

**EDUCATION 5500  
UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**LITERARY ISSUES IN CURRICULUM & CONTEXTS**

**SUMMER SESSION II, 2013**

**TIME: 13:00 – 15:50**

**Location: L1170G**

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**Course Description:**

An introduction to the broad variety of methods by which knowledge and understanding of professional practice and professional learning can be enhanced and applied in the schools of Alberta.

**Rationale:**

As educators continue to seek greater understanding of their work, they often progress from a concern for technique and method to deeper reflection about the ways their teaching influences students' lives and contributes to the contexts in which they work. Thorough analysis of many dimensions of professional practice can contribute to greater awareness of fundamental relationships between teaching and learning, and between professional practice and professional growth.

**Course Objectives:**

Participants will:

1. Develop knowledge and understanding of the purposes of reflection upon teaching.
2. Extend knowledge and understanding of effective teaching.
3. Extend knowledge and understanding of research on teaching.
4. Develop knowledge and understanding of research on professional learning.
5. Demonstrate the ability to develop and apply strategies for analyzing teaching and learning.
6. Demonstrate their understanding of their own development as educators.
7. Develop additional skills of communication and discussion specific to reflective practice.
8. Demonstrate the ability to access, analyze and use information from a variety of sources.
9. Develop deeper knowledge and understanding of leadership of learning.
10. Demonstrate knowledge and skills specific to academic writing.

### **Course Structure:**

This course invites participants into an investigation of current teaching practice in Alberta schools, with a focus on enduring issues and concerns, innovation, and evidence of improvement. The following broad themes will guide class readings, class discussions, and course assignments.

#### Curriculum & Instruction

Students will be asked to critique the work of at least three authors in drawing conclusions about the influence of their ideas on current practice in Alberta schools. A lesson plan assignment will offer students an opportunity to apply their learning in developing a lesson they will use when they return to their classrooms.

#### Leadership of Learning

Students will use selected readings from the course text, *The Essential Equation* (among other sources) to refine their understanding of the role of leadership in school improvement.

#### Communication

Students will be asked to respond through discussion and debate to a famous saying attributed to John Wallin:

*In Education, misunderstanding is the normal state of affairs.*

#### Teacher-as-Researcher

Students will be encouraged to discover and share examples of research that have had a positive impact on teaching and learning in schools.

#### Teacher-as-Adult Learner

Students will be invited to compare the writing of several adult learning experts in an attempt to identify which aspects of adult learning theory might have broader applicability to the work-lives of teachers, and which may not.

#### Schools-as-Learning Communities

Students will be challenged to read and share on the subject of learning communities, to create a framework of similarities and differences around the topic, and to contribute to resolution of the question:

*What has been the impact of the learning communities phenomenon on teaching, learning, leadership, communication, and research in Alberta schools?*

### **Course Textbook**

Townsend, D., & Adams, P. (2009). *The Essential Equation: A handbook for school improvement*.

This required text is available through the U of L Bookstore.

**Participants are also encouraged to seek out a few books and articles by leading authors in the field (be selective).**

The work of authors Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves has left a deep impression on the field of school improvement and leadership in many parts of the world. I challenge you to read their texts carefully, using your own school experiences as a lens through which to view their ideas.

Thomas Sergiovanni, Phillip Schlechty, Ann Liebermann, and Millbrey MacLaughlin have been researching and publishing on matters related to school improvement for more than 40 years. They, like Roland Barth, have written passionately about the public education system of the USA.

Some of what happens in this course will relate to the work of Donald Schön whose two books, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating The Reflective Practitioner* (1987), have had a profound impact on educational writing over the last 25 years.

Prominent adult learning authors include Malcolm Knowles, Stephen Brookfield, and Jack Mezirow.

For the sort of action research that will be emphasized in this course you may want to check out the writing of Kurt Lewin, Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, Ken Zeichner, or Richard Sagor. Lewin is considered the “father” of action research. Carr and Kemmis wrote *Becoming Critical* in 1986 but it is still widely quoted as a key source in action research.

To tie your readings more closely to classroom practice, you could choose something by Robert Marzano, John Hattie, Anne Davies, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Jay McTighe, Grant Wiggins, or Ken O’Connor.

Finally, remember, if you’re absolutely stuck for something to read, go to the source of all sources, John Dewey, who seems to have written compellingly on every subject in the field and who is probably the most frequently-cited author in education. Any reference to Dewey from 1935 to 1963 carries the appearance of authority.

### **Course assignments**

#### **1. A personal metaphor for your career**

In 3 pages or less, create a metaphor for your growth, development and experiences in your career to date.

I have read some most fanciful responses to this assignment which, in every course, elicits some unbelievably wonderful offerings. I’ve read about a rose garden, a loaf of bread, a rudderless pleasure-craft, a country road, golf, rock-climbing and a variation of Animal Farm, to name but a few. Let yourself go on this one. Art-work is permitted. Creativity is rewarded. Electronic submissions are encouraged.

We will share these in class as they are completed. They are due before the end of the first week of classes.

**Note:** This is definitely one of the assignments that should be prepared in advance.

**Due Date:** End of first week of class.

**Value: 20 points.**

- #### **2. A written critique of an article.**
- Take any journal article or book chapter from any appropriate source. As briefly and as clearly as possible, explain to me what sense you make of its content and/or its message. What does it confirm for you about own work and your beliefs about professional learning? What new idea, new skill or new attitude does it promote for you? How might your subsequent career and practice be influenced by the message in the article?

**Due date:** End of second week of classes.

**Value:** 20 points

[N.B. Length - 5 pages maximum. Brevity, with quality, is rewarded.]

- 3. Evidence of teaching.** Details to be negotiated. This assignment could involve videotaping of each participant engaged in teaching.

**Note:** Participants will be expected to complete before the end of June a short video of themselves actually teaching. Decide on a particular teaching strategy you will employ. Set a goal for the class, and for yourself. Focus the camera on you, the teacher. A 10-12 minute segment will suffice. It can be edited in advance.

**Due date:** Participants will share their videotapes in class until all have been viewed and discussed, either in class as a whole, or in smaller groups. Then, each participant will submit a one-page reflection on the “evidence-of-teaching” experience.

**Value: 10 points**

- 4. Lesson Plan.** Participants will create a comprehensive lesson plan using one of the teaching strategies promoted by Robert Marzano or John Hattie (If you can convince me, you can choose a different researcher). Wherever possible, this assignment will be completed by teams of two.

**Due date:** End of Week II.

**Value: 10 points**

- 5. A final documentation.** Specific content to be negotiated.

Most likely, this assignment will take the form of a reflective paper. It should include a literature review on a topic of great interest to each participant, and relevant to the course content. It should show how each participant’s thought processes (beliefs, values) have been influenced by the course. Finally, it should give some indication of changes in practice that participants will be intending to apply upon return to the classroom or other place of work.

[Throughout the course, participants will be expected to negotiate with the instructor and come to agreement on what will constitute the "products" of the course. This is very much part of the process by which professional people take fuller responsibility for the evaluation of their professional performance.]

**Due date:** Last day of class

**Value: 40 points**

**Graduate Studies and Research in Education Grading Scheme:**

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<b>Numeric Value</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Grade Point</b>
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 a Graduate Studies & Research in Education graduate 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