

**ELPS 465: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP:
CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR INFORMED DECISION MAKING**

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INTRODUCTION:

Now is the time for vision, for setting an agenda that will shape the future. While all moments are in some sense historic, the urgency of current events calls us to look both to the past and to the future, using lessons from the past to create a beneficent future. School leaders now feel with a special force their responsibility as instructional leaders and their call to create great schools in this era of unprecedented challenges.

Yet, education is controversial. Though the primary purpose of the schools is teaching and learning, they frequently become the place where deeply held and often conflicting beliefs are urgently voiced and where policies become the vehicle through which the interests of various constituencies are expressed and accepted or denied. In this environment, today's instructional leaders must be better able to understand the roots of educational controversy, to attain a greater awareness of possible alternatives in dealing with the various issues, and to stretch their powers of creative thinking in the search for more promising resolutions of the problems. The skills of crisis management, important though they are, are insufficient. So too is a surface or journalistic analysis of the present conditions which give rise to controversial issues. The competent instructional leader also needs to understand how these controversies are deeply rooted in Western culture. The issues that currently appear that generate the deepest emotions in the daily operation of a public school have a long pedigree. Our controversies in a very real sense have been selected for us by our history, by the particular ideologies which characterize the past experience of Western civilization. They have long been argued, pondered, and deliberated.

This course uses the historic sites of Rome as the "classroom" to discover the cultural components of Western Civilization and through them to interpret the fundamental issues at stake in current educational controversies. Seeing our culture objectified in the sites of Rome provides the basis for reflecting on why the current educational conflicts represent long-standing issues deeply embedded in our culture. For today's instructional leader, such study moves the examination of current controversy beyond its present urgency and lessens the temptation to move toward a quick-fix resolution using the latest panacea by contextualizing these issues in our cultural tradition as evidenced in the Eternal City.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to discover in Rome the fundamental concepts of Western civilization and from that to illuminate crucial decision points in responding to current educational issues. Specifically will:

- 1. Visit important locations in Rome which display issues that continue to be present in schools today. Scheduled sites include:**

The Roman Forum	Piazza Navona
The Forum of Nerva	Pantheon
The Colosseum	The Jewish Ghetto
S. Maria d'Aracoeli	Tiber Island
The Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel	Piazza Minerva
Palatine Hill	St. Peter's Square and Basilica
Campidoglio	Trevi Fountain

- 2. Reflect on current crucial educational issues to understand them as fabric of Western civilization and therefore as part of our heritage. For example:**

- Conflicting educational ideologies
- Vocational educational education vs. college preparatory curricula
- Gender equity
- Definition of shared identity: the community and moral education

The role of art in expressing shared convictions; political correctness and school murals
Creation and consequences of contemporary ghettos: education as a counter-force
Motivations for multiculturalism
Historical honesty and cleansing the past: treatment of Western tragedies in the curriculum
National destiny: patriotism in the schools

3. **Present pros and cons of current educational debates as introduced in the text, Critical Issues in Education: Dialogues and Dialectics (2007) For example:**
Is it ever necessary to create schools or classroom settings that separate students by gender?
Will the standards-based reform movement improve education or discriminate against poor and disadvantaged students?
Which and whose values should public schools teach the young, and why?
When and why should selected children be provided inclusive or special treatment in schools?
Can schools deal effectively with violent or potentially violent children?
Should schools emphasize America's cultural diversity or the shared aspects of American culture?
4. **Examine one's own school/district in terms of how the issues raised are manifested in the school's explicit, implicit, and null curricula.**
5. **Determine implications for educational change, enlightened by knowledge of the cultural heritage of an issue and its current manifestation.**

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Critical Issues in Education: Dialogues and Dialectics (McGraw-Hill, 6th Ed., 2007)

A Rome Guidebook of your choice

COURSE ACTIVITIES:

Pro/Con Debates: Readings selected from the text, *Critical Issues in Education: Dialogues and Dialectics (2007)*, will serve as the basis for the reflection of cultural themes and related educational issues for each visit. Each student will be responsible for forwarding the argument (either pro or con) from one of the essays.

Teach-Us Sessions: Students will work in groups to "teach us" about student selected sites in Rome. The task, as a group, will be to explore a site for its representation of cultural themes and related educational issues today. Through class discussion and guidance, students will plan the site visit, "teach us" about inherent cultural themes, and pose reflective questions for related instructional decision-making.

Reflective Journal: The study of cultural themes, educational issues, and implications for instructional leadership prompts reexamination and renewal. Students will maintain a personal log, recording and reflecting upon daily Rome based experiences, observations, and reflections. These will be turned in at the end of each week.

***With advisor's approval, this course may be used to satisfy a requirement or elective in Instructional Leadership, Staff Development, or Supervision for a variety of doctoral and master's degree programs and Type 75 General Administrative and Superintendent's Certification Programs.