

# Transforming Teaching

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*"Learning to be an excellent teacher is a career-long undertaking, because a great teacher is never a finished product but rather always in the process of becoming."  
-T.E. Cronin-*

## About this Course

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*Welcome to Transforming Teaching.*

This course will introduce you to the philosophical and practical aspects of teaching, and is designed to provide opportunities to engage in the reflective, scholarly, and practical aspects of teaching in a university or college environment. In the first part of the course, we will explore topics centred on the teacher, the students, and the philosophy of teaching. Later on, we will focus on practical issues regarding how to teach in the classroom, while drawing connections between the philosophical and practical.

As a student in this class, you will be expected to complete one learning module per week. Each module is comprised of online learning activities, readings, and assignments, as well as streaming video clips of teachers primarily from the University of Saskatchewan. In addition to completing these modules, you are expected to actively participate in online discussions, a central component of this course. It is our hope to create a supportive community in which you not only discuss the content of this course, but also encourage and support your peers in the vocation of teaching.

“Transforming Teaching” is a non-credit course. Upon completion you will receive a *Certificate of Completion* from The Gwenna Moss Teaching

& Learning Centre, University of Saskatchewan, and a detailed letter outlining the objectives and outcomes of the course. This class is modeled after “GSR 989: Introduction to University Teaching,” a face-to-face University of Saskatchewan course that is well-known, and that has been highly regarded by class graduates’ prospective employers.

## **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Define your personal philosophy and approach to teaching
- 2) Reflect upon and evaluate your teaching skills
- 3) Practice and demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of teaching and learning as applied to your discipline
- 4) Synthesize the samples of the current research on teaching & learning in higher education
- 5) Compile a teaching portfolio highlighting your teaching philosophy, goals, and achievements

## **Our Roles & Responsibilities**

Each week the *course instructors* will be responsible for:

- 1) Moderating the online discussions
- 2) Answering questions related to course assignments, content, activities, navigation, or structure
- 3) Assisting with technical difficulties
- 4) Providing additional resources or information when necessary
- 5) Providing feedback on completed course assignments (with the exception of the Self-Evaluation (Parts I and II) and Letter to Self)

Each week *you* will be responsible for:

- 1) Completing the learning module (including the reflective questions, readings, learning activity, and any required assignments),
- 2) Posting two responses (limited to 250 words each) on the discussion board. The first posting is a response to that week's discussion questions and must be posted between Sunday and midnight Wednesday CST. The second posting is a reply to another learner's posts, and must be submitted before midnight Saturday CST.
- 3) Responding to the instructors' feedback on course assignments. These responses (limited to 250 words max.) must be submitted within one week of when the feedback was received, and should be limited to a maximum of 250 words.

### **The Teaching Team**

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We will gladly respond to questions, concerns, comments, or inquiries about the course via email. If you are on-campus, you are welcome to drop by our offices.

## Reading Materials

Course materials consist of a binder with all modules and readings, and a CD-ROM containing streaming video and audio. The package will be mailed to you by expedited post within two days of registration acceptance.

The readings package provides a theoretical background for online discussion, and synthesizes the current research on teaching and learning in higher education. The readings package includes assigned articles (including a print copy of all online articles) and special division pages, which outline the articles to be read and the discussion questions for each of the learning modules.

## The Learning Modules

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Learning Module</b>
<b>Our Selves</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Dec. 4-10</b>	Getting Started
<b>2</b>	<b>Dec. 11-20</b>	Gardeners, Bagladies, and Mountain Climbers: Creating and Applying Personal Teaching Metaphors
<b>3</b>	<b>Dec. 21-Jan. 7</b>	From Metaphors to Philosophy: Creating your Personal Teaching Philosophy
<b>5</b>	<b>Jan. 8-14</b>	Looking Back, Looking Forward: The Self-Reflective Practice

<b>Our Students</b>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Jan. 15-21</b>	Becoming an Effective and Authentic Teacher
<b>7</b>	<b>Jan. 22-28</b>	Conflict and Emotion in the Classroom
<b>8</b>	<b>Jan. 29- Feb.4</b>	Classroom Relationships
<b>9</b>	<b>Feb. 5-11</b>	Who Are Your Students, REALLY? (And What Does That Have To Do With Your Teaching?)
<b>10</b>	<b>Feb. 12-18</b>	Teaching & Learning Styles
<b>11</b>	<b>Feb. 19-25</b>	Motivation
<b>Our Assessment and Strategies</b>		
<b>12</b>	<b>Feb. 26-Mar. 4</b>	Academic Ethics and Integrity
<b>13</b>	<b>Mar. 5-11</b>	Curriculum Design
<b>14</b>	<b>Mar. 12-18</b>	Small Group Teaching
<b>15</b>	<b>Mar. 19-25</b>	Learning in Labs
<b>16</b>	<b>Mar. 26- Apr.1</b>	Giving Great Lectures
<b>17</b>	<b>Apr. 2-8</b>	Getting Wired: Enhancing Teaching with Technology
<b>18</b>	<b>Apr.9-15</b>	Tools of Assessment: Evaluation and Feedback
<b>Apr.16-29 Midterm Break</b>		
<b>Our Professional Roles</b>		
<b>19</b>	<b>Apr. 30-May 6</b>	Teachers Striving for Equity and Achieving Balance

<b>20</b>	<b>May 7-13</b>	Things I Wish I'd Known
<b>21</b>	<b>May 14-20</b>	The Teaching Vocation

## Organization & Format of the Learning Modules

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The modules are grouped into four major themes: Our Selves, Our Students, Our Assessment and Strategies, and Our Professional Roles.

The modules guide you through a series of learning activities. The module always begins by outlining *Learning Goals and Objectives* followed by a brief *Introduction*. After the introduction, you will be guided through a set of learning activities, including reflective questions (*Think About This*), an *Activity*, possibly an *Assignment*, Readings (*Let's Check Out Some of the Literature*), Discussion (*Let's Talk About It*), and optional readings and resources (*Really neat stuff you can read if you want to, but you don't have to if you haven't got the time right now*). In some modules, you will be required to begin or complete one of the course assignments. Each week, one of the instructors will moderate the online discussions.

A module runs from Sunday to Saturday; for any given week, you should begin work on a learning module on Sunday, and finish the work by Saturday. It is important that you complete the learning modules during the week they are assigned so that you may fully participate in the activities and discussions that take place with your peers during that week. Expect to spend about 3-4 hours per week completing the learning modules. Some weeks require additional time for the completion of activities or assignments.

## **Our Online Community**

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Online discussion, like classroom discussion, is a useful way for us to get to know one another, exchange ideas and information, explore concepts and issues in-depth, and to create a sense of community with one another.

You are encouraged to use the discussion board as a forum to:

- 1) Get to know and talk to your classmates, the course coordinators, and participating/guest instructors,
- 2) Further explore areas of interest to you related to teaching and learning,
- 3) Pose questions or comments about the joys or challenges you are facing in teaching,
- 4) Ask questions about course (or its content) in general.

For the discussions to be fruitful, effective, efficient, and respectful, we would be wise to generate a collective understanding regarding guidelines for our online discussions. Below are some basic guidelines, both practical and ethical. We will invite you to add to or modify these guidelines during the first week of our online discussions to create the community that will most benefit us all.

### **Practical**

1. The course coordinators and participating instructors will mediate the online discussions. As mediators, they will contribute to the conversations, will redirect the discussion if it seems to drift too far off topic, and will, if necessary, ensure that the environment remains balanced and respectful. Ideally, these people will only be

- visible when they can not resist joining in on the remarkable discussions underway.
2. The learners will post answers to each week's discussion questions between Sunday and midnight Wednesday, CST. Participants will post reactions, questions, and discussion to other participants' posts by midnight Saturday, CST. Original posts and replies shall be limited to 250 words in length. Participation in these discussions is both required by and invaluable to everyone.

### **Ethical**

1. Be nice. Okay, so maybe we need to expand on that idea....the purpose of the online discussion is to further our understanding of the content and issues at hand. To achieve this, we will need to exercise critical thinking, and will need to challenge not only the content, but also one another. Be certain that you are challenging ideas and not people. These discussions should remain constructive, respectful, and professional.
2. While no one will be deducting marks for comma splices or spelling errors, please try to follow basic writing conventions, using capitalization, punctuation, paragraphs, etc. to improve the readability of your post, and to ensure that your meaning is clearly communicated. And avoid using capitalization for emphasis. In online discussions, all caps are equivalent to shouting.

### **Assessment**

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The assignments in this course are not graded in the traditional sense. Instead, we provide extensive comments and feedback on most assignments, with the exception of those that are primarily reflective in nature (Self-Evaluation, Parts I and II, and the Letter to Self). Rubrics

are provided to outline the criteria for acceptable vs. unacceptable assignments. Because we want you to continue reflecting on the issues raised in these assignments, we encourage you to resubmit assignments throughout the course for additional feedback (even though you are not required to do so).

## **Assignments**

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Please note that all of the assignments in this course build on each other and have been structured so that you may include them (at your option) as "evidence" in your teaching portfolio.

More details (including a longer assignment description, submission guidelines, and rubrics), will be made available as the assignment draws nearer.

## **Self-Evaluation, Part I**

Self-evaluation hones your ability to critically, yet fairly reflect upon your own performance as an instructor, a skill that you will find invaluable in your teaching career. In this assignment, we ask you to reflect upon your teaching beliefs and practices by answering a set of questions about your current teaching goals and strategies. At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete a similar set of questions about your teaching goals and strategies (Part II, below).

## **Self-Evaluation, Part II**

Part II of this assignment allows you to compare what, and more importantly, how you have learned over the past year, with your responses from Part I. Because so much of the learning in this class revolves around your personal and philosophical development as a teacher, no one is better equipped to report on your learning progress than you.

Parts I and II will be returned to you when the course is over and may be included (at your option) as evidence in your teaching portfolio. If self-reflection is an important part of your philosophy and approach to teaching, consider including this assignment as evidence of your commitment to self-reflection. Another option might be to include this assignment in tandem with other forms of evidence in your portfolio, such as excerpts from teaching journals or narratives.

## **Teaching Metaphor**

A teaching metaphor (teacher as gardener, explorer, guide, role model, etc) is a useful tool in exploring and critically examining the relationships, roles, and experiences of teachers and students.

Metaphors provide meaningful insight into what we believe constitutes “good teaching,” and can help us to achieve a deeper understanding not only of the assumptions, values, and beliefs that we have towards

teaching and learning but also how these factors guide and influence our teaching practice.

In this assignment, you will submit a 1-2 page written description of a teaching metaphor that describes your role as a teacher, how you view the role of your students, and the approaches or strategies that characterize your practice.

Once completed, your metaphor will serve as a starting point from which you will construct a personal statement of teaching philosophy. The teaching philosophy statement, in turn, is one of the most important parts of your teaching portfolio. It is essential, therefore, that you choose a metaphor that truly reflects your teaching practice, not the type of teacher you aim to be.

### **Teaching Philosophy**

A teaching philosophy is a written statement that expresses your personal values and approach to teaching and learning. It is one of three essential components that you must include as part of your teaching portfolio. Well-written statements clearly and personally define and discuss

- your goals,
- approach, and
- style of teaching,
- the terms teaching and learning and their relationship,
- how you view the roles of the teacher and learners, and
- the kinds of teaching and assessment strategies that you use in the classroom (as well as the rationale behind using these strategies).

Strong philosophy statements also outline the goals and expectations of the student-teacher relationship and demonstrate ongoing reflection and development of teaching practices.

Your philosophy statement should contain appropriate examples, stories, and anecdotes illustrating your personal approach to teaching. Try to ground your philosophy in your teaching metaphor, or, in a critical incident related to teaching or learning. Most importantly, your philosophy statement should make explicit connections to evidence contained in your teaching portfolio (e.g. student feedback). For example, if you claim to be a student-centred teacher in your philosophy statement, you will need to include evidence of this approach in your teaching portfolio. For this assignment, you do not need to include evidence, but keep in mind that you will eventually need to support the claims you have made in your teaching philosophy statement.

### **\*Learning From Model Teachers**

One way to develop your teaching skills is to watch more experienced teachers in action. If you were to sit in on a class of your choice, purely for the learning experience, which class would you observe and what do you think you would learn? Which teacher would inspire you, through example, to try new and innovative methods of teaching in your class(es)?

For this assignment, you must ask an instructor from a local campus for their permission (oral or written) to sit in on one of their university or college classes. As a guest in the class, your role will be to observe the teacher, the students, and effective (as well as ineffective) teaching and learning behaviours and strategies.

\*This exercise is based on an assignment created by T. Pychyl and C.Dence at Carleton University.

### **Course Syllabus/ Lesson Plan**

One of the most practical exercises for a teacher to complete is a course syllabus and lesson plan of a course they teach or plan to teach. This assignment will help beginning teachers in the initial stages of planning a course, and will encourage more experienced teachers to re-think how they approach course planning and design.

Either working with materials from a class you already teach, or with ideas for a class you anticipate teaching, create a 3-5 page course syllabus, that addresses the major categories outlined in your readings for week 12 (Curricula Design):

Once you've completed the syllabus, prepare a 1-2 page rationale for the syllabus describing the decisions you made, and the reasons for those decisions.

### **Planning a Lecture**

In this assignment, you are asked to write a well-organized lecture outline, containing one or more objectives, a central argument, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Two models have been provided to help you through the various steps associated with this task. These models are in PowerPoint (ppt) format and can be downloaded from the table of contents in week 15's content module. You may choose to view either one of the models (or both) based on your disciplinary background.

### **Assessment Philosophy**

If we apply our teaching philosophy to what we've learned about evaluation, we can generate an assessment philosophy. For this assignment, you will do just that—you will explain your approach to assessment, some of the strategies you do (and plan to) employ, your reasoning behind your approach and strategies, and what your purpose is when you assess your students.

### **Teaching Portfolio**

A teaching portfolio (or dossier) provides a sense of who you are as a teacher while highlighting your accomplishments and effectiveness as a teacher. It is becoming more common for college teachers and university faculty to be asked for a teaching portfolio when they apply for teaching

positions and for tenure or promotion. More importantly, developing a teaching portfolio promotes instructional development and reflection on your teaching approaches and values.

### **\*\*Letter to Self**

Here you are, at the end of the course, and we hope you've learned a lot along the way. The great thing about teaching, and the reflective teaching practice, however, is that it has no end. We have learned and developed so much from when we first started teaching, but our best teaching is yet to come!

This assignment is a fun one, and we hope you'll enjoy it. We want you to write a letter *to yourself* and hand it in to us. Your letter should be 1-5 pages in length. In six months, we'll mail that letter back to you, so that you can compare your "today teaching self" with your "six-month-from-today teaching self."

\*\*This assignment is based on an assignment created by T.A. Loeffler and described in Loeffler, T.A. (2004). *Experiential Learning: Confessions of an Egg Dropper*. The News about Teaching and Learning at Memorial, Newsletter of the Instructional Development Office, 8(1): 3.

## **Policy on Late Assignments**

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We all have different roles, obligations, and responsibilities; as such, we try to be mindful that sometimes a deadline cannot be met. If you are unable to submit an assignment by its deadline, please talk to one of us prior to the date the assignment is due. If possible, we will arrange for a new date for submission depending on the circumstances stated.

All assignments must be submitted according to the deadlines given unless prior arrangements are made with the course instructors. Failure to submit any or all the assignments by the last day of the course (May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007) will result in a grade of “Incomplete” for the course.

## **Academic Integrity**

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Please ensure that any writing submitted to the course is your own. Postings, assignments, or teaching materials that present the ideas, opinions, strategies, or paraphrased statements of others should be clearly acknowledged from print, electronic, or oral sources.

For more information on the University of Saskatchewan's policies on academic integrity, please refer to the guidelines of conduct at [http://www.usask.ca/honesty/aca\\_honesty.shtml](http://www.usask.ca/honesty/aca_honesty.shtml).

## **Giving Us Feedback**



We encourage you to submit your feedback about the course using the forms that are provided in the course readings package. You may return these forms via mail to:

The Gwenna Moss Teaching & Learning Centre  
Room 37 Murray Building  
3 Campus Drive  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5A4

or by fax to 306-966-2242. The same evaluation forms are available online on the WebCT website.