Meaningful Change: Transforming Communities of Practice

Critical theorists and liberatory pedagogues emphasize the crucial link between theory and action, critique and transformation. They argue that critique without action is inauthentic, dismissing the purposeful links that release learners and educators into creative acts characterized by search and invention, rather than superimposing solutions that were developed for another group of learners in another time. Freire (1985, 1984) for example, maintained that reading and writing alone would not create liberation because understanding of written words must develop simultaneously with moving from naiveté into critical consciousness. He also argued that critical consciousness could never be attained through intellectual effort alone. Consequently, he espoused the crucial dialectic between coming to know an unjust reality and transforming that reality.

This conference theme celebrates the fundamental dialectic that interweaves theory and action, critique and transformation, creativity and learning, critical consciousness and praxis.

Featured Keynote Presenters:

Wayne Au is an Associate Professor in the School of Educational Studies at the University of Washington, Bothell. A former public high school teacher and current editor for Rethinking Schools, Au teaches teachers and undergraduate students in the areas of multicultural education, education policy, and social studies education. Au has published widely in books and journals, and his academic and public scholarship focuses broadly on critical education studies and teaching for social justice. Most recently he co-edited the four-volume compendium, Critical Education (Routledge), and edited, Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for Racial and Cultural Justice (Rethinking Schools).

Lois Weis is State University of New York Distinguished Professor of Sociology of Education at the University at Buffalo. She has written extensively about the current predicament of White, African-American, and Latino/a working class and poor youth and young adults, and the complex role gender and race play in their lives in light of contemporary dynamics associated with the global knowledge economy, new patterns of emigration, and the movement of cultural and economic capital across national boundaries. She is the author and/or editor of numerous books and articles relating to race, class, gender, education and the economy. Weis is a winner of the outstanding book award from the Gustavus Meyers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America, as well as a seven-time winner of the American Educational Studies Association’s Critic’s Choice Award, given for an outstanding book. She is member of the National Academy of Education (NAEd) and an Honorary Fellow of the American Educational Research Association.
Strand Descriptions for Teaching and Learning for Equity and Social Justice

The conference invites presentations that address issues of equity and social justice in the practice of teaching and learning. Accepted presenters are invited to submit full papers (due March 16) for a special Equity and Social Justice issue of the peer reviewed *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education*. Only papers accepted for the 2015 ESJ conference will be included in the Equity and Social Justice special issue.

**Adult Education in Communities of Practice**
“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 1998). This strand invites presentations that address the role of adult education in promoting equity and social justice in local communities and the larger society as a whole. Papers outlining scholarship in the education of and for adults are welcomed. The focus of this strand is on the role of communities of practice in facilitating emancipatory learning and social action.

**Critical Race Studies**
Many believe racism does not exist in contemporary times, thereby dismissing the challenges experienced by non-hegemonic groups. We invite papers and workshops by researchers, educators, and scholars who critically examine racist practices, policies, micro-aggressions and other forms of oppression as it relates to critical race studies and transformative solutions in the following areas: K-12 Education, Higher Education, Adult and Community Education, Sociology, and Teacher Education.

**Critical Youth Studies**
This strand invites scholars from a wide variety of disciplines whose research explores contemporary discourses about childhood and youth from a critical and action-based perspective. Throughout American history, adults have circulated images of youth that are manipulative, hostile, and damaging. More often than not, young people are portrayed in these adult-generated discourses as either passive victims or aggressive perpetrators; rarely are they depicted as productive and capable agents in their own right, and even less frequently are they granted access to the means of representation that construct and disseminate these images. The theme provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue, and seeks to engage historians, philosophers, and cultural and media critics, among others, in conversations that focus on the representation of young people in academic and popular discourses, emphasizing the interplay between critical analysis and radical change. In addition, this session invites scholars whose focus of inquiry explores the cultural practices of young people themselves.

**Educational Reform in the 21st Century**
Proposals in this strand consider how contemporary reform initiatives are affecting teaching and learning. It questions how students, teachers, teacher educators, and administrators are influenced by the intended and unintended consequences of policies such as Race to the Top, Common Core Standards, charter schools, new teacher evaluation systems, and teacher candidate assessments such as the Teacher Performance Assessment. This strand explores attempts to seek equity and social justice in educational reform movements.

**Urban Education & Community Partnerships**
The relationship of community partnerships in assisting urban community transformation is explored in this strand. Proposals might address questions of how such partnerships are begun or sustained. Research may consider how equity and social justice can be cultivated in relationships between community partners and urban schools, adult education organizations, and/or the academy.
“Othering”
The “Othering” strand solicits papers from scholars and practitioners in a range of disciplines whose work captures how constitutive forces and cultural practices inside and outside of schools, higher education, and other formal institutions lead to the marginalization of learners and other social actors on the structural axes of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and/or disability. Proposals may address the impact of “othering” on equity and social justice, ways in which this issue has been researched, and strategies for transformation that have evolved from the research. This track also calls on educators, activists, researchers, and students to share theoretical insights, empirical data, pedagogical strategies, and cultural work that have the potency to ameliorate oppression against the “Other” as well as have the power to remake schools and other institutions of learning on the ideals of social justice and democracy.

PROPOSAL FORMATS  (SUBMIT PROPOSALS TO: esjconference@buffalostate.edu)

*Individual Proposal:* (75 minutes)
The Conference Committee welcomes individual paper proposals, with the understanding that those accepted will be grouped together around common or overlapping themes. Presenters will have approximately 15 minutes to present or summarize their individual papers. A 250 word abstract of the paper will be peer reviewed for acceptance to the conference.

*Symposium Proposal:* (75 minutes)
The Conference Committee welcomes proposals for a symposium. A symposium is typically composed of a chair and discussant and three to five participants who present or summarize their papers. Each symposium is organized around a common theme. A 250 word abstract of the symposium will be peer reviewed for acceptance to the conference.

*Panel Proposal:* (75 minutes)
The Conference Committee welcomes proposals for a panel discussion. A panel is typically composed of three to six participants who discuss their scholarly work within the context of a dialogue or conversation on a topic or theme related to the conference. Typically, each panelist is given 10-15 minutes to discuss the topic, present theoretical ideas, and/or point to relevant research. A chair should be identified who introduces the panel and frames the issues and questions being addressed. We also encourage (but do not require) organizers of panels to include a discussant who responds to the comments of the panelists. A 250 word abstract of the panel discussion will be peer reviewed for acceptance to the conference.

*Alternative Format and Special Interest Groups* (75 minutes)
Alternative proposals that do not fit into the above categories, such as workshops, performances, video and multimedia presentations, and round-table dialogues, are encouraged. We also welcome proposals for the organization of special interest groups. A 250 word abstract will be peer reviewed for acceptance to the conference.

**Proposals must include:**
- Names and affiliations of presenters
- Conference strand
- Presentation format

**CONFERENCE CO-DIRECTORS**

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