Community, Youth & Education Studies (CYES)

Overview:
Are you someone who:

- Is frustrated by the low test scores, high suspension, expulsion and dropout rates of children of color in our schools?
- Decries the high incarceration rates of Black and Brown young men in our society?
- Is angry at the way our society blames children for the above realities and so many other forms of social inequality?
- Wants to move beyond learning about these problems and others and work to change the realities facing our youth and families in Worcester and beyond?

Then perhaps you should consider Clark’s new Major (and Minor) in Community, Youth and Education Studies (CYES).

Educational and community programs either serve to maintain the current inequities in our society or they work towards the transformation of those inequities by engaging youth and their families in a critical analysis of their world and an engagement to change the social reality. This new program squarely identifies itself with embracing educational spaces as spaces for transformation. We define education broadly to include not only schools, but all spaces of learning, including but not limited to popular education, community organizing, youth work, and more. We define education as something distinct from schooling and school systems. Since we learn in all types of contexts, education occurs everywhere. It can involve media, grassroots organizing, research, and traditional classrooms. For us, education is a relational practice that involves youth and adults in communities working together to understand and grow individually and collectively. Education, then, is a powerful tool to engage others in a critique of their social world and organize for social change.

Our work, as activists, educators, organizers, and scholars involves the critical examination of inequality related race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation as it plays out from the micro to the macro levels of society. However, the commitment to transformation must move beyond critique to engage in actions of resistance to these forces of oppression and to create more socially just and equitable spaces, communities, and worlds. This means we engage with communities, schools, and organizations, recognizing that such sites are spaces of contradiction and negotiation. We believe that through engaging in this messy, collaborative and situated work we can foster cultures of courage, humility, and reflection that we feel are necessary for personal, community, school and larger social transformation. This, of course, means that we must become reflexive practitioners who understand that our work in the world is shaped by the identities that we embody and
recognize the ways in which our social locations shape our work. It is only through this praxis, a cycle of reflection and action, that we can develop more complex theories for both understanding our social world and for changing it.

What’s in a Name?
The name of this major is Community, Youth and Education Studies (CYES). This program is an interdisciplinary major that bridges what in other universities might be considered the separate fields of Community Development, Critical Youth Studies, and Education Studies. Each of these fields is already defined as an interdisciplinary field. We embrace the power of interdisciplinarity by integrating these fields. The basis of the integration is social justice praxis.

The acronym for the program, CYES, can be understood in two ways based on how it is pronounced: “see-yes.” As such it reflects an important aspect of Clark’s motto, Challenge Convention and Change our World. It is a call to not stay in the Ivory Tower and look around the world to merely critique and denounce problems. Rather, we take the critiques and announce a new and better world. Thus, we “see” the world as it is, but then we affirm, “yes” we can make change. Stated differently, we seek to “see” the ways that we can (yes) affect change.

Additionally, the acronym’s pronunciation can also be heard as a bilingual (Spanish and English) double affirmation that “Sí, Yes,” we can change the world when we find ways to come together across our communities’ many linguistic, racial, gender, socioeconomic and other forms of social division. It is an embracing of and celebration of such differences.

Core Commitments:
A Developmental Trajectory: We have created a developmental sequence of educational experiences grounded in a strong foundation that links theory, ideological critique, reflexivity, and activism — and leading to capacities for social change and transformative action in the world. Students in the major will take a sequence of courses that develops them to critically interrogate their social world, reflexively examine their social location within that world, and engage in social change.

Praxis: Renowned critical pedagogue, Paulo Freire, describes praxis as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it." For Freire, praxis represents an on-going cycle of collectively theorizing the world and then acting to create change based on that theorizing. As a result of the impact of our actions, we refine and re-develop our theories to better guide our actions and so on. This idea of praxis is a central construct of the work in the major. The time in class can be seen as a space of reflection and theorizing that guides students in going out to engage in work in the community based on the theorizing. This action, then, guides the ongoing reflecting/theorizing. Thus, our classes are designed to be community engaged and students will be expected to engage in social change work in the community.

Three Theories of Understanding: The program is framed around three theories of
understanding that when integrated form the overarching theoretical framework for the program. As illustrated below, the first two theories, critical social theory and positionality and identity in social context, provide the analytical framing for developing effective theories of change that avoid replicating the very inequities they seek to address (see the visual below). Ideally, the first two theory courses should be taken before students take one of the social change theory courses. This flow of coursework reflects this major’s developmental model rooted in research on how people learn in complex practice and consistent with the LEEP development model.

- **Critical Social Theory:** We must carefully and critically investigate the social world to understand how inequality occurs. We draw from social theory rooted in experience and historical analysis to make sense of the overt and hidden systems that create the social order as experienced differently by different people. Only with a critical understanding of our social world can we challenge the conventions and assumptions that maintain the status quo and effectively create a more just society. Questions we consider: How do we make sense of the world? How do we explain the inequalities that are connected to race, class, gender, nation, religion and other forms of social difference? How does power work in the social world?

- **Positionality and Identity in Social Context:** This theory of understanding recognizes that larger macro structures shape individuals’ personal identities. In this theorizing, we explore how our situated identities are mediated by the social world. Further, we embrace reflexivity about our own social identities to understand the ways in which each of our social locations shapes our experience of the world and our ability to interact with and affect social change. Questions we consider: How does social identity shape people’s experience in the world? How has our own social identity helped to shape our trajectory in the world? How does our social identity affect our interactions
with others across differences related to race, class, gender, nation and more? How does who I am shape what I can do?

- **Theories of Social Change:** This theory of understanding integrates the previous two theories to figure out our personal theory of social change. That is, it guides us in exploring how our critical understanding of the world combined with our social identity and our personal passion, shape how we can affect change in the world. Through the exploration of different change theories, we attempt to articulate our own theory of change. *Questions we consider: In what ways does positive social change occur? What are the complexities and tensions associated with social change? How am I best situated to promote and enact social change?*

What Can Our Graduates Do?
We see the CYES major (and minor) as preparation for engaged scholarship and leadership in the 21st century, working for social justice across a wide-range of educational, cultural, institutional, and linguistic boundaries and borders. The program is an ideal foundation for a wide range of professional work, preparing graduates to be: an urban teacher, a community organizer, a youth worker, a Peace-Corps volunteer, a public policy advocate, a web-design specialist for an organization that challenges convention to change the world. But most significantly, we are preparing our students not just to enter careers that currently exist, but also to be able to adapt to a dynamic and diverse world and, more importantly, to become agents of future social, economic and cultural transformations.

Some of the Fields Our Graduates May Enter

- Activists
- Adjustment Counselors
- Coaches
- Community Organizers
- Community/ Adult Educators
- Career/College Counselors
- Lawyers
- Media Producers
- Peace Corp Volunteers
- Public Policy Advocates
- Public Health Workers
- Refugee Workers
- Social Entrepreneurs
- Social Workers
- Teachers
- Union Organizers
- Urban Planners
- Volunteer Coordinators
- Youth Workers

Requirements for the Community Youth & Education Studies (CYES) Major
CYES is an interdisciplinary major. As revealed in the descriptions above and below, the program attempts to embody Clark’s motto and the educational foundations of LEEP (Liberal Education and Effective Practice)

**Gateways**
All CYES majors will pass through three gateways: 1) an entrance gateway, 2) an advancing to candidacy gateway, and 3) a praxis project and portfolio defense gateway.
Each gateway will be read by committees and will involve advising/feedback to determine the next phase of the program all the way through graduation. Each is described in more detail below.

**Courses**
The major is made up of a 11-course sequence including a core foundation course, 3 *theories of understanding* courses that connect with the three core understandings (outlined above and again in the portfolio expectations below), a Participatory Action Research course, a praxis design course, a community-based praxis internship/apprenticeship/project, a culminating Capstone/LEEP legacy project, and an interdisciplinary set of elective courses.

**Extracurricular Programs**
Throughout the program, students are expected to participate in co-curricular events, at least one Difficult Dialogues Seminar, special forums, and CYES student symposiums.

**Portfolios**
All CYES majors produce a digital portfolio that provides a record of work accomplished throughout the program. The portfolio is designed as a space for reflection, and a mechanism for demonstrating to others original work and accomplishments. As part of the portfolio development, students are expected to develop three core portfolio pieces: 1) A theoretical framework for understanding the social world, 2) A piece on social identity in which students examine their social identity in relation to their social world, and 3) A piece that outlines the student’s theory of change rooted in the social context. Each of these theoretical pieces is interconnected and developmental. Students will be asked to write papers and develop presentations throughout their coursework. They will be asked to reflect and re-work their ideas into a finalized portfolio.

In addition to three theoretical pieces, each student will develop a major Participatory Action Research project (which we call the Praxis Project). This project will be developed through a sequence of three courses. The final Praxis Project and the entire portfolio will be presented and defended for graduation. This digital portfolio can be converted into a digital resume upon completion in the program.

**What are the Gateways?**

**Entrance Gateway:**
Students are admitted into this major or minor on the basis of their commitment to working alongside community and/or youth, enacting change in community contexts and exploring the relationship between theory and praxis.

The first step in the process is to meet with the program advisor in education ([CYES@clarku.edu](mailto:CYES@clarku.edu)) to learn about the CYES major/minor.
Then students must prepare 2 (brief) reflection papers – one looking *backward* about your
learning experiences to date, and the other looking *forward* to your goals, dreams, and
hopes for the future.

- **Reflection Piece 1:** What has influenced you to become a CYES major/minor? Include: A) a description of experiences (projects, internships, etc.—both in and outside of the Clark classroom—that have been most interesting, challenging and/or transformative, and why; B) a reflection of your strengths and assets as a learner; and C) any information that you wish to share with program faculty. 300-500 words)

- **Reflection Piece 2:** Why Community, Youth, and Education Studies? How will this program of study help you accomplish your goals and dreams? (This paper should include a description of the student’s objectives and goals in pursuing the major/minor; and an indication of knowledge, skills, topics, and questions that one might develop or pursue with the support of program faculty, peers, and mentors. 300-500 words)

An advisor will read both papers.

The next part of the process involves a roundtable discussion made up of at least one CYES advisor and group of new students. *In this discussion, students will share their papers, and learn about their peers’ questions and ideas.*

**Advancing to Candidacy Gateway:**
The culmination of the Praxis Design Course engages students in constructing their proposal for their praxis project. This proposal will include an introduction, a theoretical framing of their research project grounded in a review of relevant literature, and a comprehensive method and methodology section. Also, students will need to complete the human subjects protocol for the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This Praxis Design Proposal will be read and signed off by two readers (one of whom is typically the Praxis Advisor and the instructor of the Praxis Design course), indicating that the student has advanced to candidacy to begin their culminating praxis project required of all graduating CYES majors.

**Praxis Project and Portfolio Defense Gateway:**
Upon advancing to candidacy, students are expected to complete a praxis project. Majors can work on praxis projects alone or in small collaborative groups. Each praxis project must have both an activist and research component. Each major will write an individual final thesis paper based on the research conducted in their praxis project. The Praxis Seminar and Capstone courses will support CYES majors as they complete their final thesis. The final thesis will be one of several portfolio pieces including the three theories of understanding pieces that will compose the final portfolio. The Praxis Capstone is the course that will support the completion of the final portfolio. Towards the end of the Praxis Capstone course, CYES majors will submit their portfolio including their praxis
project thesis to a committee for review. The committee will be composed of the praxis project thesis chair who will be faculty from CYES, a second university faculty reader, and a community member (ideally someone involved with their project). A fourth non-voting member of the committee will include a junior level CYES major. The committee will evaluate the praxis project thesis and the entire portfolio and then meet with the candidate in a final defense of their presented work. Students will either receive a Pass, Pass with Honors, or a Non-Pass. All students passing will be expected to present their final project in a final Praxis symposium.

Can I Minor in CYES?
Yes, there is also a minor offered. The minor involves a 6 course sequence which includes the following components:
- Completing the Entrance Gateway (See above).
- Completing the Foundation course (see below).
- Completing the 3 Theories of Understanding courses (see below).
- Completing 2 additional elective courses approved from this handbook or from the program coordinator (see “electives” below). The Participatory Action Research Methods Course can count as one of the electives.

What Courses Will CYES Students take?

Foundation Course (1):
The foundation course builds a strong foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities with respect to urban schooling, activist community organizing, youth work, and social change. It also provides a framework for the core understanding of praxis and the three theoretical frameworks: Critical social theory, identity theory, and theory of social change. Out of this course students should develop an initial critical theoretical framework for social analysis.

Theories of Understanding (3):
Effective social change work requires a commitment to praxis that involves an on-going cycle of critical analysis/reflection on the world coupled with thoughtful action. Following a foundation course, CYES majors take 3 courses that provide lenses and tools for thinking about and participating in engaged scholarship that contributes to social change. The courses come from an interdisciplinary set of courses that reflect and highlight the three theoretical frameworks of CYES:

- Critical Social Theory
- Positionality and Identity in Social Contexts
- Social Change Theories

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Methods (1)
This course engages students in the practice of PAR in which the process of engaging in research is also an effort in creating community social change. Students will examine the
methodological theory and begin to develop the project alongside community members.

**Praxis Sequence (3)**

- **Praxis Design (1)**
  This semester-long seminar prepares students to conceive of their activist project both in theoretical and practical terms. This semester of reading, reflecting, and designing equips students for their Apprenticeship/Internship/Activist Project course in which they design and carry out their own independent action research project. This is the space where they refine some of their portfolio pieces on the three theories of understanding and use these theories to guide the design of their project. The conclusion of this course guides students in the development of a theoretically grounded and methodologically sound praxis project proposal. This proposal will be read by both the student’s advisor (and teacher of the course) and a second reader as the advancement to candidacy gateway.

- **Praxis Project Seminar (1)**
  In this course students work independently or in small groups to enact their praxis projects designed in the Praxis Design course. This one-credit course will engage students in the implementation of their community based PAR project, including the collection of data. While these projects will typically be implemented during the fall semester of the senior year, they could also be implemented during a semester abroad or over the summer. The praxis project can also be implemented as part of an internship or apprenticeship program.

Prerequisites: Praxis Design and Advancement to Candidacy Gateway passed.

- **Praxis Capstone (1)**
  Engaging deeply in the world of *praxis* (a cycle of action and reflective theorizing), students (in their senior year) will take a CYES Capstone course to integrate theory with community-based action, producing (and defending) original work of quality and consequence. Students bring their knowledge gained from their Praxis Design and Praxis Project Seminar courses to reflect on the process, further develop their theory of change, refine their portfolio pieces and develop a final paper and project for presentation/defense. The Capstone Project is judged and juried by two faculty and a community member and presented in a Colloquium on Engaged Scholarship. All students will be given a Pass, Pass with Honors, or not Pass designation. For an Honors designation, the project should produce new knowledge or tools, leaving a legacy for the community, program, or institution that demonstrates the role of engaged activist scholarship.

**Electives (3)**
Electives can be taken from any of the approved courses affiliated with the three theories of understanding (critical social theory, social identity theory, and theories of social change). There are also additional courses not affiliated with the three theories of understanding that can be taken as an elective, with approval from the chair of the major.

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1 Small groups of students can work on collective Praxis Projects.
Course Options to Fulfill Major Requirements

Foundation Course (1):
- EDUC 060: Public Schools and Democracy
- EDUC 152: Complexities of Urban Education

Theoretical Strands Courses (3—1 from each category)

Critical Social Theory Related to Inequity (1)
- EDUC 155: Education and Social Policy
- EDUC/SOC 215: Sociology of Education
- ID 265: Global Issues In Education

Positionality and Identity in Social Contexts (1)
- HIST 016: American Race and Ethnicity
- EDUC 227: Culture, Language, and Education
- EDUC 254: Education in Film: Media Representations of Race, Class, Gender & Schooling
- EDUC 255: Ethnography at School
- EDUC 291 - An Exploration of Multicultural Children’s and Young Adult Literature

Theorizing Social Change (1)
- EDUC 280: Teaching English Language Learners
- EDUC 281: Critical Pedagogies
- IDCE 203: Youth Work: Practice and Social Justice
- ID 220: Critical Pedagogy for Social and Environmental Justice: Liberal Arts Education in Practice

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Methods (1)
- EDUC 153: Participatory (Action) Research with Youth
- CYES 250: Socially Just Participatory Research Practices

Electives: (3) -- Chosen from the list below or from another course(s) granted approval by the program chair.
- EDUC 060: Public Schools and Democracy
- EDUC 155: Education and Social Policy
- EDUC 208: Literacy Across the Curriculum
- EDUC/SOC 215: Sociology of Education
- EDUC 221: Orality, Literacy, and Cybercy: New Media/Learning in the Knowledge Age
- EDUC 254: Education in Film: Media Representations of Race, Class, Gender &
Schooling
- EDUC 255: Ethnography at School
- EDUC 260: Literacy Development
- EDUC 261: Human Development and Learning
- EDUC 264: Knowledge, Development and Instruction
- EDUC 281: Critical Pedagogies
- EDUC 229/329: Graphic Novels in the Classroom
- EDUC 291: An Exploration of Multicultural Children’s and Young Adult Literature
- HIST 016: American Race and Ethnicity
- IDCE 203/303: Youth Work: Practice and Social Justice
- ID 220: Critical Pedagogy for Social and Environmental Justice: Liberal Arts Education in Practice
- ID 265: Global Issues In Education
- SOC 160: Global Cultures and Identities
- SOC 137: Race and Ethnicity Across Borders: Comparing the Local and Global
- SOC 252: Race and American Society
- SOC 260: Roots and Routes, Immigrants, Diaspora and Travel

Praxis Design
- CYES 295: Praxis Design

Praxis Project Seminar
- CYES 296: Praxis Project Seminar

Praxis Capstone
- CYES 297: Praxis Capstone