Social justice has an integral place in education. For example, there is a crisis rooted in injustice because privileged, mainstream people have access to good schools while poor, disadvantaged people do not (Gee, 1996). Moreover, disadvantage impacts students differently according to their class and race (Kozol, 1992) as well as gender (Sadker & Sadker, 1995). Educators who are interested in social justice teaching could help to resolve actual injustices while increasing student and teacher motivation through meaning-making.

The classroom is the most radical space of possibility in the academy because in it one can think, rethink, and create new visions (hooks 1994). Additionally, Jesuit pedagogy promotes service to others, challenging students while encouraging responsibility, asking questions, facilitating students' understanding in a personally relevant manner, and helping students see the world from multiple perspectives. The design of this social justice course rests on those beliefs.

Defining Social Justice

Teaching for social justice reflects how a teacher understands social justice. Although social justice is a negotiable term, for the sake of this project, I based it on the following assertions by key scholars in the field:

- Justice should begin with the ideas of domination and oppression, emphasizing issues of decision-making and culture as well as the importance of social group differences; therefore, social justice is the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression since the deep injustices in our society can only be rectified by basic institutional change (Young, 1990).
- Justice is a preferred relationship between institutions and human beings that is tied to the notion of rights and impartiality as well as an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1999).
- A just society is one where everyone affected by a decision has a part in making that decision (Greene, 1998).

Whereas the very idea of justice coexists with the political (Young, 1990), and is individually based on teachers' understandings of social justice, what occurs within and between schools is complex. Thus the term social justice includes a number of ideas and concerns outside of and within the field of education.

For example, Oakes and Lipton (2003) provide a social justice framework specifically for education with the following three objectives, representing the secular perspective:

1. To uncover, examine, and critique the values and politics that undergird educational decisions and practices as we also explore the more instrumental issues of organizing curriculum and instruction
2. To challenge educational common sense and to ask important questions about why we do the things we do in schools and who benefits from them
3. To attend to the ways in which schooling often contributes to the creation, maintenance, and reproduction of inequalities, particularly along the lines of race, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and other such categories so we can construct more empowering alternatives

Social justice is associated both with individual empowerment and with structural control. In other words, social justice is concerned with questions of power and decision-making as well as both economic and cultural resources available to individuals and to particular communities or sectors of those communities.

For the Jesuit understanding of social justice, I referred to the following excerpts from Decree 4 from the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus where their mission was THE SERVICE OF FAITH AND THE PROMOTION OF JUSTICE. While there is a clear focus on the poor, the specific tenets that impact social justice teaching are listed below:
• In the service of faith, the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.
• Our response to these new challenges will be total (involving prayer and action), corporate (collaborative), rooted in faith and experience, and multiform (different in different contexts).
• Strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith, and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministrations, by means of the Spiritual Exercises, and the education of children.
• Recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, and work to actively secure those rights.
• Demonstrate an openness and generosity to anyone in need, even a stranger or an enemy.
• Offer resistance to the many forms of contemporary atheism, including a social justice without God.
• Notice the millions in our world, specific people with names and faces, who are suffering from poverty and hunger, from the unjust distribution of wealth and resources and from the consequences of racial, social, and political discrimination. Not only the quality of life but human life itself is under constant threat.
• It is now within human power to make the world more just, but we must want to.
• Promote justice and human freedom on the social and structural level; attack injustice at its roots by transforming the attitudes and habits which beget injustice and foster the structures of oppression.
• Bring people to a real reconciliation with God.

Clearly there are similarities and differences in the secular and Jesuit conceptions of social justice. My objective in designing the course was to negotiate the tension between the two by recognizing where they overlapped and where they resisted and even confronted each other.

Educational goals and methods have always been characters in our national morality play, political archetypes representing order and stability and disorder and the breakdown of civilization. Against this backdrop, the issues of power and privilege have been effectively laundered from U.S. education under the ruse that education is an objective science. Lacking a political economy model, teachers are denied the opportunity to see and understand their own embeddedness in history, language, culture, and power (McLaren, 97).

I believe that education is never neutral, and that we, as educators serve the purpose of recognizing our location and our students’ context when engaging in social justice teaching.

Describing the Process

This syllabus represents a calling of mine: social justice teaching. Although at one time, I thought that social justice was a concept I understood, I have found that through research, contemplation, practice, and reading, social justice teaching is complex, complicated, and evasive.

During one of my earliest meetings with my first doctoral advisor, he inquired as to my research interests. Quickly, and rather matter-of-factly, I responded, “I am interested in social justice.”

He looked at me for a moment, blinked a few times, and asked, “Yeah, but what does that mean?” As simple and perhaps basic as that sounds, his question has haunted - and motivated - me. Moreover, his question started me on a quest. Before beginning my doctoral program, I had read a number of professional social-justice oriented texts to use in my classroom teaching, earned a graduate certificate in Women’s Studies, and had three articles published in English Journal (Slack, 1999; Slack, 2001, Bender-Slack 2002). I thought I knew what social justice was and, more importantly, knew what it meant to teach for social justice in the English classroom.

Consequently, it was disconcerting but exhilarating to realize my quest for “recognizing” social justice and its place in English education had only begun. While I read a number of teacher interpretations of what it meant to teach for social justice, my growing interests in scholarly research and teacher education as they intersected with my work in adolescent literacy led me to explore the notion of social justice as it related to teaching in the social studies (Bender-Slack & Raupach, 2006; Bender-Slack & Raupach, 2008) and the use of texts in the secondary ELA classroom (Bender-Slack, 2009; Bender-Slack, 2010a, Bender-Slack, 2010b).

Since coming to Xavier, the place of social justice in education has become even more complicated for me, however, due to Jesuit pedagogy, providing a space for social justice in my classroom is even more important. When constructing my syllabi each semester, choosing texts, designing lesson plans, and interacting with others, social justice is at the forefront of my thoughts, beliefs, and motivations because I take the mission of Jesuit pedagogy seriously.
Due to past research, I had given much thought and time to teaching for social justice. Choosing to include particular secular texts when designing the syllabus was relatively easy because I was familiar with many of the works and scholars. The Jesuit texts were much more difficult. I re-read the handouts, fliers, and desktop primers I received when joining Xavier in 2008. I talked to my mentor and colleagues in Mission and Identity in order to identify other resources. Additionally, I visited the Xavier library, specifically the Jesuit section on the third floor, examining numerous texts. I learned more about solidarity and kinship, mission, service rooted in justice and love, discernment, and reflection.

Originally I planned to organize the course by spending one half studying the secular notion of social justice and the other half the Jesuit conception of the term. I decided, however, that I would synthesize the course by negotiating both each week so that one did not appear to be privileged over the other. Next, I wondered if Jesuit and secular texts and topics should be equally balanced each week. Due to the nature of my research and background knowledge, I decided that was not crucial but attempted to do so anyway. Clearly, just because the texts or topics were balanced, does not mean they would be given equal representation during instruction. Due to the complex variations on social justice both within and between the Jesuit and secular communities, the representation was challenging. Although there are differences, I found that there were a number of ideas and ideals that overlapped. These are synthesized in the syllabus that follows.

References:

CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & LITERACY DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT:
Xavier University’s Department of Childhood Education and Literacy is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and to the orderly discussion of critical issues confronting educators in a free, inquiry-based environment committed to current and relevant scholarship and research related to our profession. Xavier University seeks to create awareness of social justice in all disciplines through its emphasis on living the Jesuit tradition of intellectual, moral, and spiritual preparation. The candidates in the Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Montessori and Literacy programs, through their academic and professional training, are prepared to value the lives of children regardless of racial, linguistic, socio-economic, religious, or ethnic background and to work with and value family and school structures in both urban, rural, and suburban settings. Special attention is given to developmentally effective practices and advocacy for all children, with ethical issues and values as expressed through the Jesuit tradition. Thus, the Childhood Education and Literacy preparation at Xavier University strives to send out into the education community candidates who are morally sensitive to the academic and social needs of our time, foster an appreciation for human diversity, reason critically, and think creatively. Candidates in the Childhood Education and Literacy Department are encouraged to develop and maintain a disposition toward lifelong learning in the profession of education and to the service of their students and their students’ families and communities.

COURSE OVERVIEW:
This course introduces students to theoretical perspectives and instructional practices related to social justice from both the secular and Jesuit traditions. In this course, students will examine the theoretical positions related to a variety of topics in social justice. Teaching for social justice, including the more practical aspects of developing thematic and inquiry-based lessons, facilitating classroom discussions, and promoting a positive atmosphere within the school community will be examined. Students will be required to analyze, synthesize, and reflect upon the readings in order to begin the process of application within their teaching context.

REQUIRED TEXT & RESOURCES:
Various book chapters and articles on E-Reserve

COURSE OUTCOMES:
- Analyze, discuss, and reflect upon the social justice theories presented in class
- Evaluate the implications of these theories for teaching and learning
- Incorporate available resources into a social justice teaching project
- Develop and model instructional methods to motivate social justice activism within the educational context
EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENTS:

Weekly Reflections and Postings: Students will be expected to keep a written reflective journal that responds directly to the guiding question for the week. Your journal entries should focus not only on what you are learning through the course readings and weekly classroom discussions, but should also include your thinking about and reflecting upon your pedagogical practices, your developing philosophy of social justice, and your personal life experiences. Reflective work does not mean that you summarize the readings or provide a synopsis of the reading, but that you carefully and critically consider the issues and implications of what you are reading, relating it to the personal and professional growth you are experiencing. You will want to comment on things you find important, enlightening, confusing, or disturbing. Students should then use this journal to make one posting per week via Discussion Board. Postings should be made no later than noon on the Friday prior to the class meeting and students should also make an effort to respond to at least two of your classmates’ postings.

Multi-genre Annotated Bibliography: Students will receive release time the ninth week of class in order to individually investigate the literature, music, and other resources that are available for the purpose of teaching social justice in the classroom. Students should use their local library, online sources, and other research facilities to research, develop, and write a bibliography of at least ten sources appropriate for use in the classroom. Your sources should include the following: biographies, realistic fiction, poems, journals, newspaper articles, short stories, artwork, songs, documentaries, movie clips, etc.

The annotated bibliography must be written in APA format, and include a brief synopsis of each source (no more than one paragraph) and a statement of pedagogical implications (no more than two sentences). In parentheses, after the entry, students should include any awards the source may have won. Copies of this bibliography should be made for every member of the class, including the instructors.

Social Justice Unit Plan: Each student will become a member of a group to develop a unit that addresses one aspect of social justice that has been introduced in this course.

The unit will also include:
- unit justification
- content standards and student objectives
- a thematic planner (unit overview)
- lesson plan using the XU lesson plan format from each student
- at least one technology connection
- a bibliography of sources, references, and texts
- a unit plan assessment (to assess the effectiveness of the unit, not the progress of the students)

Each group will be expected to present their unit plan as a PowerPoint during the final class meetings. Each student must post the unit thematic planner on Blackboard.

Points for Assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Reflections and Postings</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice Unit Plan</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Social Justice Unit Plan</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

310 points possible

GRADING SCALE:

A  95-100%  C+ 82-84%
A- 93-94%   C  79-81%
B+ 90-92%   C- 77-78%
COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance: The Xavier University catalogue states “In order to earn credit in any course for which he/she is registered, the student is required to attend classroom and laboratory exercises regularly and promptly. Lack of reasonable attendance as determined by the individual faculty member is reason for denial of credit for a course and possible course failure.”

As people who highly value education, it is important that you attend all class sessions. Your participation and attendance in class is critical. Attendance will be taken every class period through a student sign-in sheet that will be checked by the professor. Please be on time, as punctuality is an indicator of consideration for your fellow educators. All students should arrive on time and remain in class for the duration of the meeting. Failure to attend class meetings will result in a lower class grade and possible course failure. In other words, two absences will decrease your earned final grade one letter grade. If you miss more than two classes, you will receive an F for the course. Two tardies equals one absence. Any snow day may be made up during finals week.

Class Participation: Participation is necessary for sharing ideas and building a sense of a learning community. Participation includes but is not limited to contribution of ideas in class, answering questions, pre-class preparation, submission of assignments in a timely manner, and being respectful of the differing ideas, opinions, and experiences of others. Students are expected to be fully prepared and to become actively involved in activities, discussions, and exercises. This course is part of an accredited teacher preparation program, which leads to a professional license or certificate. Unprofessional behavior may result in a lower course grade. All assignments must be turned in to the instructor on or before the assigned due date. *Turn off or silence all phones/pagers before class. Do not use your computers in class for activities unrelated to our class material. Please close computers except when taking notes. If I see computers being used otherwise, you will not be able to use your computer in class at any time.

Quality of Work: All assignments must be typed with correct grammar and spelling. As college students in an education course, APA style is expected. Completion does not insure receiving all of the allotted points. Students who fail to provide quality assignments will receive a lower grade. Grades will not be disputed. Assignments turned in late will receive a maximum of half the possible points allowed.

Note: All work is expected to be prepared in a thoughtful and professional manner. In order to receive full credit, work must be: (1) Professional - insightful, free of spelling, grammatical, and all mechanical errors. (2) Submitted on time – deductions will be taken for all late or incomplete work. (3) Neatly word-processed, double-spaced, APA format (4) Ethical – in line with ethical standards, and most importantly (5) Of excellent, outstanding quality through evidence of critical thinking and deep reflection.

Academic Honesty: The Childhood Education and Literacy Department values and expects academic honesty. It is expected that each student will submit original work. Where others’ works and ideas are used, citations must be included. Plagiarism: 1. Submitting another’s published or unpublished work, in whole, in part, or in paraphrase, as one’s own without fully and properly crediting the author with footnotes, citations, or bibliographical reference. Please refer to the Xavier University Catalog for the official statement and consequences.

Accommodations: Xavier University’s Learning Assistance Center can be reached by calling 745-3280. The Writing Center is located in Alter B12 and the phone number is 745-2875. Please discuss necessary accommodations with the professor.

Graduate Work: Each student taking this course for graduate credit is responsible for putting her/his status on each assignment. The work should be of the highest caliber. I expect you to go above and beyond the assignment guidelines. Advanced assignments will be given.
COURSE CALENDAR:

Week 1  Guiding Question: What is social justice?
Topics: Introduction
  Review of syllabus and course requirements
  Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Weekly Readings:

Week 2  Guiding Question: What is the place of religious beliefs and practices in social justice?
Topics: Discernment
  Magis
Weekly Readings:

Week 3  Guiding Question: What is the place of social justice in education?
Topics: Critical Theory
  Mission
Weekly Readings:

Week 4  Guiding Question: How is teaching political? ethical?
  Teaching for democracy
  Service Rooted in Justice and Love
Weekly Readings:


**Assignment**: Choose a topic for a social justice unit

**Week 5**

**Guiding Question**: Why identify as social justice teachers?

**Topics**: Solidarity and Kinship

**Weekly Readings**:


**Week 6**

**Guiding Question**: How can teaching be used for social activism?

**Topics**: Engendering multiple strands of inquiry

**Weekly Readings**:

**Week 7**

**Guiding Question**: How does one negotiate teaching for social justice?

**Topics**: Cura Pesonalis

**Weekly Readings**:

**Week 8**

**Guiding Question**: Who is teaching social justice for?

**Topics**: Men and Women for Others

**Reflection**

**Weekly Readings**: 


**Week 9**

**Annotated Bibliography Work Time**

**Week 10**

**Guiding Question: What is the best way to approach the teaching of social justice?**

**Topics:** Critical Pedagogy  
Jesuit Pedagogy  
Weekly Readings:


**Assignment:** Annotated Bibliography Due

**Week 11**

**Guiding Question: How will teaching for social justice impact my classroom?**

**Topics:** Building communities within and outside of the classroom  
Weekly Readings:


**Week 12**

**Guiding Question: What are the consequences of teaching for social justice?**

**Topics:** Blurring of Boundaries  
Weekly Readings:
The Writings of Ellacuria, Martin Baro and Segundo Montes (pp. 3-23) in *The Jesuit Assassinations*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward.

[Conclusion: A Prudent Synergy: Pedagogy for Mind and Spirit, pp. 311-336]

Week 13
Unit Plan Group Work Time

Week 14
Sharing unit plan PowerPoint presentations

Week 15
Sharing unit plan PowerPoint presentations

Week 16
Sharing unit plan PowerPoint presentations
Course and Instructor evaluations