the Middle School Extension.

**Course Objectives:**

1) develop an understanding of middle school structures;

2) explore processes of data-informed decision making;

3) identify teaching practices that support adolescent cognitive development and mixed ability grouping;

4) examine practices that promote the differentiation of instruction;

5) relate teaching to personal lives;

6) create and maintain psychologically and socially safe and supportive learning environments for students and;

7) assess school culture.

**Attendance Policy**Attendance is mandatory. Absences and non-engagement in class activities represents failure to fully complete course requirements. You are responsible for completing your blog entries weekly and turning in your assignments at the start of each class. Your final grade will reflect absences from class sessions.

**Course Outline**

(Please note that the agenda for each class session and the specific assignments are subject to change)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date / Topic** | **In Class Focus** | **Online Focus** |
| **September 3:** Introduction | 1. Course Introduction 2. Middle School Structures (teaming; looping; scheduling; advisory; instructional strategies; etc.) 3. What makes middle schools different? | Read *Learning How to Kiss a Frog*(see file below).  Post your comments on the class [**blog**](http://www.whittneysmith.com/blog.html).  You should be finished with this book by class on **October 22** and provide me a one page summary of key points. |
| **September 17:** Technology & Student Engagement | 1. Social Media 2. Web 2.0, The 4 Cs & SAMR 3. 1:1 Initiatives; Flipped Classroom & BYOD 4. Nouns and Verbs | Choose one or more weekly [Twitter Chat](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AiftIdjCeWSXdDRLRzNsVktUUGJpRWJhdUlWLS1Genc#gid=0)to follow and participate in.  Comment about the chat and on your own learning as a result on the class [blog](http://www.whittneysmith.com/blog.html).  Begin Reading *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents****(Due Nov.19)*** |
| **October 8:** Mindset & Grit | Discussion: This We Believe... and how it relates to the work of Carol Dweck and Lisa Blackwell as well as the work of [**Angela Lee Duckworth**](http://events.adelphi.edu/newsevent/true-grit/) | Begin to think about a current middle school structure / strategy / model to research and a group of 4 to work with. (The assignment is detailed below).    Finish*Learning How to Kiss a Frog and Blog...* |
| **October 22:** Project / Problem Based Learning & Differentiated Instruction | 1. Review *Learning How to Kiss a Frog* 2. *What is PBL?* 3. *The who, what, when, where, why and how of Differentiation?* | 1. Work on your culminating projects with your group. 2. Continue to follow Twitter & Blog 3. Finish Reading *This we Believe… and Blog* |
| **November 19:** "Classroom Management" | 1. "Relevant vs. Real" 2. "Carrots and Sticks" 3. "Punished by Rewards" | Presentations due next week! |
| **December 10:** Conclusion | Presentations | Have a great Winter Break! |

**Format of The Course**

This hybrid class will be taught through discussion, dialogue, and performance-based assessments. Ample opportunity will be provided for students to raise questions and learn collaboratively, both in the classroom and throughout our online learning community. It is essential that you attend each class and that you take the responsibility of being prepared for class by having done the necessary reading and writing. Details on readings, assignments, and evaluation processes are below. **University Statement On Accommodations Or Adaptations Needed**

If you are a qualified student with a disability seeking accommodations under the Americans with Disability Act, you are required to self-identify with the Office of Disability Services, 3rd floor, University Center. Please see me at the soonest possible time for special arrangements, seating and other accommodations if necessary.

**University Statement On Academic Honesty And Integrity**

You are expected to behave with the highest level of academic integrity. Cheating and other forms of dishonest will not be tolerated and will receive the proper disciplinary action from the university. Classroom behavior that interferes with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or ability of students to benefit from instruction will not be tolerated. All beepers and cellular phones should be turned off while class is in session. You are expected to come to class prepared- this means having read and studied the assigned chapters before class. By having prepared in this manner, you will be able to maximize your time spent in class. **Use Of Student Work**

All teacher education programs in New York State undergo periodic reviews by accreditation agencies and the state education department. For these purposes, samples of students’ work are made available to those professionals conducting the review. Student anonymity is assured under these circumstances. If you do not wish to have your work made available for these purposes, please let the professor know before the start of the second class. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. **Ethical Guidelines For Journal Writing And Classroom Discussions**

There will be many opportunities during the course for you to reflect on your own life history as you react to the issues and stories we explore in the course. You must use your own judgment regarding the disclosure of personal information. A sense of ethical obligation to others will lead us to agree to principles of confidentiality when personal information is heard, and to respect privacy when an individual chooses not to disclose information. These principles will hold for both oral and written work done in the course. We further agree to respect the privacy of those not present in the class by not identifying them by name when discussion of professional or interpersonal dilemmas might be intrusive or harmful to persons. Please also read the participation guidelines distributed in class.

**Assignments and Grading**

**Learning How to Kiss a Frog** (Blog Posts and Summary of Key Points) - 20%

* **You are responsible for reading Learning How to Kiss a Frog : Advice for those who work with pre- and early adolescents and completing blog entries about your reading. Be sure to include chapter and page numbers in your comments. Also, comments on other class members writing are necessary to create an online discussion. You should be blogging weekly. You will also need to hand in a one page summary of key points on October 22. Be creative!**

**This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents** (Blog Posts) - 15%

* The 16 characteristics delineated in this research based position paper indicate that these characteristics, when present over time, lead to higher levels of student achievement and overall development. In your reading, focus on the **5 characteristics of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**and the**6 Culture and Community Characteristics.**  In your blogging, share your thoughts and comment on others.  Be sure to relate your comments to what you have seen or not in the classrooms you have visited or worked in.  **November 19.**

**Weekly Twitter Chat Posts** -15%

Use this Blog Post to write about what you are "following"... You are responsible to post weekly:

* Post a summary and reaction to what you are "following" including a hyperlink to an article /website that is referenced.
* Post comments/reactions about two other blog posts from your classmates.

**Culminating Project** - 40%

* You will work in groups of four to research a current middle school structure/strategy/model that you would like to learn more about and determine how you would implement it in your class/school.   You will then present your group’s research as well as the implementation plan (what it will look like in you class/school)  You can choose from the following: homework, scheduling, teaming, student-led conferences, flipped classroom, PBL, Engagement (Student-centered instruction), etc. Please review your topic with me prior to beginning this project.Your final multimedia presentation should include a works cited.

**Class Performance & Preparedness**- 10%