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# Independent Reading Course: The Art of Teaching in Higher Education

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Please complete, sign and deposit in Co-ordinator's office ED 244

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Program : INTEGRATED STUDIES IN EDUCATION Course #: \_\_\_\_\_ Section #: \_\_\_\_\_  
CRN: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Credits: 3.0  
Term: Fall: \_\_\_\_\_ Winter: \_\_\_\_\_ Spring/Summer: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Professor:

Office:

Phone:

Email:

Student:

McGill ID:

Email:

## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course aims to facilitate the study and practice of the art of teaching within higher education. It is designed for PhD students looking to develop the necessary pedagogical skills and dispositions and to demonstrate their teaching ability for their academic curriculum vitae. Conceptually, students will consider the necessity of reflexive thinking and practice, student centered learning, teacher observation, creating learning communities, course development, and lesson leading. The structure of this course can take a number of forms. At a minimum, the doctoral student will attend the class every week taught by faculty member/ lecturer who has agreed to facilitate this independent study for the duration of the semester. This weekly commitment is akin to a student's placement or *practicum* where students will explore and practice in-class teaching, syllabus and lesson development, co-assessment, co-planning as well as lesson leading.

When possible, these sessions will be combined with participation in a collaborative inquiry group, consisting of other student-faculty pairs also participating in this teaching independent study. These groups would meet every two weeks, and would be a space for the students to share their reflections and experiences of these models. The inquiry group will also serve as a space for peers to mentor each other, offering students a plurality of ways to benefit from the mentorship model. Content from inquiry group discussions, individual *reflexions* and field notes will constitute data from which students can study their teaching practice.

Considerable emphasis in this course is given to understanding the process of learning to teach others and the characteristics of learners. In addition to practicing instructional skills, participants will observe, reflect, discuss, and write about teaching. Furthermore, PhD students will gain professional experience in teaching and curriculum development in higher education, which can help them to build their professional and academic curriculum vitae. Moreover, this practicum would offer international students an opportunity to develop a Canadian-based professional teaching portfolio in higher education.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the construction of quality teaching, assessing, and learning in higher education
- Utilize reflexive praxis and dialogic engagement as techniques for critically examining their developing practice as educators
- Understand how to professionally collaborate with colleagues
- Develop, organize, and lead a series of lessons (in a minimum of three classes).

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS:**

This course is based on a dialogic, relational approach in which students' knowledge and experience are valued and brought directly into the curriculum through ongoing opportunities for personal and social dialogue, completion of weekly reflexive writing/recording, and participation in a bi-weekly collaborative inquiry group. Through course assignments, particularly reflexive writing/recording, students will be asked to think about themselves as knowers and thinkers, to examine their beliefs about teaching, research, and leadership as well as themselves as active agents in educational contexts. Through this critical examination of themselves, the potential for transformation emerges as students explore alternative understandings of how they see the world and their roles within it (Cranton, 1996; Lysacker & Furuness, 2012). Based on this self-study process, students will use their emerging knowledge of themselves as educators and their theoretical understanding of how to create rich learning experiences.

THE SPECIFICS OF THE COURSE ARE TO BE DEVELOPED BETWEEN STUDENT AND COLLABORATING FACULTY MEMBER. (SEE BELOW FOR ONE SUGGESTED STRUCTURE). THESE SHOULD BE OUTLINED IN THIS LEARNING CONTRACT.

**REMINDER TO FACULTY COLLEAGUES: THE STUDENT IS NOT A TEACHING ASSISTANT AND SO SHOULD NOT BE ASKED TO DO ANY EVALUATION OF STUDENT WORK EXCEPT AS PART OF THE MENTORSHIP (eg., not grading alone).**

## LEARNING CONTRACT

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Learner:

Instructor:

Learning Experience: Independent Reading Course -- *The Art of Teaching in Higher Education*

Start date:

Completion date:

<i>What are you going to learn? (Objectives) Itemize what you want to be able to do or know when completed</i>	<i>How are you going to learn it? (Resources and Strategies) What do you have to do in order meet each of the objectives defined? SPECIFY THE NUMBER OF EXPECTED HOURS RELATED TO EACH EXPERIENCE</i>	<i>Target date for completion.</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
<i>How are you going to know that you learned it? What are the specific tasks that you are to complete to demonstrate learning?</i>		
1.		
2.		
3.		

I have reviewed and find acceptable the above learning contract.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Student SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Professor's SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

## SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION COURSE

### Participant Observations & Engagement

Students are required to be in their assigned class according to the course's regular schedule basis, and are encouraged to meet regularly with their faculty mentor. Data obtained through participant observation and engagement serve as a check against students' reporting of what they believe about education and what they do as educators. Participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts of teaching in higher education including the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people's behaviors and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom (Family Health Unit, n.d.).

Through the partnership, faculty mentors will be giving the student feedback based on the specific context of the course as well as their experience with best practices. The student's analysis and sense making of this information will occur through a reflexive journal and in the collaborative inquiry group.

### Collaborative Inquiry Group

Self-study requires critical collaborative inquiry. It is personal and interpersonal, with learning, thinking, and knowing arising through collaboration and the appropriating of feedback from others. It is the community that helps extend an individual's understanding. Students are encouraged to prepare their self-study for publication.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Final evaluation for this course will be based on the learning contract co-constructed between the student and the instructor (<https://www.msu.edu/user/coddejoes/contract.htm>). Here are some possible assignments:

### **ASSIGNMENT 1: Critical Reflexive Journal**

As qualitative researchers studying the practice of teaching in higher education, students are required to keep a reflexive journal to record entries of self-inquiry to understand personal and professional perspectives that influence their study and interpretations of best practices as well as their emerging identity as educators. Engagement in the Critical Reflexive journal also requires the student to depict the ability to direct their thoughts back onto themselves; to examine their theories, beliefs, knowledge, and actions in relation to the practice of teaching. The interpretations of experiences, and insight into how one's interpretations came into existence, result in reflexive knowledge (Barry & Clare O'Callaghan, 2008).

When engaging in the Critical Reflexive Journal, students are encouraged to consider the following:

1. Creative and original approaches to inquiry
2. Insightful, original, thought provoking questions/statements
3. Connections between observations, readings, personal experiences and ideas

Please note that journal entries are expected to be substantive. They should:

1. Offer analytical, engaging and thought-provoking entries (minimum one entry per week, minimum of 250-500 words each)
2. Experiment with a variety of ways to engage in the Critical Reflexive Journal (using multiple modes of representation)

### **ASSIGNMENT 2 - Creating Learning Plans**

The purpose of this assignment is for the student to develop and lead course lessons (number to be determined by faculty mentor and student). Students are required to have detailed learning plans

written and approved by the faculty mentor prior to the delivery of these lessons.

### **ASSIGNMENT 3: Self Study**

The self-study draws directly from the student's experience as a learner and as an educator situated within the undergraduate classroom, and in particular, on the student's critical reflexive journals. Students will develop their own research questions generated from observations of their classroom and previous experience. The tensions chosen to examine are opportunities for professional growth and learning (Berry, 2007). Self-study gives students the opportunity to examine their lived practice and whether or not there is a living contradiction between what they say they believe and what they actually do in practice (Whitehead, 1989). Examining the realities created by this gap leads to new understandings of their emerging identity as academics. Students can choose from various self-study methods to inquire into beliefs and action in practice, explore who they are as individuals and educators, and self-assess their teaching. Students have the opportunity to consider the role culture and history play in their theories and practices to assess its impact on their teaching (Samaras, 2010). Students are encouraged to prepare their self-study for publication.

## READING LIST

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