



Critical Youth Work: Bridging Theory and Practice

“The potential for critical practice is inherent in many aspects of youth work, but workers need to be clearer about concepts such as power, purpose and learning and forms of social action, which connect the personal to the political. Because there can be no critical practice without critical practitioners, youth workers need a strong theoretical framework to underpin their work.”¹

YouthREX has developed this professional development certificate **Critical Youth Work:**

Bridging Theory and Practice to provide Ontario youth workers with the space to engage in critical dialogue and learning about the political, social and economic realities that characterize youth work.

The certificate will provide youth workers with the tools to critically analyze key youth work issues, and explore options for creative and viable forms of transformative practices that support and strengthen youth wellbeing.

Successful participation and completion of the three modules and the online learning content of the certificate entitles participants to a Certificate of Completion from the Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange, York University.

Please note that the certificate is completely free. The cost of all the course materials, as well as lunch on each of the three days, will be covered.

¹ Bamber, J., & Murphy, H. (1999). Youth work: The possibilities for critical practice. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2(2), 227-242 doi: 10.1080/13676261.1999.10593037

WHO IS THIS CERTIFICATE FOR?

Eligible participants will have a minimum of two years youth sector experience and will be currently engaged in Ontario’s youth sector either in a paid or volunteer capacity. Eligible participants will also be:

- ✓ Able to commit 7 hours each week for the in-class sessions and 10 hours for online learning over the three weeks
- ✓ Willing to use and advance critical skills and approaches to community engagement, youth leadership and capacity building in communities in ON
- ✓ Committed to working and learning about youth work within a context of equity, respect, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices

STRUCTURE OF THE CERTIFICATE

This certificate takes place in a small group format of 20 – 25 participants. Guest lecturers from a diversity of backgrounds will engage participants in critical, reflective and meaningful learning focused on challenges and opportunities specific to the Ontario youth sector. The certificate is made up of three modules – each of the three 7-hour sessions will cover one module. To enhance collaboration, strategic networking and coalition building, the certificate uses an experiential learning format. Participants are expected to bring their full selves to these in-class sessions – share opinions, take risks, respect others and support each other to do the same.

THE CERTIFICATE INCLUDES THREE DAYS OF IN-PERSON SESSIONS

(9:30am-4:30pm) and ten hours of online learning.

LOCATION: YORK UNIVERSITY

MODULE 1

November 15, 2023

MODULE 2

November 22, 2023

MODULE 3

November 29, 2023

Applications Open

October 9–23, 2023

Notice of Acceptance

October 30, 2023

WHAT TOPICS WILL THE CERTIFICATE COVER?

MODULE ONE

The Policy and Personal Context of Youth Work in Ontario

The first module will examine and critique the major policies that have impacted Ontario youth work in the last decade, including the Ontario Youth Action Plan, the Enhanced Youth Action Plan and the Stepping Up Framework for Youth Wellbeing. Participants will also be asked to situate themselves and their work within this broader context by taking up challenging questions around identity and how these issues may be experienced by youth workers, young people and the community at large.

Examples of questions we will discuss in this module include:

- ✓ What challenges do we face in meeting these goals?
- ✓ Why did we enter youth work and what do we hope to achieve in our relationships with youth?
- ✓ What are our ultimate goals in working with youth?
- ✓ How do we define a ‘critical youth worker’?
- ✓ How is the personal connected to the political in our work?
- ✓ What factors are considered when developing policy?
- ✓ How are policies made for youth work and what are the different models of policy development?



Successful participation and completion of the three modules of the certificate entitles participants to a **Certificate of Completion from Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange, York University.**

HAVE QUESTIONS ?

We’d love to hear from you!

Get in touch with us at

learn@youthrex.com

MODULE TWO

Theorizing Critical Youth Work – Dilemmas, Challenges and Possibilities

The second module will critically review the major theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin youth work discourses such as ‘youth at risk’; resilience; youth violence; criminalization; positive youth development; youth engagement; and marginalization. We will critically assess the policy and practice implications of deficit framings of youth. Participants will be asked to draw from their experiences in the youth sector to integrate critical pedagogy into policy and practice.

Examples of questions we will discuss in this module include:

- ✓ Why and how does theory matter to youth work?
- ✓ Why is it important to think ‘critically’ about the role of theory in youth work?
- ✓ How does theory legitimize certain beliefs / positions / political ideologies over others?
- ✓ How do we take up certain concepts in our youth work such as at-risk youth?
- ✓ How do these theories create a story of youth in the communities we work in?

MODULE THREE

Theory into Action – Best/Good/Promising Youth Work Practices

The third module on the third and last day will critically integrate the policy, personal and theoretical analyses from Modules One and Two into a practice context. Building on the the concept of “best/promising/good practices”, participants will contextualize critical youth work concepts from a youth wellbeing framework.

They will apply critical thinking skills and knowledge to strategies for engaging in effective day-to-day/ moment-to-moment critical youth work including strategies for addressing institutional constraints, youth advocacy and empowerment, anti-oppressive interactions and interventions and more.