

**C&T 6505**  
**Documenting Teaching**

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Overview and rationale: Current policies towards teachers reflect both hopes for a “high-quality” teaching force as well as fears that many teachers cannot be trusted to perform adequately. However, educators rarely have a chance to look inside classrooms and discuss what “high quality” teaching may look like. As a result, too often, policies and programs grow out of simplistic assumptions about what it takes to teach effectively and fail to take into account key aspects of the many different contexts in which those policies and programs need to work. This research seminar seeks to address these issues by examining and making public classroom practices in a variety of different contexts. In addition, while many efforts focus on getting research *into* practice, this seminar seeks to develop new means of articulating the expertise that already exists *in* practice and sharing it more widely among teachers and teachers educators as well as researchers.

Specifically, this seminar is designed to enable students to document, analyze and compare the practices of teachers in the New York City area. Working in concert with the teachers (or possibly in their own classrooms), seminar participants will use videotapes of class sessions, interviews, collections of classroom materials and student work to examine classroom practice and to gain a greater appreciation of the complexities of teaching and the strategies and approaches that may work in different contexts.

Goals: Seminar participants will be expected to gain experience and develop their skills in the research process including gaining entry, developing relationships and getting permissions; designing and conducting interviews and video-based classroom observations; and analyzing and presenting data. In addition, participants are expected to deepen their understanding of key issues in teaching and learning and refine their abilities to present their work to a variety of audiences.

Participants: The seminar is designed for students with experience as teachers and/or experience in the production of websites, videos or other multimedia works. Ideally, it will include a mix of students with different areas of interest and expertise – such as special education, bilingual instruction, English, mathematics, early childhood education, and technology in education.

Seminar products: The final product will be a **multimedia website** that documents a key aspect of teaching and learning and that can be used in teacher education, professional development activities, and future research. These websites should:

1. Focus on a key issue or concern in teaching and learning that is likely to be of interest to a wide audience.

2. Engage viewers quickly in the issue; offer materials they can take away to enhance their own work; and provide enough materials so that viewers can pursue their own questions and investigations.
3. Developed to a high enough quality and with enough sensitivity so that they can be displayed publicly and used productively by others.

Previous experience suggests that the websites should focus on what teachers do during a particular class or unit, with documentation consisting primarily of one or two “pre-interviews” with the teacher, videotaping of one class session, collection of relevant curriculum materials and student work, and a “post-interview” and discussion with the teacher about the development of the website. With the permission of the instructor, students may document the practice of an educator outside regular classroom settings.

Participants are expected to work with at least one **partner**. Partners can choose to work on a single project/website together (for example, one person’s teaching might be the focus of the documentation while the other person does the observation, interviewing etc.); to develop two related websites (perhaps addressing a similar subject or taking a look at teaching in a particular place or by a particular teacher from different angles); or to develop separate sites and simply serve as “critical friends” for one another.

Participants are also expected to identify a potential **audience** or set of “users” for their website and to gain feedback from some member or members of that audience during the development process.

In addition to the final product, each participant will be asked to keep a **journal** in which they reflect regularly on what they are thinking about the key issues of teaching and learning that are the focus of their sites, the research and development process, and their learning in the seminar.

Design of the course: The seminar is designed to respond to the needs and interests of the seminar participants; therefore, the specific topics and assignments for each week will be developed jointly. In general, the seminar will address topics like:

- Developing research relationships and entering sites
- The ethics of classroom-based research and research with children
- Interviewing
- Video-based observations
- Representing teaching

For the most part, meetings will proceed in “workshop” fashion with participants presenting their developing work and receiving feedback. The semester will culminate with a multimedia exhibition of the finished sites.

Assessment: Assessment will be based on the timely completion of all assignments and:

Participation in class (25%)

(Including regular attendance, preparation for class, contributions to discussion, and respect for and responsiveness to the contributions of others)

Journals (25%)

(including the depth and development of thinking about teaching and learning, the research process, and the participant's own learning)

Websites (50%)

(Criteria to be discussed in class including: quality of the documentations; clarity of ideas; responsiveness to feedback; power of presentation; and usefulness for one or more audiences)

Participants will also be expected to provide constructive feedback to one another throughout the process and will participate in the development of the criteria for assessing the websites and the assessment of the final products.

Information for students with disabilities: The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities for information about registration (166 Thorndike Hall). Services are available only to students who are registered and submit appropriate documentation.