George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Division of Elementary, Literacy and Secondary Educations
EDPD502.6R5
Fostering Rigor in a High School Honors English Course – Spring 2015
Meetings: Mondays at Rock Ridge High School
Online at Loudoun VISION

INSTRUCTORS: Jason White & Laura Tornello
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course will introduce high school teachers of Honors English with the theory and practice designing and teaching curricular units based on essential questions. In addition, teachers will learn the principles of conducting effective Socratic Seminars and use those in their classrooms. Teachers will apply concepts to their own professional essential questions, conduct classroom research, and report their findings to the whole group. Teachers will also learn and practice strategies for conducting effective peer writing response groups.

COURSE PURPOSE AND INTENDED AUDIENCE: This course will provide high school teachers of Honors English with the tools and material to learn the theoretical framework of teaching in response to teacher and student generated essential questions - and using student portfolios for assessment. They will apply their knowledge to their own teaching as they conduct classroom research on an essential question of their choosing.   Participants will develop their writing skills while participating in collaborative writing group, the focus is being how to teach writing rather than merely assign writing.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES:
This course is designed to enable students to:
1. Design and implement curricular units based on essential questions
2. Develop a professional essential question, collect artifacts referring to it, write an answer to the essential question, and present findings to the class
3. Understand and apply the principles of Socratic Seminars to classroom instruction
4. Understand and apply the principles of an effective peer writing response group

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS: National Council of Teachers of English Standards 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12

REQUIRED TEXTS:
- Matt Copeland. *Socratic Circles* (Steinhouse 2005)
- Jim Burke. *What's the Big Idea?* (Heinemann 2010)
- Supplementary texts & articles posted on Vision

ASSIGNMENTS & WEIGHTING
1. Attend all class sessions and participate in writing groups – 10%
2. Participate in all Vision forum discussions – 20%
3. Design and implement a curricular unit based on an essential question – 40%
4. Collect artifacts and present findings related to a professional essential question – 20%

ASSIGNMENT EXPECTATIONS

Assignment 1: *Attend all class sessions and participate in peer response groups*
- Student brings writing sample and copies for others in the peer group
- Student reads writing sample in peer group and accepts feedback
- Student gives feedback to others in the peer group

Assignment 2: *Participate in all Vision forum discussions*
- Student posts a substantive discussion thread by each week's deadline and responds substantively to a peer's posting by the following week's deadline.

Assignment 3: *Design and implement a curricular unit based on an essential question*
- Students will work in groups to design curricular units using the Understanding by Design template. The unit must contain Standards of Learning, an Essential Question, a text set, defined summative assessments, and a description of the learning activities.
- Student implements the designed unit in his or her classroom, posts discussion reflections about it, and shares student outcomes with school-based group.

Assignment 4: *Collect artifacts and present findings to a professional essential question*
- Student selects a professional essential question to reflect upon throughout the year
- Student collects classroom research relevant to the essential question
- Student presents the results of research to peers and school administrators

GRADING SCALE
A = 96-100
A- = 90-95
B+ = 86-89
B = 80-85
C = 70-79
F = 69 and below

PROPOSED CLASS SCHEDULE *(subject to change)*

Date	Assignment
*Monday, August 25th	**(Whole-class meeting: 6 hours)**
By Thursday, September 4th	<u>Vision Post #1</u>: What is your philosophy for teaching writing? How does your own writing process and experience affect your philosophy? How could you improve your writing instruction? <u>Reading</u>: "Madman, Carpenter, Architect, Judge: Roles and the Writing Process," by Betty Flowers
By Thursday, September 11th	Response Post
*Thursday, September 18th	**(Whole-class meeting: 3 hours)**
By Thursday, September 18th	<u>Vision Post #2</u>: Post the professional essential question that you will be reflecting on throughout the course. Why did you choose this particular question? What do you hope to learn? What types of artifacts (i.e. student work, handouts, assignments, assessments, etc.) do you envision yourself gathering to document your exploration of this question?
By Thursday, September 25th	Response Post
Wednesday, October 1st	*(School-based team meetings: 2 hours)*
By Thursday, October 2nd	<u>Vision Post #3</u>: How do you *teach* writing rather than merely *assign*

	writing? Readings: "Inside the Writing Process" & "Teach Writing As a Process," by Donald Murray
By Thursday, October 9th	Response Post
By Thursday, October 16th	Vision Post #4: How was the excerpt from *Deeper Reading* applicable to teaching your Honors English course? How could Gallagher's text inform your teaching? Reading: *Deeper Reading* Chapters 1-3
*Monday, October 20th	**(Whole-class meeting: 3 hours)**
By Thursday, October 23rd	Response Post
By Thursday, October 30th	Vision Post #5: How can Socratic Seminars be used to increase rigor and ensure accountability in your Honors English course? Reading: *Socratic Circles*
Wednesday, November 5th	*(School-based team meetings: 2 hours)*
By Thursday, November 6th	Response Post
By Thursday, November 13th	Vision Post #6: What "best practices" do you already use in implementing Socratic Seminars? What other techniques from *Socratic Circles* would you like to implement in your classroom? Reading: *Socratic Circles*
*Monday, November 17th	**(Whole-class meeting: 3 hours)**
By Thursday, November 20th	Response Post
Wednesday, December 3rd	*(School-based team meetings: 2 hours)*
By Thursday, December 4th	Vision Post #7: How can you support those students who struggle to meet the demands of and Honors English course? Readings: Jim Burke's Tools for Teachers/Academic Essentials Matrix & "How To Mark a Book" article
By Thursday, December 11th	Response Post
By Thursday, December 18th	Vision Post #8: Revisit your 1st Vision Post: What is your philosophy for teaching writing? Drawing on the course texts and your teaching experience this year, revise your philosophy.
By Thursday, January 8th	Response Post
By Thursday, January 16th	Final Vision Post: Revisit your 2nd Vision Post. What did you learn about yourself as a teacher as you explored your professional essential question? What curriculum conclusions did you draw? What artifacts do you envision using in your final portfolio?
*Monday, January 19th	**(Last whole-class meeting: 3 hours)**
Wednesday, February 4th	*(Last school-based team meetings: 2 hours)*
*Monday, March 9th	**Presentations (2 hours)**

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS
a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code (See **http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/**).

b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (See **http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/**).

c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance (See **http://caps.gmu.edu/**).

e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester (See **http://ods.gmu.edu/**).

f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing (See **http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/**).

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS
Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT
The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: **http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/**.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website http://gse.gmu.edu/.