Chapter 2
Developing an Impactful Diverse Literature Course for Future Librarians:
From Reflection to Action

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the development of a course about diversity in children's literature for pre-service librarians. A discussion of the pedagogical philosophy that grounds the faculty member before designing the course is presented. With a lens of critical pedagogy, the course presents a learning environment in which students analyze their place within the power structures of society. The course's design follows a structure that takes students from reflective assignments to acquiring the tools they will need to actively diversify youth collections and programs in libraries and schools. The chapter includes suggested guidelines to develop the course's learning outcomes, materials, and tools for authentic assessment of learning. It also includes samples of assignments, resources to use in the course design, and suggestions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching future librarians and educators has implications beyond the world of academia. The impact of these future professionals' practice will affect and be affected by the society in which they will be working. In the prologue to *Education, the Practice of Freedom*, Paulo Freire (1986) states that "there is no education without a human society and there is no man outside of it" (p. 25). Freire was referring to the fact that even if his work on the power of literacy had applications outside of his own country and circumstances, everything he wrote was intrinsically tied to the Brazilian society in which he was immersed.

In the field of librarianship, a course that deals with selection of reading materials that will be placed in the hands of children and youth has direct and indirect consequences: It influences the professionals as they learn to select the materials, and it indirectly impacts the youth that will be exposed to those materials. For this reason, a course about multiculturalism or diversity in children's literature is favorably positioned to be facilitated with a critical/social justice pedagogy that prompts students to analyze their own positions within the power structures of society in order to affect change (Pollard, 2020).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the pedagogical background to be considered by faculty members before designing a multicultural literature course, and to guide the development of the syllabus and course materials that complement that reflection, by providing ideas and resources to use in the course's design. Activities and assignments are provided as examples of teaching tools that present students with opportunities to reflect on the current state of diverse literature for youth with a critical inquiry lens, while taking agency and developing materials that could be used after graduation, in order to have an impact in the communities where they will work.

Background

The course titled "Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults" is offered in a graduate level program attended by future librarians. Taught online and asynchronously, the course has been filling to capacity every semester and it is recommended for students in the school media pathway or those interested in youth services in public libraries. While graduate programs tend to present theoretical frameworks, some of their courses also have pragmatic knowledge to prepare students for their practice, especially programs that certify professionals such as librarians and teachers.

Critical thinking is an intrinsic goal of graduate level coursework, and generally speaking, of higher education (Barnett, 1997; Liyanage et al., 2021). Learning outcomes in graduate programs, for example, might include the ability to evaluate critically, reflect, and problem-solve, work collaboratively, and participate in the intellectual development of the discipline (University of South Florida [USF], 2015). In addition, library and information science programs include among their objectives the students' preparation to identify the information needs of the community (USF, 2015). Courses that address diversity or multiculturalism present an opportunity to combine these two educational outcomes. They can provide occasions to ensure critical reflection on the state of diversity in children's literature and practical activities to determine the needs of the community and act on these needs. By taking these courses, future librarians will be actively engaged in the work for social justice and inclusion before they begin, or as they continue their careers in libraries.

The work to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in higher education experienced a significant growth in the last decade, and many institutions have added EDI components to their missions and visions (Barnett, 2020). Schools of information and library science are not an exception to the trend, as there is (and has been) an increased interest in diversifying the profession and the formation of information professionals (Jaeger et al., 2013; Stauffer, 2020; Villagran & Hawamdeh, 2020). Lack of diversity in library schools' faculty and curricula has been addressed in the literature and, although a review highlights some improvements, there is also evidence that the implementation of EDI principles in library schools' curricula is still lacking (Adkins et al., 2015; Jaeger at al. 2015; Mestre, 2009; Stauffer, 2020).

The need for diversity in the education of future librarians accompanies the call for diversity in library services, programs, and collections for youth, as manifested in a white paper issued by the Association for Library Services for Children, ALSC (Naidoo, 2014). Specifically, in the area of collection devel-

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