Title of Project: RESHAPING RHETORICS OF DISABILITY: The Ethics of Inclusiveness Excellence In Teaching “Other People’s Children”
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BACKGROUND:
The Single-Subject Credential Program at CSULB has received many accolades for its emphasis on providing subject matter pedagogical preparation within specific academic departments. Within the Department of English, the majority of our majors are pursuing degrees in English Education with the intent to teach middle or high school English/Language Arts (ELA). There are a number of required core courses, and I teach several of them including ENGL 310 (Applied Composition). In this course, students not only improve their own reading, writing, and critical thinking abilities, they are also introduced to theories and practices of teaching reading and writing to their future students. The course is writing-intensive and requires 30 hours of observation at middle/high school ELA classrooms in and around the Long Beach catchment area. In teaching this course, I have implicitly integrated the ethics of teaching ELA, but have not yet implemented an explicit module that introduces students, in a systematic way, to the ways in which “ethics” (in both broad and specific ways) plays key roles in the teaching of English. ENGL 310 is offered four times per academic year with an annual enrollment of at least 200 students. Given that students in this course are preparing to teach middle or high school ELA, this project will impact not only the CSULB students taking the course, but also the future 6th-12th grade students of our graduates. In addition to teaching middle and high school, many of our English Education graduates return to complete MA degrees, become Literacy Leaders/Teacher our teacher candidates have a grounding in ethical pedagogical and legal concepts will enable those 200+ students per year to, ultimately, impact an untold number of middle/high school students as well as other teachers and teacher candidates.

Over many years, our single-subject credential recipients indicate on post-teaching surveys, that while they feel very prepared to teach their respective subject matter (English, history, math, etc.), the majority surveyed indicate that they do not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities (who are included in regular education more and more often) and students who are learning English as a second or third language. Students with disabilities, as any other historically underrepresented, marginalized group, face systemic institutional discrimination and are talked about in rhetorics that frames them as “less than” individuals and more as the result of their disability.

Lisa Delpit’s seminal text Other People’s Children (2006) draws on the work of Freire, a world-renowned educator and author of Pedagogy of the Oppressed who points out that as a people, we cannot discuss language or the teaching of language without discussing ideology and power, and is one of the texts I use in ENGL 310 to enable students to begin thinking about the many and varied ethical decisions ELA teachers are required to make on a daily, and sometimes even hourly, basis. In Other People’s Children, Delpit points out the many ways in which “academic problems attributed to children of color are actually the result of miscommunication, as primarily white teachers and ‘other people’s children’ struggle with the imbalance of power and
the dynamics plaguing our system.” Children in K-12 classrooms are often segregated by their native language, by test scores, by local and state assessments, and by diagnoses of disability. Delpit notes that "One of the most difficult task we face as human beings is trying to communicate across individual differences, trying to make sure that what we say to someone is interpreted the way we intend. This becomes even more difficult when we attempt to communicate across social differences, gender, [dis/ability], race or class lines, or any situation of unequal power." In this module, I propose the impact of the current rhetorics of disability and the ways in which teachers of rhetoric and composition can work with students with disabilities to reshape and revise these rhetorics. Emily Wilson, a Ph.D. student in the Joint Program in English and Education at the University of Michigan, discusses the vital need for teachers (and, of course, future teachers) to be able to ethically and accurately represent all differences:

It is critical that we broaden the space for engagement with difference in the secondary classroom. Students need to become aware, in their formative years, of our culture’s discriminatory practices toward disability, and teens with disabilities need to see themselves represented in the curriculum. It is also important, in framing this discussion of disability, to heed Stephanie Kershbaum’s warning against turning the study of disability into some kind of “bazaar” where we gawk unreflectively at other people’s difference. Instead, teachers need to facilitate understanding of disability in a way that helps them work with students to create a more equitable society. (https://disabilityrhetoric.com/)

The value of integrating ethical pedagogical strategies into ENGL 310 (as well as other English Education courses) cannot be overstated. Our discipline is actively creating spaces for teachers of ELA to consider ethical pedagogical methods across the K-16 curriculum. A recently developed web site “Ethical ELA” offers a plethora of resources that are valuable for those of us educating future teachers and for teachers themselves. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in their “2013 Position Statement NCTE Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment” pointed out the many complex and varied ways in which ELA teachers must attend to ethical considerations as they design, implement, and assess the multiple literacies of 21st century students:

Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. The 21st century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies… literacies are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. Literacies are inextricably linked with particular histories and social trajectories of individuals and groups. Participants in this 21st century global society must be able to attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments to
understand and adhere to ethical practices as they use resources and create information

PROPOSED ETHICS MODULE:
Texts relevant to module include but are not limited to:
Online resources include but are not limited to: http://www.ncte.org/, http://www.ethicalela.com/ and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFWjnKypFA (A Conversation with Paulo Freire)

MODULE COMPONENTS:
I will present the three-hour module on Ethical Teaching of ELA early in the fall 2016 semester. This will position the realm of ethics in such a way that my students and I expand on the module as the term progresses. Students in ENGL 310 will read and discuss pertinent chapters/selections from the required texts (Learning Outcome 1) that provide a foundation for understanding the ethical and legal ramifications of teaching English (specifically in large, urban public schools). I will provide initial discussion prompts for each reading and students will post individual responses to such prompts on our BeachBoard discussion site. In class, students will then form “expert groups” in which a group of 4-5 students are responsible for teaching certain readings to the class. In this way, students become active participants in their learning and we create a model that embraces the teacher/student and student/teacher relationship—one that is grounded in ethical and empathic pedagogical behaviors and understanding. As students work toward creating their mini-lessons and digital projects (Learning Outcome 2), we will grapple with ethical questions of remixing, posting work online, and explore best practices for teaching 6-12 grade students to be ethical/conscious consumers and producers of digital literacies (including video, blog, web site, podcast, etc.). Because ENGL 310 functions as an Applied Composition course, I will, in addition to content, introduce ways in which students can assess various rhetorical situations and respond accordingly (Learning Outcome 3). In the course of the module, I will 1) Introduce theories/Foundations of ethical principles of teaching ELA; 2) Provide scaffolding activities/background information on the readings; 3) Offer directed reading/discussion questions, models for creating and presenting mini-lessons, and feedback on oral and written responses.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
At the end of the module on Ethics of Teaching ELA, students will be able to:
1) Demonstrate their understanding of ways in which all literacies are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups;
additionally, students will demonstrate specific knowledge of the rhetorics of disability and ways those rhetorics can be misused and can be reshaped.

a) Developed by: close reading of texts for module on ethics, class discussion, informal and formal writing assignments.

b) Assessed by: instructor assessment of small-group presentations, individual student discussions, and instructor assessment of students’ verbal and written responses using holistic rubrics based on NCTE assessment standards.

2) Develop a mini-lesson for ENGL 310 that specifically attends to the ethical responsibilities of teaching ELA and recognizes the complexities of teaching ELA across several domains and includes readings on disabilities.

a) Developed by: inventing, drafting, revising, and editing mini-lessons that include a digital component (video, blog, web site, podcast, etc.); peer workshops of mini-lessons.

b) Assessed by: peer and instructor assessment of students’ mini-lessons, extent and significance of the feedback they provide their peers, instructor assessment of students’ reflection essay of the assignment. Digital and written projects will be assessed using a comprehensive/holistic rubric that evaluates: appropriateness of content, medium used, rhetorical/technical aspects, and integration of ethics as related to course and project.

3) Analyze in written and/or oral form the ethical and political responsibilities inherent in producing, receiving, and assessing written discourse and conventional rhetoric.

a) Developed by: Class discussion, small group presentations, informal and formal writing assignments.

b) Assessed by: Assessment of individual and group presentations; evaluation of written responses using standardized rubrics using an A-F metric with “A” being truly exceptional across all domains and “F” indicating Failure to complete assignment satisfactorily.