Welcome to Inquiries
We’re excited to work with you this semester and to create a classroom community that fosters your growth as teachers and learners. Classrooms in city schools are exceptionally complex spaces filled with myriad “working parts.” In this course you will use readings, written work, classroom observations in a city school, and thoughtful class discussion with your peers to break down these parts, figure out how they work together, and then integrate what you’ve learned into your teaching opportunities throughout class. Before we start, though, it’s essential that we are clear about classroom procedures and expectations.

Coursework
For each class meeting there is a box on this syllabus describing reading and writing assignments due that day. You will hand in writing assignments at the beginning of each class.

Instructors will read written work and return it with written feedback based on a rubric. Once written work is returned to you, please keep it and revise it; all writing assignments will be included in your final portfolio.

Course Purpose
Inquiries into Teaching and Learning is the introductory course in the teacher preparation sequence for all students seeking teacher certification at NYU. Inquiries creates a dialogue between each of three key elements:

1. A reflection on each student’s own learning autobiography—the memories, good and bad, that each of us carries about our own elementary and high school experiences as well as about learning that took place in many out-of-school arenas.

2. A carefully planned series of observations and engagements with the students and teachers of New Design High School.

3. Close attention to some of the significant research literature that is available in the field of education today through readings, occasional lectures, and class discussions.
At the end of the course, Inquiries students will be able to:

1. Articulate a stance regarding a variety of historical and current issues in teaching and learning.
2. Assess their own prior schooling experiences in light of new and varied perspectives gained through reading and discussion.
3. Develop and articulate an emerging educational philosophy based on their synthesis of course texts, in class discussion, reflections on prior educational experiences, and experiences/observation in current NYC classrooms.
4. Research an individual question of interest and create a classroom teaching piece.
5. Integrate their reflections on theory and practice in the context of their off-campus NYC public school location and associated fieldwork.
6. Participate in the creation and support of an inclusive and democratic classroom community.
7. Observe, develop, implement and evaluate strategies for student-centered learning activities.

Books to Buy for the Course—All books are available in the NYU Bookstore

Required text for everyone
James W. Fraser, TEACH (2011)

Select two—one from each set—**DO NOT BUY THESE UNTIL CONFERRING IN CLASS**

Learners & Learning
Santiago, Esmeralda, *When I was Puerto Rican* (2006)

Teachers & Teaching
Codell, Esme Raji, *Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher’s First Year* (2001)
Greeley, Kathy, “*Why Fly That Way?” Linking Community and Academic Achievement* (2001)
McCourt, Frank, *Teacher Man* (2005)
Michie, Gregory, Holler *If You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students* (1999)
Classroom Practices

• **RESPONDING TO READINGS:** Your goal as you complete each reading is to respond as you read, which means to ask questions, make connections ongoing teaching and learning experiences, challenge the text’s assertions, restate complex ideas in your own words, anything that enables you to build your own knowledge base.

• **EACH CLASS, YOU WILL HAND IN TWO CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS (OR CRITICAL THOUGHTS) FOR EACH PIECE ASSIGNED OR ONE THINK-TAC-TOE PIECE.** If you are bringing the think-tac-toe piece, you are in charge of guiding that week’s class discussion. Your classmates will support you by coming prepared with their critical thinking questions/thoughts. We will review and clarify the meaning of these assignments during the first weeks of the semester.

• **IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION:** This classroom is a place to experiment with your thinking and take risks. Please speak up and share your thoughts and speak with the instructors as soon as possible if you don’t feel invited to do so for whatever reason.

• **OBSERVATIONS:** You will observe a class at New Design High School. Starting the third week of the semester, you will go directly to the class you are observing at New Design. You will be in the class from 2:30-2:55. **For each observation, you will write field and reflective notes (using the observation form distributed in class).** We will normally allow the first 20 minutes of our class time after your observation to debrief, test what you have each have seen and heard, and compare notes. You will rotate into a different classroom observation assignment about halfway through the semester.

• **ATTENDANCE:** You must attend every class on time. You are expected to arrive on time to your observation and stay on New Design’s campus for the full duration of our class time together. (Observations are not optional.) If this is not possible, please notify one of the course instructors beforehand and supply documentation for excused absences (doctor, etc) upon your return. **More than one absence may result in the lowering of your final grade.**

• **GROUP WORK:** You will have several opportunities to work in small groups with your classmates. All group members are expected to share the workload equally and make every effort to communicate with one another. You are accountable to the group; compromise and collaborate throughout the process. Set group norms ahead of time to avoid conflict and enhance the final product. We will model this process with you as a classroom community at the start of our work together.

• **BLACKBOARD:** We are using this site to expand classroom discussions beyond the time we have available to us. Please visit the site and post there when instructed to do so. Posts assigned for work outside of class are “late” if they are posted after the start of the following week’s class.

• **ASSIGNMENTS and SPECIAL EVENTS:** As noted in the schedule below, we will meet with other sections of the Inquiries course on three occasions during the course of the semester. In addition to the first day of class, when we all meet together, these multi-section meetings will give us the opportunity to hear an All Section Lecture/Discussion in which other members of the NYU Steinhardt faculty present their areas of expertise. The purpose of these lectures is to add yet more data to the dialogue described on the first page of the syllabus. Please come with your questions and engage with the presenters in
the way that is most useful to you. The key takeaway should appear in your final course papers and presentations.

The Changing Nature of the Teacher's Job. From the day that John Adams rode off to teach school in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1755 to the times in the 1830s that Catherine Beecher argued that women made better teachers than men, or taught people recently freed from slavery on the Sea Islands during the Civil War to the new job expectations embedded in No Child Left Behind, the nature of the teaching profession has been ever-changing and teachers have often been in the forefront of these changes. As aspiring teachers we need to know how teachers have brought about change—for good and for ill—and what this means for us in a never-static profession. Guest: James W. Fraser, Professor of History and Education. Please review the essays by Richard M. Ingersoll, William Ayers, and Kati Haycock (pages 27-46 in the course packet) prior to this class session.

The Common Core and You. Understanding the demands of the new Common Core State Standards for novice teachers and the ways in which teaching literacy—at all grade levels and in very class—is changing as schools adopt the Common Core and explore new approaches to helping students gain more advanced skills in reading, writing, mathematical, technological, and scientific literacy, and critical thinking. Guests: Susan B Neuman, Professor of Childhood and Literacy Education and Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning and Okhee Lee, Professor of Childhood Education. Please review the essays by E.D. Hirsch, Bob Peterson, and Alfie Kohn (pp. 73-89 in the course packet) prior to this session.

- **LATE WORK:** Written work must be **printed and submitted** (as opposed to emailed) on the date it is due. **Late work will not be accepted and may result in the lowering of your final grade.**

- **FURTHER THOUGHTS:**

  In the process of our inquiry it will be necessary to face many tough questions:

  - Questions about how knowledge is constructed socially and individually and passed on from generation to generation in similar and different cultures.

  - Questions about the nature of discrimination around race, class, gender, sexual orientation, able-bodied-ness, and a range of other ways in which schools too often sort students; privileging some and discriminating against others.

  - Questions about what constitutes good instruction and how best to structure a classroom to ensure that all students succeed. While very few educators argue against ensuring success for all, they argue passionately and long about how best to ensure this sometimes elusive goal; what mix of pedagogical strategies, curricular models, record keeping, and assessment measures will guarantee success and which ones may actually hinder achievement for some students.

  - Questions about standards and testing and accountability for students, teachers, schools and school systems—What role do they serve? Who are they designed to help/hurt? Who do they help/hurt in practice?
• Questions about the politics of education . . . about who makes decisions and who should make decisions and about the authority of teachers and the accountability of teachers to students, parents, communities, unions, and to the administration of schools at the local, city, state and national levels.

• Questions about the nature of democratic education . . . what constitutes true democracy in the modes of instruction, the management of a class, and the purposes of schooling?

There are no right answers to most of the questions that we will be considering. But the goal of the course is stated in its title; in this course instructors and students inquire together about teaching and learning.

**An important message from the Dean regarding your rights:**
Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf of Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212.998.4980, 726 Broadway, [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

**Important Additional Policies that all students need to be aware of:**

NYU Steinhardt’s Grading Policies
[http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/registration/standards#grading_policies](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/registration/standards#grading_policies)

Statement on Academic Integrity:
[http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity)
COURSE SCHEDULE

Please review this in its entirety as soon as possible. Some assignments take several weeks to prepare and we don’t want assignments sneaking up on you.

For each class, you are required to bring either your think-tac-toe piece (if you have elected to teach a piece on a particular day) or, if you’re not teaching, your critical thinking questions/responses to that day’s readings for each class session.

From February 7 to April 24 our regular class schedule will be as follows:
2:30-2:55—Observation in your assigned NDHS classroom
3:00-3:20—Debrief with your Observation Work Group (i.e. those who are observing in the same classroom as you) and write field notes.
3:30-5:50—Regular class session (includes a ten minute break.)

Reading = Readings are located in the course text, TEACH, on a handout, or in a book you’re working on in a book group.
Writing = Written assignment due at the start of class. Written assignments may not be emailed.

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT(S) DUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>- Introductions to each other and the course.</td>
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<td>- Establish classroom community norms.</td>
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<td>NOTE: We will meet on campus at NYU for this first session—Pless Hall, 3rd floor lounge. Choose top three Learner and Teacher texts for book groups, as well as Think –Tac-Toe teaching opportunity dates. (We will explain when we meet.)</td>
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<td>January 31</td>
<td>- Review/revise class norms</td>
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<td>Our first meeting at New Design High School—350 Grand Street in the Lower East Side. Please be at the school at 2:30 for a prompt start. (Best to allow 30 minutes for walk or subway ride. You will receive directions.</td>
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<td>Question to Ponder: Look carefully at the “Portrait of an Educator” on p. 6 and ask what teaching style works for you? As you read the articles by Ayers and Pellerin-Duck ask yourself—Why am I interested in possibly becoming a teacher? How committed am I?</td>
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<td>Writing: TEACH, Chapter One</td>
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<td>February 7</td>
<td>- Defining “Diversities” in preparation for next week’s observation opportunity.</td>
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<td>Question to Ponder: As you read the article by Kati Haycock, think about other conversations about teaching you have heard. Do you think most people really believe that good teachers make a</td>
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difference? How would you answer if someone asked, “What does good teaching look like?” (Include an example of something you see at NDHS in your thinking, here.)

**Observation Question:** What is a particularly interesting “move” you saw the teacher make during class, either with the whole class or an individual student? We’re defining “move” as a seemingly intentional choice dedicated to a specific, positive teaching and learning outcome.

**Writing:** Rewrite New York State Code of Ethics in light of Haycock and other readings and what you have seen and discussed to date.

| February 14 | **Reading:** TEACH, Chapter Three  

**Observation Question:** Focus your observation on the students. Describe as many of the diversities you saw in a NDHS classroom as possible. Is there a form of diversity that is in danger of being overlooked?

**Interview:** NDHS Gay/Straight Alliance founder Laura Rubin and NDHS teacher Jessica Flores discuss LGBT issues and making the classroom a safe place for all students.

**Writing:** What does a safe, inclusive classroom look like to you? How do you know all students feel welcomed in this space?

| February 21  

*Break for New York City schools but not for NYU. We will meet with other sections of the course in a classroom to be designated at the NYU campus.* | **Reading:** The Changing Nature of the Teacher's Job. From the day that John Adams rode off to teach school in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1755 to the times in the 1830s that Catherine Beecher argued that women made better teachers than men, or taught people recently freed from slavery on the Sea Islands during the Civil War to the new job expectations embedded in No Child Left Behind, the nature of the teaching profession has been ever changing and teachers have often been in the forefront of these changes. As aspiring teachers we need to know how teachers have brought about change—for good and for ill—and what this means for us in a never-static profession.  

*Guest: James W. Fraser, Professor of History and Education. Please review the essays by Richard M. Ingersoll, William Ayers, and Kati Haycock (pages 27-46 in the course packet) prior to this class session.*

| February 28 | **Reading:** Read your Learner biography well in advance of this session so that you can present on February 28. Note, you may also want to read ahead in chapters four and five in TEACH to prepare for next week.

**Teaching Opportunity:** Learners & Learning book groups

**Writing:** Learner paper: See handout for guidelines.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Observation Question:</th>
<th>Writing:</th>
<th>Interview:</th>
<th>Understanding Urban Public Schools Presentations—First Set of Presentations</th>
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<td>March 6</td>
<td><em>TEACH</em>, Chapters Four and Five: You will respond to some critical thinking questions in response to this reading on Blackboard.</td>
<td>You will again focus on the students—specifically on gender issues and on what Hehir calls “abelism.”</td>
<td>Research notes for your “Portrait of a Teaching and Learning Environment.” What did you find out about NDHS online? What are you seeing about the school; it’s students, teachers, general atmosphere. You won’t hand these in, but keep them and use them in writing up the <em>Portrait</em> assignment in your <em>Portfolio</em>.</td>
<td>Mike will speak with the class to discuss NDHS curricular goals. Be prepared with 2 specific questions inspired by your observations of NDHS. What do you need to know in order to flesh out your eventual portrait of a teaching and learning environment?</td>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td><em>TEACH</em> Chapters Six and Seven</td>
<td>Focus your observation today on the teacher. What was the curricular goal that you saw today? Note specific classroom management techniques that she/he used; did they work? Why / why not?</td>
<td>Join the debate between Hirsch and Peterson. If you were asked to prepare a response to both, what would you say? Can their views be reconciled? How? You should write an essay that could easily be published parallel to the two in <em>TEACH</em>.</td>
<td>We will have a guest from NYU will meet with our class to discuss the role of technology in contemporary education.</td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td><em>TEACH</em> Chapter Eight</td>
<td>What sort of technology is available the NDHS classroom where you’re observing now? Is it used? How does that compare with the technology in the high school you attended?</td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td><em>TEACH</em> Chapters Nine and Ten</td>
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**Observation Question**—Focus your observation on the students—and keep in mind Beverly Tatum’s article from chapter ten—Do the students self-segregate? How? If so, why might you guess they do so? (It may be necessary for you to include observations of students in the hallways as you go to and from your observation classroom.)

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### April 10

**Classes will meet on campus at NYU this week rather than at NDHS.**

**Reading**—You will need to have read your learner autobiography well in advance and be prepared to teach what you have learned from it in today’s class session.

Observation: Since we will meet at NYU this week, there will be no observation. We will use the whole 2:30 to 5:50 time slot for the book group teaching opportunities.

**Teaching Opportunity:** Teachers and Teaching book groups

**Writing:** Teachers and teaching paper (see handout)

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### April 17

**Reading**—*TEACH* Chapters Eleven and Twelve

**Observation Question:** Focus on the teacher. If they were to re-write John Dewey’s “My Pedagogic Creed” what do you think your teacher would say differently?

**Interview:** Professor Jonathan Zimmerman of NYU will join us for a provocative discussion of the current politics of education.

**Writing:** Submit a first draft of your “philosophy of education” paper answering the questions, “What makes someone a highly effective teacher? What does it mean to teach in a democratic society?” As you write, please include passages from the readings that are shaping your thinking. To cite a reading for this paper, the author’s last name and page number will suffice.

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### April 24

**Teaching Opportunity:** *TEACH* Chapter Thirteen

**Observation Question:** This is your last day of observation. What are you seeing that makes you want to be a teacher? What discourages you?

**Interview:** Beth McDonald, a former elementary school principal on “What do principals look for when hiring a teacher? What teaching opportunities are currently available in NYC schools?”

**Writing:** Focus on assembling, revising, and reviewing your portfolio (due May 8) and a final draft of your philosophy of education paper on teaching in a democratic society. We will provide some time in class for you to sit with a peer and review a piece of your Portfolio in order to get feedback for further revision.
| May 1 | *The Common Core and You.* Understanding the demands of the new Common Core State Standards for novice teachers and the ways in which teaching literacy--at all grade levels and in very class--is changing as schools adopt the Common Core and explore new approaches to helping students gain more advanced skills in reading, writing, mathematical, technological, and scientific literacy, and critical thinking. Guests: Susan B Neuman, Professor of Childhood and Literacy Education and Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning and Okhee Lee, Professor of Childhood Education. Please review the essays by E.D. Hirsch, Bob Peterson, and Alfie Kohn (pp. 73-89 in the course packet) prior to this session. |
| May 8 | **Writing:** Final Portfolio to be submitted and shared with the class. Please select a piece of your Portfolio and be prepared to share that piece with the class. |