EDCI 422: Teaching English in Secondary Schools

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is the capstone methods course for English education majors, integrating the various issues of secondary English teaching addressed in previous coursework. As critical and reflective thinkers, you will synthesize old and new knowledge, create new understandings and alter taken-for-granted perspectives in order to analyze different methods, theories, expectations and beliefs of teaching the English Language Arts. You will not isolate “the answer” or “the method” in this class – alas, there is no such thing in teaching. Rather, you will examine the complexities of the ELA classroom to develop your practice and your selves as secondary English teachers. To that end, this semester you will examine the English Language Arts from a pedagogical perspective. Through class discussion, course readings, individual assignments and collaborative projects, you will explore multiple methods of instruction and assessment, debate multiple issues of teaching and learning, consider multiple means of creating an effective classroom environment and explore multiple ways of understanding the students in your classroom.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To explore different philosophical constructs, theoretical applications and instructional methods for secondary English teaching
- To examine the complex, diverse issues affecting teaching and learning in the secondary English classroom
- To further develop the self-efficacy, reflective consideration and critical thinking skills necessary for an effective secondary English teacher
- To further develop competency as a curriculum specialist, student advocate, classroom manager and reflective teacher

Course Information

Tuesday/Thursday
Time: 3:00-4:15

Instructor Information

Prof. Melanie Shoffner
Office: 415 Heavilon
Email: shoffner@purdue.edu

Office Hours

TBA
by appointment
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COURSE READINGS

All readings should be brought to class, in either hard copy or electronic form. Required texts are listed below; additional required articles and chapters are listed at the end of the syllabus.


One of the following:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Please note: As future English teachers, there is no leeway - or excuse - for errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Assignments will be evaluated accordingly.

I. General

Class participation

Your preparation for and participation in this course are essential, so please come to class awake and prepared. You are expected to engage with the material, question the proffered perspectives and consider opposing viewpoints while working together to develop as English teachers. Various informal assignments will be given throughout the semester; these are not graded as independent requirements but counted toward your participation.

As a capstone course, attendance is required and assessed - much as it will be when you enter the classroom. Therefore, you must arrange to cover any absence (i.e., find a substitute) although only one absence is allowed without penalty (i.e., take a sick day). Two absences will affect your grade (i.e., have a poor teacher evaluation) and three+ absences will result in failure of the course (i.e., lose your job). If a situation regarding your attendance arises, contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss how best to address the issue.

Reflection journal

You will write 10 reflections this semester on any teaching-related topic of your choosing. Really, anything. Perhaps you underline something in your reading or notice something in your practicum classroom or hear something in a conversation; whatever causes you to stop and reflect on a topic related to teaching is fair game.
To submit your reflections, you will use your choice of electronic format, e.g., email, blog, tumblr. The length of your reflections is at your discretion but they must be long enough to engage with the topic under consideration (so use your discretion wisely). Although reflections are evaluated for completion as part of your participation, a successful reflection will show thoughtful engagement with the topic, questioning of personal views/values/experiences, consideration of multiple perspectives/beliefs/ideas and implications for future teaching and learning. You are free to submit reflections before the due date if you wish.

II. Practicum

Over the course of the semester, you will spend a minimum of 20 hours in a local middle or high school English classroom with a secondary English teacher. You may organize your required 20 hours as you and your mentor teacher see fit (e.g., four hours once a week; two hours three days a week). The purpose of this practicum is twofold: to assist in your preparation for student teaching and to connect your development as a teacher directly to the secondary English classroom. As such, I expect you to bring your practicum back to our classroom through examples, illustrations and questions.

Three components make up the classroom practicum.

1. Practicum checklist: This checklist notes a range of activities to complete during your practicum. These activities are not busy work; rather, they offer additional insight into the many tasks required of a teacher. The Practicum Checklist is found on Blackboard and evaluated for completion.

2. Lessons and pedagogical reflection: You are required to create and teach at least two lessons (full or partial) under the guidance of your mentor teacher. After teaching one of these lessons, you will submit your lesson plan and a reflection on your teaching of that lesson. This reflection should address (a) what went well, (b) what you would change in a second teaching, (c) how you made your pedagogical decisions, (d) how you view your interactions with students, (e) and your response to being “the teacher” in the classroom. The lessons are evaluated for completion. The reflection is evaluated for thoughtful engagement with the five elements: honest questioning of personal views, values and experiences; meaningful consideration of other perspectives; and implications for future teaching and learning.

3. Practicum evaluation: This evaluation is to be completed by your mentor teacher at the end of the semester. You, however, will collect the evaluation and return it to me. The Practicum Evaluation is found on Blackboard and evaluated for a positive assessment by the mentor teacher.

III. Curriculum

Unit planning

This semester, you will create a 3-week unit plan suited for the secondary English classroom in which you complete your practicum. Various elements of the unit plan will be addressed in class through mini-lectures, group work and discussion, so it is in your best interests to take detailed notes throughout the semester.

Although the unit plan will be submitted in its entirety, you will submit elements of your unit plan during the semester for feedback and review. Each unit plan will consist of (a) a 1-page rationale explaining the unit’s merit for student learning, and (b) 15 detailed lessons, with each lesson including
objectives, standards, supplemental materials, general timing, and specific methods/activities and evaluations/assessments.

The unit plan should also incorporate the following aspects of effective instruction:

• **Diverse literature** – different literary genres, forms, periods and authors
• **Varied instruction** – diverse activities and methods
• **Varied assessments** – formal and informal assessments/evaluations
• **Technology** – evidence that technology is used for meaningful student learning
• **Coherency** – evidence of the unit as a coherent whole, with a unifying structure supporting student understanding and appreciation of the material
• **Engagement** – evidence of teaching and learning issues beyond the content itself

You will also complete a reflection addressing the following elements: (a) your personal strengths in instructional planning, (b) your personal areas to improve in instructional planning and (c) your experience in collaboratively designing a unit plan, if applicable.

**Please note:** In addition to a course requirement, the unit plan is the Gate C Artifact for English Education majors. Each student **must** upload the unit plan and reflection to her/his electronic portfolio in TaskStream by the given date to receive credit for the assignment and pass the course. The unit plan will be evaluated using the rubric provided in TaskStream. You will also find a copy on Blackboard.

**Topic teaching**

The five practitioner texts listed in the syllabus correspond to the following ELA topics: assessment, discussion, grammar, literary theory and writing in the digital age. In class, you will choose the topic that you would like to explore in more depth and read the corresponding practitioner text. You will also identify and read two articles related to a specific aspect of the topic. This reading will support your ability to teach a class on your ELA topic; dates are listed in the syllabus. This is not a mock exercise or a simulated role play; you will truly teach your fellow preservice teachers - and future colleagues - what they need to know about your ELA topic. Before teaching, you will **(a) meet with me the week prior to teaching to discuss your lesson and (b) assign 2-3 readings to the class related to your topic.**

Your lesson plan - and subsequent teaching - requires specific objectives, instructional activities and some form of in-class assessment. Your lesson should also provide a summarization of the main points from your practitioner text; traditional forms (e.g., lecture, PowerPoint, handout) are fine but also consider alternative forms (e.g., video, webpage, iBook). This assignment will be evaluated using the following criteria: (a) timely and thorough preparation; (b) development of a workable lesson plan; (c) instructional ability in the classroom; (d) feedback from the class and (e) an informal self-assessment submitted by email following the class.

**IV. Students**

**Student mini-ethnography**

From your practicum classroom, you will select three students for an interest inventory. You should make every effort to choose diverse students, i.e., students who differ from each other. Using either face-to-face interviews, questionnaires or a combination of both, your inventory should explore the following topics for each student: (a) personal interests, likes and dislikes; (b) likes/dislikes about school; (c) likes/dislikes about English; (d) likes/dislikes about reading and writing; (e) likes/dislikes about teachers.
After completing your inventory, you will write a ~5 page paper that contextualizes your students, summarizes your findings and considers the implications of those findings. Consider these questions to guide your writing: Who are the students you chose to inventory? What do you now know about this subset of students? How might you apply what you have learned to your future students? In what ways may your future teaching be influenced by what you have learned?

Your paper will be evaluated using the following criteria: (a) obvious completion of the interest inventory; (b) contextualized summarization of inventory findings; and (c) reflective consideration of potential implications for both students and teachers.

Student reading project

Using one of your practicum classes for context, you will create a two-week independent reading project around YA literature that responds to the students in that class. Your project will contain the elements listed below. Some questions are provided for guidance but they are not an exhaustive list; consider what else you must take into account to create this project. Your project will be evaluated using the criteria and process determined by the class.

- Class overview - Which class have you chosen? What factors about the students did you consider to create the project?
- Annotated book list - What YA texts will students read? Why are the chosen texts suited to these particular students?
- Procedures - How will students work: alone, in pairs, in groups? How will students choose their books: assigned, picked from a hat? When will students read: in class, for homework?
- Assignments - What will students do before, as and/or after they read? What structure will be provided to students?
- Evaluation - What will students learn from this project? How will you determine that learning?

Classroom environment

To consider the impact of classroom environment on teaching and learning, you will determine the specific “rules and procedures” you want to support your ideal classroom environment. After consideration, create the specific handout or classroom poster that will convey this information to your students and bring this to class; if creating handouts, please bring one for each member of the class. This assignment is evaluated for completion as part of your participation grade.

V. Final reflection

To complete your efforts this semester, you will engage in a final reflection on your development as an English teacher. Final reflections will consist of a one-on-one meeting with me in 20-minute time slots available during finals week. You will be asked to start our conversation with reflective consideration on a topic of your choice; the conversation will go from there. Topics to consider include a specific change of understanding, positive/negative experiences in the practicum classroom and/or the extension of an expressed viewpoint but all topics are welcome. Your reflection is evaluated for honest answers and reflective responses.
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COURSE GRADING

General ..............................................20%
  participation, classroom practicum, reflections
Curriculum assignments..........................35%
  unit planning, topic teaching
Student assignments ..............................35%
  mini-ethnography, reading project
Final reflection .......................................10%

*Failure to satisfactorily complete the unit plan or the practicum will result in failure of the course.*

A+ ....................100-99%
A ....................98-95%
A- ....................94-90%
B+ ....................89-88%
B ....................87-85%
B- ....................84-80%
C+ ....................79-78%
C ....................77-75%
C- ....................74-70%
D ....................69-60%
F ....................below 60%

COURSE NOTES

• **Email** is a wonderful invention and a necessary means of communication. Please make a habit of checking your email on a regular basis for any correspondence related to EDCI 422.
• Details of the course may change as we progress through the semester; your **flexibility** in such an event is much appreciated.
• That flexibility extends to the **possibility of a campus emergency**. If we find ourselves under attack by sources elemental, viral or human, course requirements, deadlines and grading may change as necessitated by a revised calendar or other circumstances. All changes will be announced in class; major changes will also be announced via email.
• **Cell phones, iPods, laptops, iPads, newspapers, crossword puzzles and other assorted distractions** of a personal nature should be put away and/or silenced during class.
• During the last two weeks of the semester, you will be asked to evaluate this course and my teaching of this course. Purdue has transitioned to **online course evaluations**, which means you will receive an official email from evaluation administrators with a link to the online evaluation site rather than complete a pencil-and-paper evaluation in class. Your thoughtful evaluation is very much appreciated and your feedback is used to assist in revising the course (seriously).
• **Plagiarism**, academic dishonesty and similar **honor code abuses** are not accepted in any form. Consequences for such behavior range from uncomfortable discussions with the professor to failure of the assignment to failure of the course to referral to the Dean of Students’ Office.
• To be clear: **Plagiarism** is the use and representation of another’s work as one’s own. Any source qualifies: published books, electronic articles, websites, living group test banks, friends, the guy sitting beside you at Starbucks. If you use another’s words or ideas, you must give credit. If you need guidance or clarification, please ask.
• **Incivility** in the classroom is not accepted in any tone, expression, statement or behavior. Disagreement is absolutely crucial to intellectual growth; disrespect is not. Please remain open-minded, conscientious and good-humored during class discussions. Consequences for incivility will most definitely start with an uncomfortable discussion with the professor and progress to the Dean of Students’ Office, if required.

• **Purdue’s Writing Lab** provides a range of writing services as well as multiple online guides, including grammar support (found at [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/)) and APA style (found at [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)). Please - I beg of you - take advantage of these resources throughout the semester to support your writing.

• **Students with disabilities** must be registered with Adaptive Programs in the Office of the Dean of Students before classroom accommodations can be provided. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss what I can do to support you.

**COURSE READINGS**


Mr. H. (2012). Call it what it is: Confronting the teacher-on-teacher bully down the hall. *English Journal, 101*(6), 64–69.


Tarasuk, T. J. (2010). Combining traditional and contemporary texts: Moving my English class to the computer lab. Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 53(7), 543-552.
Williams, B. T. (2004). Boys may be boys, but do they have to read and write that way? Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 47(6), 510-515.