

Critical Concerns Curriculum Guide Executive Summary

Underlying Principles:

This curriculum embodies three underlying principles: to seek what is true; to discern wisely; and to strive for justice. Our Catholic faith calls us to always pursue what is true in times of uncertainty, to contemplate the core issues that require our assistance in the world today, and to inspire action for the causes of social justice. This is the heart of a Mercy education.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Critical Concerns Curriculum is to encourage further implementation of social justice issues regarding women, nonviolence, immigration, racism, and the earth into Mercy schools. By organizing definitions, resources, guiding questions, content, and lesson plans, this curriculum seeks to make it easier for teachers to access information for implementation into their classrooms.

Summary:

The curriculum is organized into separate documents (each referring to one of the critical concerns) that detail main topics, guiding questions, resources, reading material, video suggestions, and lesson plan examples. These documents can be used by teachers to further the discussion of the critical concerns within their own classes.

The definitions of the critical concerns are the following:

Women: While representing nearly 50% of the world's population, women today still lack equal representation within political and economic circles. In the world today, the rights of women throughout the developing world is a critical concern. Support for women's issues involves action and advocacy for policies that support equality for women, especially in the areas of education, healthcare, employment, and childcare. These causes should be paired with a renewed feminist movement that understands and reforms gender stereotypes.

Nonviolence: Nonviolence is the use of peaceful means, whether individual or national, to resolve conflict and bring about political or social justice. In a world of increased gun violence, war, genocide, suicide, and environmental destruction, violence is at the root of all the other critical concerns. Nonviolent solutions are desperately needed during these uncertain times.

Immigration: On the current immigration crisis, Pope Francis has stated that "those who build walls, and not bridges, are not Christian." The heart of Christianity calls for "welcoming the stranger." Amidst the growing movement of migrants and refugees

fleeing violence, climate change, and war, Christians are called to protect migrant families, lobby for just immigration policies, respect the inherent dignity and rights of migrants, and address the root causes of migration in the world today.

Racism: The Anti-Defamation League states that racism is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another and a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics.

Earth: In discussing the environment, Pope Francis has stated that “the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” Care for the earth is one of the primary critical concerns for society today and requires practices and policies designed to protect all creation from unnecessary destruction including respecting the earth's ecosystems, combating climate change, advocating against unnecessary fracking, drilling, or mining, and encouraging sustainable lifestyles.

Conclusion:

This curriculum is by no means complete. Just as Christians seek to be “contemplatives in action,” these documents will need to be updated with the times. New issues will arise that garner our attention and action. Therefore, we encourage further collaboration on these critical concerns in the future to continue to build women of service and action in the world today.