

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

EDUCATION 486-4

CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN TEACHING: THE TEACHER AS DECISION MAKER

Spring Semester, 1991
(January 7 - April 5)
Wednesday, 16:30 - 20:20
Location: MPX 7600B

Instructor: Dr. S. Wassermann

PREREQUISITE: EDUC 401/402 or permission of Instructor

OVERVIEW OF COURSE AND ELIGIBILITY

This course is offered for preservice and inservice teachers who wish to participate in the examination of the decision making processes of teachers, and understand the kinds of influences that bear upon these processes.

One of the important aspects of professional functioning is the autonomy of professionals to arrive at decisions based upon their sound professional judgment. The ability to examine and interpret data, to analyze assumptions, and to project potential consequences is considered a true mark of professional functioning.

In some professions, a variety of pressures --political, social, emotional, personal, temporal -- serve to influence professional judgment and consequently, decision making. Such influence may have a deep and pervasive effect upon the degrees of freedom and emotional health of professionals, upon their beliefs and values about the profession itself, and upon their subsequent practice. This course uses contemporary film and readings to raise levels of awareness about factors influencing teachers' decision making, through examination of certain critical incidents in teaching. Films, books, journal articles and written case studies are supplemented by focused group discussions through which the many facets of educational decision making may be more critically examined. It is through this process that students become more critically aware of personal decision making in their own professional/educational contexts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To promote greater understanding of and appreciation for the various and complex factors that influence personal decision making in professional contexts.
2. To promote awareness of the relationship between decision making and personal empowerment.
3. To promote more critical awareness of personal decision making in professional contexts.
4. To develop more effective strategies to aid in personal decision making.

REQUIREMENTS

In addition to regular attendance and active participation in seminars and study sessions, students are required to complete assigned readings, complete a written analysis of a film "case", keep a journal of reflections on decision making in professional contexts, and do a summative project demonstrating how personal/professional decision making has been informed by course experiences.