

University of
Lethbridge



Faculty of Education

EDUCATION 5500

Understanding Professional Practice and Professional Development

Fall 2018: September 5th – December 5th, 2018

Online Delivery

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Office Hours: Please feel free to call, email, or post a message or question on Moodle for me. If you would like to make an appointment to meet in person or skype, send me an email and we can arrange a time that works best.

Weekly online drop in (Zoom) office hours will be set up Tuesdays 7-8 pm.

The course will be administered through Moodle. All relevant resources, criteria and assessment tools will be provided there:
<https://moodle.uleth.ca>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Good teachers are more than they do; they are the teaching.
(Aoki, 2005)

Welcome to Education 5500! The calendar course description for Ed 5500 is that it is “an introduction to a broad variety of methods in which knowledge and understanding of professional practice and professional development can be enhanced and applied through field studies for professionals in education and education-related contexts in community settings” (University of Lethbridge Calendar, 2018, p. 154). I look forward to our work together as we explore a wonderfully rich topic!

The focus of this course is to explore and critique current understanding of professional practice and professional development as well as deepening your understanding of your own identity and stance as a professional, reflective practitioner. Some of the questions we will be considering throughout the course may include:

- What does it mean to be an educator?
- How does our own experiences and identity impact ourselves as educators?
- How do social, cultural, historical, political, and geographical forces influence educators’ roles and identity?
- What is the role of the teacher as curriculum worker and change agent?
- How do students and teachers together negotiate the lived reality of the classroom?

- How do we read and write the world in educational contexts?
- What does it mean to be a reflective practitioner?
- What does it mean to be a professional?
- How do we understand the complexities of teaching and learning through research?
- What is the role of professional development in our practice?
- What does it mean to be an educational leader?

Course Goals

Our work in this course is to become aware of, and to join in the complex, rich conversations that are already at play in education and society about professional practice. We will read thoughtfully and carefully from key education theorists to help explore how our current understandings of professional practices have developed.

We will use critical inquiry as our primary model of learning through reading a variety of research and through collaborative learning groups and discussions. Dr. Hans Smits (nd) reminds us that inquiry is important in teacher preparation since “knowledge is not simply received but is codetermined in the development of a knowing self.” Joseph Dunne (1993) encourages us to understand teaching as a practice where the challenge in learning to teach involves attempting “to make more explicit the knowledge that is implicit in good practice”. This is very different from learning skills or “truths” that can be implemented in every situation. This takes us from what Francesco Varela suggests a critical difference between “knowing-what” and “knowing-how”. Understanding teaching and learning as complex interactions where skills, knowledge and the development of practical wisdom are all integral components allow us to recognize the complexity of teaching that is laden with values and ethical intentions and are characterized by actions that are often “intuitively and tacitly enacted”.

David Jardine (2013) argues that part of our work is to recognize that our understandings of education is not a predetermined institution that is “just the way things are.” Teaching, curriculum, and education are human creations that were created in response to human, social, political, cultural, environmental and philosophical understandings of the world and schooling.

The trick here, of course, is to remember that this is not what the real world is in some intransigent, ontological sense. Rather, it is how the world has turned out and therefore, two things. First, there are causes and conditions that can be untangled that can help us understand something of how and why things turned out like this, thus loosening their grip on our imaginations and practice. (Jardine, 2013, p. 7)

Our job then is not to end these conversations with definitive answers but become a part of these conversations that are always already at play, and allow our understandings of teaching to become part of the important dialogue in exploring how else could professional practice be understood and enacted. Maxine Greene (1995) contends it is imperative to disrupt seeing education as “predefined and given” (p. 23).

Only when the given or the taken-for-granted is subject to questioning, only when we take various, sometimes unfamiliar perspectives on it, does it show itself as what it is – contingent on many interpretations, many vantage points, unified (if at all) by conformity or by unexamined common sense. Once we can see our givens as contingencies, then we may have an opportunity to posit alternative ways of living and valuing and to make choices. (p. 23)

In order to do this work carefully and thoughtfully we need to be **active participants** with the literature and with each other by engaging in the following:

1. Deepen your knowledge of professional practice and professional development.
2. Articulate developing views about the purpose and complexities of how we understand reflective practice, teaching, and learning.
3. Compare and contrast multiple discourses of professional practice and research.
4. Contextualize the readings, activities and discussions **to your own experiences** within the classrooms and/or place of learning.
5. Demonstrate effective communication through proficient writing, online platforms (ie. Moodle, Zoom and others as appropriate).

Key Course Topics for Ed 5500

The key topics/themes for Ed 5500 will roughly frame our course structure, yet we recognize that often these themes are recursive and connected. We read each section recognizing that these key themes are closely related.

Introduction to Professional practice and educator identity

- What do we know and believe about being an educator?
- What impacts our identity as an educator?
- How does our identity impact our role as educator?

Educating as a reflective practice/Phronesis

- How do we understand the concept of reflexivity?
- What are some of current multiple theories of reflective practice?
- How can reflective practice be implemented in our teaching practice?
- Exploring beyond the tool box: the role of emotional/spiritual/ethics of care and their impact on professional practice

Educator as professional and professional development trends

- What does it mean to be a professional?
- A critical exploration of external forces/impacts on the teaching profession
- What are multiple ways to understand the process of professional development?
- Dimensions of professional learning communities
- Factors that support/hinder professional learning communities
- What is meant by teacher as leader?

Educator as Researcher

- Understanding our contexts through action research
- Exploration of collaborative inquiry
- Interpretive inquiry – action research as a living practice
- Exploration of your own practice and possible topics for spring internship

RESOURCES AND SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

Assigned Textbook: There is no assigned textbook, all readings will be posted each week on Moodle.

A list of references that will supplement your work as you begin your research is found on Moodle under “reference list”. This will be updated throughout the course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

There will be 4 synchronous online Zoom classes throughout the term:

1. Wednesday, September 5, 7-9pm – Introduction to class and “educator artifact”
2. Tuesday, October 5th – 7-9pm “Key word consolidation cards”
3. Tuesday, November 6th 7-9pm “Key word consolidation cards”
4. Tuesday, December 4th – Conclusion and celebratory sharing of projects

A. My journey as an educator.....10%
(Max 1000 words. Due date September 10)

This assignment is an informal introduction and description of your current professional identity.

As we begin our work, taking time to reflect on your own understandings of curriculum, teaching and learning is an important first step in your journey. Based on the reading, *The Courage to Teach* plus our initial discussion on Zoom, this initial assignment asks you to explore:

- What brought you to where you are today as an educator? What journey have you experienced that has helped shape you as an educator?
- Why did you become an educator? Who impacted those decisions initially and as you have continued?
- How do you see yourself within the landscape of teaching/learning that you inhabit as a professional educator?
- How do you think your students see you as a professional educator?
- What are you in the midst of that interests you deeply in education?

Please send this first assignment to me on Moodle dropbox by September 10th (September 12th at the latest) so that I can learn your needs and interests to help shape the upcoming discussions and readings.

B. Weekly Group Discussions (8 weeks). 45%

“Surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise.”
(Maxine Greene, 1988)

- As we go through the course we will be exploring complex topics on curriculum theory and practice from a wide range of key theorists. **As an important member** of a learning group you are asked to read and reflect on the assigned readings and videos and then take up the posted questions in your assigned group(s) on the Moodle discussion board site. You are expected to respond to the information from the readings and connect them with your own experiences as educators and learners. It is crucial for you to **go beyond just stating opinions and instead provide evidence** linked to the research. Keeping in mind the process you have used in previous courses in analyzing a research article, your job is to explore the authors’ ideas and explore the ways the authors’ ideas either speak to or go against your own experiences and how the ideas may allow new understandings for your teaching practice to emerge.
- You will be placed into a discussion group where you will be posting and responding to throughout the course). The intent is to create a rich conversation (as opposed to stilted, disconnected responses). The groups will change part way through the course so you hear from many different people.

- Each week you will receive feedback in the form of a grade (please refer to the discussion rubric provided).
- The group discussion board will close at midnight at the end of the week. Please try to submit your **initial response early in the week** (Monday or Tuesday at the latest) so that others can have time to respond to your post.

Background and Purpose: This assignment assures that you closely read the required texts, gives you practice in writing academic summaries, and practice in how to integrate your own voice from personal experience. This means that you do not write from ungrounded opinions, but organize your thoughts in levels that connect concrete references to abstract generalizations, informed by your synthesis of the readings. I encourage a critique of the readings to create a deep discussion in your responses to each other. Different voices and theories will purposefully be given so that you can explore the complexity of what we call professional practice. Blogging these summaries is a worthwhile tool for discussion and inquiry. By providing a platform that promotes involvement, educators can learn to inform their practice, and public and academic discourse. Researchers identify factors that inform effective use of discussions/blogs in graduate work as: providing writing practice, receiving timely feedback through comments and replies, providing opportunities to read and write across disciplines, and developing incentive for considering a variety of viewpoints. See <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/literally-psyched/2013/04/12/why-grad-schools-should-require-students-to-blog/>

Procedure:

1. I will create weekly discussion groups on Moodle. Your first entry (not for marks-but for participation) will be an introductory piece in which you tell us a bit about yourself, your teaching context, your hopes regarding this course-after reading the course outline and participating in the online Zoom session.
2. **For the subsequent weeks***, write and post your initial response to the questions posed online based on the readings/activities from the week. Ensure that your response is written not as a rant or opinion paper but a well-argued point of view using and citing the readings from the week, tying it in with earlier readings or other readings you may have done in the past, or have found in response to the initial readings, and most importantly, connecting it with your own lived experience as an educator. **** On the 2 weeks we have a zoom class there will be no written response – we will discuss the readings together either face to face or Zoom.**
3. Read, reflect upon and respond to the other group members' posting. These should not be simply "I agree or disagree", but respond in a way that is thoughtful, meaningful and engages in a deeper dialogue. It can include asking questions and making connections to your own understanding which furthers the dialogue.
4. Some key questions to help frame your reflection/discussion will be provided on Moodle. These are starting points only, not a prescribed list.

Criteria for assessment of weekly discussions: 8 postings throughout term.

1. There will be 8 weeks of discussion forums that will be assessed. See attached schedule for dates and topics. The first assessed response will be the week of September 16-22.

There will NOT be a discussion forum for:

- a. **Online class weeks:** (Sept 30-Oct 7, or Nov 4-11). The readings will still need to be completed but discussion will happen synchronously online as opposed to written.
- b. **Reading Week** (Nov10 - 18) or
- c. **On the last week of classes** (Dec 2-5).

2. You will be assessed (rubric posted on Moodle) on your ability to engage in the conversations with your group members in deep, meaningful ways by responding to the questions (initially) as well as contributing to the conversations that emerge with your group members. **It is expected that students will be online a number of times throughout the week.** It is crucial to go beyond stilted individual posts and instead immerse yourself into a conversation. It is also very important to post your original posting early on in the week (Sunday, Monday or Tuesday) so that others have time to read, reflect upon and respond to your posting. The weekly discussion will be closed at Midnight on the Sunday of the week.

C. Inquiry Proposal and Project..... 45%

**Deadlines: Proposal: October 26th (Moodle dropbox)
Final Project: December 7th (Moodle dropbox)**

There are 2 parts to this assignment:

1. **Inquiry Proposal - 5% of Project mark**
2. **Final Inquiry Project – 95% of Project mark**

Part 1: Proposal

As early as possible you need to identify a topic of study that intrigues you in relation to professional practice/development and any of the key themes/questions we will be exploring. Give yourself time to investigate the topic first before firmly deciding what it is that you wish to inquire. Then begin to hunt and gather, research, question, ponder, wonder, dig into your topic. What is your question? What is it that you want to examine closer? How and what do you want to actually do and why? Why is it a topic worthy of anyone’s attention?

After you have considered these questions, you are ready to write your proposal for your topic. In 500–750 words (as a rough estimate), submit your proposed topic of inquiry, explaining what you are interested in learning, why you care about the topic, and how you are going to make others care about it. In your proposal, you will also need to explain the shape your inquiry will take. Are you creating a video? A blog? A website? A podcast? A paper? Please include in your proposal all peer-reviewed sources you have gathered that will inform your work, as well as any other sources you hope to use. An initial list of references you have explored in determining your proposal needs to be included (APA Format).

Part 2: Project

This is your opportunity to take up something that you are passionate about in regards to professional practice and explore in depth. Where should you start? It can be from an event/experience or a question about the everyday aspects of teaching or learning. Or it can be from becoming engaged and interested in one author’s ideas or a theme we have taken up in this course that you now want to deepen your understanding. I challenge you to be creative and imaginative. Do something that inspires you and will be meaningful for you as a critical pedagogue. This project will be a precursor to your spring internship – it is meant as a space for you to begin your research into ideas/concepts that will help you as you move forward.

Some ideas (not exhaustive)

- A deeper exploration of one of the key themes/ideas we will be exploring.
- An exploration of current professional practices and/or professional development (Professional learning communities, Reflective practice as individuals, collaborative inquiry practices, teacher

as leader, professional development practices, Professional learning in Canada, influences on teacher learning and practice as some examples). This would be a great opportunity to explore more deeply where these ideas originate from, key thinkers and concepts within the movement and assumptions of professional practice within the movements). Most “new ideas” have a past and ancestry that is often ignored in the latest fads.

- An in-depth exploration of a certain way to engage in educational research that deepens your professional practice.
- An in-depth study into the theory, history of the conceptual framework of your possible project for your internship. Here you would not be developing the project itself but exploring the literature to give you a solid foundation of the topic that you are interested in, *as it relates to professional practice/professional development*.

This can be a way to begin to explore different ideas for your spring research internship. Use your time during the first part of the course to begin to dig into topics and pay attention to the research so you can unearth your real questions. Begin by taking up a significant event or experience from your own pedagogical practice and experience, or a reading/author that you are intrigued by. This can be something that is ordinary and day-to-day that you have taken for granted but you now wonder about, or something that addressed you or shattered your preconceived notions of education, teaching and learning. Begin your paper by writing about the story of your experience/situation carefully describing what happened. Be as descriptive as possible.

Now go back and read your narrative. What themes emerged, what questions do you have that need exploring? What broader contexts are they situated in? Are there multiple voices with different foci on your topic? Begin exploring how best for you to take this up: Is this a paper? A blog? A project? A website? A classroom project? No matter which form your project takes up, a thorough review of the literature is needed to help ground your work.

It is crucial no matter what and how you take up your topic that you **reference (using APA) the relevant literature that informs your deepening understanding**. What broader curricular issues, questions, ideas, problems, etc. does your work illuminate? How will this understanding impact your classroom and your students? How does this shape your understanding of what it means to teach well? What does this say about your own curricular beliefs?

Final Project will be due on December 7th, 2018 in Moodle drop box. Possible length of a written inquiry project should be 3500 to 4000 words in length and follow APA Format. Assessment Criteria posted on Moodle.

GRADES AND UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

The Faculty of Education has a standardized grading schedule for graduate courses. This schedule will be used for determining final grades for graduate students in this course.

Numeric Value	Letter Grade	Grade Point
97 – 100	A+	4.00
93 – 96	A	4.00

90 – 92	A-	3.70
87 – 89	B+	3.30
83 – 86	B	3.00
80 – 82	B-	2.70
Note: Any course with a grade of less than B- cannot be considered for credit in the M.Ed. program.		
77 – 79	C+	2.30
73 – 76	C	2.00
70 – 72	C-	1.70
67 – 69	D+	1.30
63 – 66	D	1.00
<63	F	0.00

Student Accommodations:

If you have a disability, special learning needs, or a recent injury that requires academic accommodation to complete the required activities and/or assignments, please follow the procedures outlined in the University Calendar.

You are encouraged to contact the Accommodated Learning Centre (<http://www.uleth.ca/ross/accommodated-learning-centre/>) for guidance and assistance. Counselling Services (<http://www.uleth.ca/counselling/>) is another resource available to all students.

Professional Writing Expectations:

It is expected that your writing meet the expectations of a graduate level program, including abiding by the **APA Publication Manual 6th edition**. All writing must demonstrate appropriate standards of written communication; grammatical errors, lack of clarity, poor structure or organization are not acceptable.

Student Conduct and Professional Standards:

Students are subject to the student discipline policy for academic and non-academic offences in accordance with the University Calendar (www.uleth.ca/ross/academic-calendar/sgs)

Additionally, in the Faculty of Education graduate programs, students are required to adhere to the conduct expectations as stipulated in Faculty of Education policies, and the Standards of Practice/Conduct, Code of Ethics, and/or the Code of Professional Conduct for the field, as noted below.

ATA Code of Professional Conduct

[http://www.teachers.ab.ca/About the ATA/UpholdingProfessionalStandards/ProfessionalConduct/Pages/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/About_the_ATA/UpholdingProfessionalStandards/ProfessionalConduct/Pages/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx)

Standards of Professional Conduct for Master of Education Students:

<http://www.uleth.ca/graduate-studies/master-education/resources/beginning-your-program/professional-conduct>

Academic Honesty:

The University of Lethbridge subscribes to Turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection service. Please be advised that assignments submitted in this course may have their originality verified using this system.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

- Although we place a heavy emphasis in this course on your own school settings, practices, and data, it is imperative that we refrain from using personal identifying information in our dialogue.

- The personal information your classmates and course instructors disclose to you should not be discussed with anyone outside the course, now or in the future, unless the author of the personal narrative has stated otherwise. Unless you have the person's specific permission, please do not mention identifying information about the person's story (e.g., no names, no agency) and keep the disclosure broad rather than specific.
- Recording lectures or class discussions is not permitted unless the instructor and all audience members have granted permission in advance.
- If you are aware of any situations where individuals are not honoring the expectation of privacy/confidentiality, you are encouraged to intervene by discussing the matter with that individual. If you are not comfortable doing so, or if a resolution is not forthcoming, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.
- While faculty/staff and students are expected to take all possible precautions to safeguard the personal information that is exchanged in each course, whether it be in discussion forms, web conferencing, recordings, assignments, etc., there is no guarantee of confidentiality.

Withdrawal from an Online Course:

If you have indicated in writing to your instructor that you will be withdrawing from an online course, your access to that course will need to be removed as soon as possible. You must notify the program staff immediately to complete the required paperwork.

REFERENCES - further references on Moodle

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