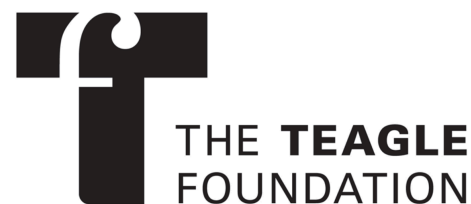


## Knowledge for Freedom at Portland State University: Inquiry for Justice

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### What is the grant for?

This \$300,000, 3-year grant from the Teagle Foundation supports rising seniors from Portland Public Schools to join a 2-week residential program at Portland State beginning in the **summer of 2022**. This onramp to our dual credit program, Senior Inquiry (SRINQ), is designed to build confidence and familiarity with new concepts and skills for succeeding in school and college, and new perspectives on familiar ones. Designed as a cohort of 20 students each year, it is open to rising seniors who have forecasted for the Senior Inquiry class, with priority for first generation college students and students who come from populations historically excluded from higher education.

### What will the program be like?

Our initiative creates an intensive summer bridging program for rising high school seniors to experience college-level work and to prepare for participation in Senior Inquiry classes, and ultimately for university-level interdisciplinary humanities studies. The program will begin outreach to students in Spring 2022. The first summer session will run in July, 2022. Our initial partner schools are McDaniel and Roosevelt high schools in the Portland Public School district.

### Who is this program for?

This program prioritizes first generation college students and students whose racial/ethnic groups are historically excluded from higher education. Selection for this program will take a holistic approach, considering attributes of interest, curiosity and enthusiasm, rather than relying on GPA as an indicator of success in school. Recruitment for this class will come primarily from teacher recommendations to PSU staff. Working with current Senior Inquiry teachers at our partner schools, we feel confident that we can communicate the nature of the student body that we are trying to create in Inquiry for Justice: students who could benefit from relational supports and an intensive summer course. We are intentional about working against tracking tendencies in public schools with the Senior Inquiry course, and this summer bridge will follow suit. Because of this, we will also consider recommendations from student support programs and advisors who work with first generation and other historically excluded students at these schools.

### Who are our partners?

Both of our partner schools are in Portland Public Schools (PPS), which is Oregon's urban school district, and one of the largest in the Pacific Northwest, enrolling more than 49,000 students PK-12. Aiming for a cohort of 10 students from each of our current partner schools, we will welcome our first Inquiry for Justice scholars in the summer of 2022. Our partnering high schools – McDaniels and Roosevelt – are high-need among the district's nine high schools, with underserved populations as of October 2020 at 65.3%, and 75.5%, respectively, compared to an underserved rate of 44.8% overall (<https://www.pps.net/Page/942>). While students of color comprise 44.1% of the district's overall grades 9-12 enrollment, they comprise 65.2% of McDaniels, and 66.7% of Roosevelt's. The percentages of students receiving limited-English -proficiency (LEP) services at these three schools also exceeds the district average of 5.6% at the high school level, at 16.9% at Roosevelt, and 14.4% at McDaniels. All PPS schools use the theme of "Race and Social Justice" in their Senior Inquiry classes.

## **What are the key syllabus elements for the Inquiry for Justice summer program?**

**Inquiry for Justice** explores how justice is formulated in our lives, how it impacts us, and how we can have agency in determining what it is. In seminar discussion, writing and readings, our class will examine and four central questions:

Key question #1: What is justice?

Key question #2: How does justice impact individuals and groups differently, and why?

Key question #3: How do our case studies show justice and injustice in action?

Culminating question: How can we integrate new understandings in our approach and strategies for co-creating a more just society?

The course will explore ideas about justice through the lens of two 20th century case studies: the incarceration of Japanese-Americans in 1942 and subsequent redress, and issues related to the destruction of Vanport with ongoing repercussions to the shape and nature of our city.

Both case studies involve students in close reading of central texts, as well as hands-on inquiry at local archives, sites and museums. Our interdisciplinary approach, which mirrors student learning in our existing high school Senior Inquiry courses, introduces reading strategies, seminar-based discussion and collective meaning-making through problem posing and dialogue. The course will include frequent, linked writing assignments as well as collaborative, project-based learning to investigate the central questions about the role of justice in civic responsibility and the agency of the individual within a collective.

**Inquiry for Justice** builds its curriculum and learning practices on the four following fundamental goals of Portland State's general education program:

**Communication:** Students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways – writing, graphics, numeracy, and other visual and oral means – to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies.

**Inquiry and Critical Thinking:** Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula – problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing – in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

**Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice:** Students will explore and analyze identity, power relationships, and social justice in historical contexts and contemporary settings from multiple perspectives.

**Ethics, Agency, and Community:** Students will examine values, theories, and practices that inform their actions and reflect on how personal choices and group decisions impact local and global communities.

The University Studies vision is to challenge us to think holistically, care deeply, and engage courageously in imagining and co-creating a just world. The University Studies mission is to use inclusive, interdisciplinary, and inquiry-based pedagogy to provoke students to build self-efficacy through relational learning across difference; encourage a community of educators to practice engaged teaching for transformative learning; and advance civic engagement, reflective practice, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

### **Tentative list of texts**

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Theater of War, *Antigone in Ferguson*

Plato, *Allegory of the Cave*

Lawson Inada, *Drawing the Line*

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

Sarah Mirk and Nicole J. Georges, *The Vanport Flood*

Oregon Experience *Vanport*

Vanport Mosaic oral history project

ML King Jr, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Inada, ed. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*

*Korematsu v. United States*

Ta-Nehisi Coates "The Case for Reparations"

"The Politics of Racial Reparations: Japanese American and Black American Intersections" (Video)

Raymond Williams, *Keywords*

Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*

John Locke "Of Property" from *Second Treatise on Government*

*Texts may be read in whole or excerpted.*

## **What is Knowledge for Freedom?**

The following information is taken from the Knowledge for Freedom website, which is located [HERE](#).

The project is designed in accordance with these criteria:

"Knowledge for Freedom programs invite underserved high school students to study humanity's deepest questions about leading lives of purpose and civic responsibility. Between the junior and senior years of high school, students come into residence on a college campus, where they experience the intensity of a seminar-sized discussion taught by college professors focused on major works of philosophy and literature. Over the following year, while applying to college as high school seniors, the students engage in civic initiatives inspired by the recognition that their lives are interconnected with the lives of others.

"High school students who typically find themselves shut out from opportunities available to their more affluent peers are thus provided with an opportunity to undertake college-level work in the humanities, to build meaningful relationships with college faculty and college students, who serve them as mentors, and to develop, through practice, civic skills with their peers. Knowledge for Freedom programs, as demonstrated by the "Freedom and Citizenship" model program at Columbia University, dramatically improve college readiness, admission prospects, and college graduation, while building interest in humanistic writing and issues, as well as habits of civic engagement that persist during and after college.

"The Knowledge for Freedom initiative is designed to be adaptable enough to reflect the assets and needs of each institution and coherent enough to create a community of shared practice among programs across the nation. All Knowledge for Freedom programs reflect certain common features:

- All programs bring low-income high school students onto a college campus for an intensive summer seminar in the humanities taught by college faculty and supported by undergraduate teaching assistants.
- All syllabi include transformative texts in the humanities connected by ideas or questions about the nature of government, freedom, and democracy. We define transformative texts as works—whether ancient or recent—that have transformed the world and that continue to transform individual lives by the power of their ideas and expression.
- During the following academic year, all programs offer formalized assistance with college applications and direct students in a civic engagement or public service project. All programs engage with their alumni by sponsoring events, facilitating mentorships, or by connecting them with opportunities to continue their civic engagement."

## **What about sustainability?**

Because the sustainability of this program is intimately tied to the sustainability of Senior Inquiry, all planning for future funding and programming related to this summer bridge will be considered in that context. Our plan will be based on the data we collect about the impact of Inquiry for Justice on Senior Inquiry and further post-high school educational paths of our participants. Implementing this model will advance the university's goals for solidifying the pathway from k12 to higher education and beyond,

expanding the Senior Inquiry program, reaching underrepresented students, and fostering students' skills and identities as curious and empathetic learners and citizens, as well as leaders in their schools and wider communities.

### **Is it only a summer program?**

No. In the fall, Inquiry for Justice summer scholars will join their peers in Senior Inquiry courses and may participate in class leadership, and/or supporting community connections. With guidance from Senior Inquiry faculty, they could steward the democratic organizing of the community-based inquiry and civic projects that play a central role in these courses. Since each school has its own unique culture and program for learning, SRINQ teachers will work with PSU staff to best showcase student learning and leadership. Mentors will support students in completing college-going processes, in close collaboration with other supportive adults, including teachers and counselors.

Student participants will also receive specific supports as they plan and prepare for a successful transition to college/university studies, including quarterly check-ins and learning opportunities with Inquiry for Justice project support staff, guest educators/activists, and one another; confidential advice and encouragement in securing letters of recommendation from their professors and help from Senior Inquiry program staff in transmitting these letters to school counseling staff and/or college admissions offices; monthly connection with college mentors who are specifically trained to assist with key college-going activities, including the selection process, financial aid, required applications, guidelines for writing effective essays, management of expectations, and making a college/university game-plan. Mentors will be paid for four hours of training/meeting time and two hours of prep time each month over nine months of the regular school year months (September to May); Enrollment in the text-based support program *Get Schooled* to encourage ongoing engagement with the college-going process.

### **Who is running this program?**

Inquiry for Justice implementation will be co-directed by Drs. Sarah Dougher and Sonja Taylor. Dr. Dougher's qualifications include three years' experience as a UNST Senior Inquiry instructor, 16 years college teaching experience, and over ten years of high school teaching experience with historically excluded youth. She has a research background in classics and comparative literature, gender studies and the history of education, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Dr. Dougher planned, administered, and taught a Portland-based summer humanities course on the Clemente model for two years, collaborating with an eastside city high school, Bard College, Oregon Humanities, a student refugee and immigrant support program, and College Possible; she also participated in a Teagle planning grant through Clemente (presented at the National Humanities Conference, 2020). She collaborated in developing a writing curriculum and faculty training for PSU's Summer Bridge program in 2021.

Dr. Taylor has directed the PSU Senior Inquiry program since 2018 and has extensive high school teaching experience with underserved youth. Her research background includes parent participation through digital communication in elementary school, how social and cultural capital are developed and activated using the parent-teacher relationships in elementary school; elementary teacher's perception of grit related to student sense of belonging. Dr. Taylor is also internationally recognized for her work in the use of ePortfolios for developing personalized learning and the creation of academic identity. Her latest project is a retrospective, interviewing former Senior Inquiry students who have now graduated from college. She has developed a sophomore level "landing course" for former Senior Inquiry students who continue at Portland State to continue to support success for students in the program. She taught math and quantitative literacy in PSU's Summer Bridge program in 2021.