



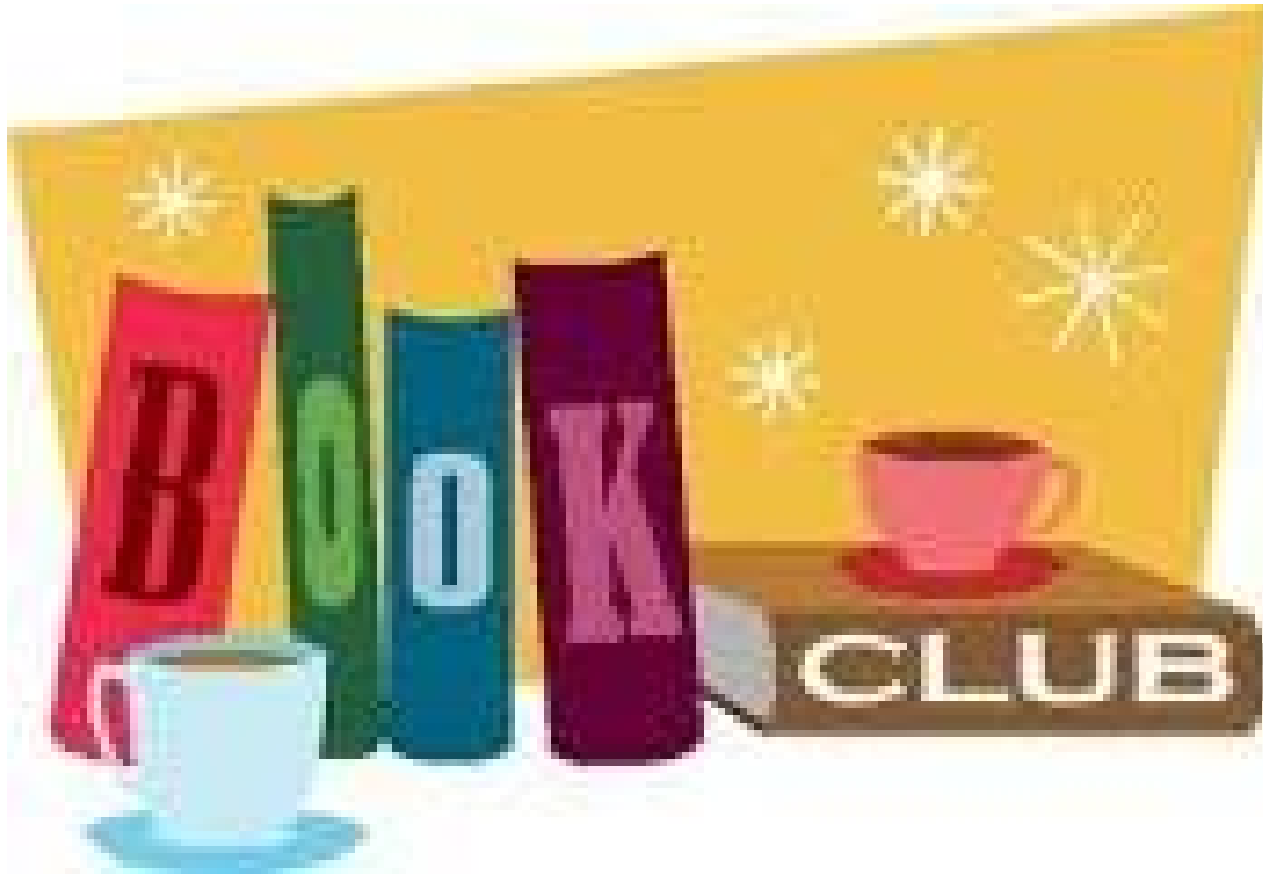
BOOK CLUBS IN THE ONLINE COURSE

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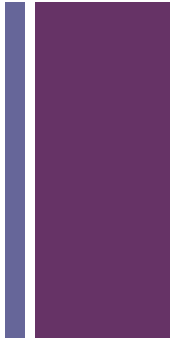




Our Course:

“Culture, Equity, Power, and Influence”

- A required course for all Masters students in School of Education.
- Readings are sociological, historical, and theoretical. Students are encouraged to connect readings with issues of practice, but the readings, for the most part, do not provide a “human story” approach.
- There are multiple readings each week – usually articles, or excerpts from books.
- Nearly every week students are on DB for readings-based discussions.
- We wanted to integrate a different type of reading and a different way for students to have discussions = BOOK CLUB.



+ Popularity of Book Clubs



- More than 5 million adults are in Book Clubs.
- The people who participate in Book Clubs are demographically diverse.



- *Why are they so popular? What are they offering people?*



Book Clubs: From the Informal to the Formal



- Oprah Book Clubs
- One City-One Book Book Clubs
- Friends/Neighbors Book Clubs
- Online Book Clubs
- Book Clubs in the English Class in K12 schools
- Book Clubs as Professional Development

+ What do we mean by “Book Club”?

- A mix of the formal and informal.
- A small group of students read the same book. (4 to 5 students)
- Students choose the book they read based on offerings made by the instructors.
- Students read the book in advance of their Book Club meeting and prepare questions for discussions.
- Students are encouraged to meet “live” online, though the option is provided to meet via DB as some students are not able to participate in an oral discussion and/or a synchronous discussion.





Why do we use “Book Clubs” in our course?



- Opportunity for students to dig deeply into a single book.
- Opportunity to read a “human story” style book, which can connect students in new ways with the issues of culture, equity, power, and influence the course addresses.
- Opportunity for (many) students to see and talk “live” with classmates via online platform; to connect in more personal way than DB.
- Opportunity for (many) students to engage in collaboration in ways that differ from DB.
- Opportunity for (many) students to try out a new communication technology.



LOOKING AT THE RESEARCH
TO SEE WHAT ARE THE
CHARACTERISTICS
OF EFFECTIVE BOOK CLUBS

+ Practices of Productive Adult Book Clubs

- Are more egalitarian, collaborative, and personal than traditional classroom-based discussions.
- Involve a high level of participation by all members.
- Avoid jumping superficially from topic to topic => topics get more fully developed.
- Willingness of members to participate in discussion in ways that generate alternative interpretations.
 - Members know that other members are bringing different knowledge and experiences => opportunity to collaboratively construct new interpretation.



What makes a Book Club with specific professional learning goals work?



■ 5 Conditions Present in a Complex Learning System:

- INTERNAL DIVERSITY
- REDUNDANCY
- DECENTRALIZED CONTROL
- ORGANIZED RANDOMNESS
- NEIGHBORHOOD INTERACTION

Davis and Simmit (2003) cited in M.A. Reilly, "Occasioning Possibilities, Not Certainties: Professional Learning and Peer Led Book Clubs," *Teacher Development*, August 2008.



Learning Objectives for Book Club



- Students will be able to...
 - Identify, critique and discuss the big ideas/major points of the book.
 - Articulate questions that can lead to a thoughtful, deep discussion because they connect the big ideas/major points of the book with:
 - the big ideas of this course (about culture, equity, power, and influence);
 - issues of practice.
 - Collaborate with Book Club members to generate solutions to the problems exposed in the book and related problems in their practice as educator.
 - Reflect on the learning that happened for them by reading the book and discussing it in Book Club.

+ Logistics 1: Choosing the Books

- We chose books that addressed the big ideas of the course: culture, equity, power, influence.
- Most books employ strong narrative style, “human story” approach (to contrast with most weekly readings).
- Books address meso and macro perspective while largely telling the story through the experiences of individuals.





Logistics 2: Setting up groups



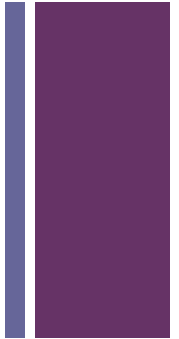
- Students sign up for their 1st and 2nd choice.
- Students identify if they will or will not be able to participate in live, online discussion.
- Instructor then creates groups. (4 to 5 students/group)
- Instructor identifies a “coordinator” for each group. That person is responsible for communicating with other club members about setting up date/time to meet online.



Logistics 3:

What happens during the book club meetings

- Students are told to “arrive” at Book Club with at least 2 questions to spark discussion, and a readiness to make specific references to the book.
- The previous weeks’ DB work has prepared students to participate in a culture of professional learning in which they are responsible for building and deepening the discussion, asking each other new questions, disagreeing with each other, pushing each other for clarification/expansion.





Logistics 4: Assessing Book Club Participation



- Students write a 2 page reflective paper on the big ideas/main points of the book, the key issues and solutions discussed in the Book Club, and the “take aways” for them from the book and the discussion for their work as educators.
- Alternative assignment provided for those who at the last minute are not able to participate:
 - Write a 4-5 page book review.



Connecting back to the research



- ✓ Personal
- ✓ Diversity as well as similarities among group members
- ✓ Egalitarian
- ✓ Organized Randomness
- ✓ Topics discussed deeply
- ✓ Collaborative
- ✓ New/Alternative Interpretations Shared
- ✓ New Ideas are Generated by the group, rather than by an individual member



YOUR QUESTIONS?

