

Course Title: **Understanding Education**

Instructor: Dr. Tim Sibbald, OCT

Course Value: 3 credits

Location: Online (BlackBoard)

Course dates: Sept. 8 – Dec. 8 with a reading week to be determined.

Office Hours: I will have office hours on Monday and Wednesday. The specific times will be provided at the start of the course. Please note that my email is routinely checked and I am available to talk one on one outside of my office hours. In particular, I am flexible to respect work schedules.

Course Code: **Educ-5196**

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Calendar Description

It has been said that the more things change the more they stay the same. What philosophical and empirical theories underpin current understandings of education? In what ways does an educational theory inform curriculum and leadership development? Such questions will form the basis for discussion.

Course Outcomes and Objectives

The course outcomes and objectives that are emphasized in this course are:

- Demonstrates critical thinking and analytical skills with regard to educational theory, historical context, research, policy, legislation, educational governance, assessment, and evaluation to inform professional practice
- Actively engages in critical and analytical thinking through reflective practice before, during, and after teaching/learning opportunities
- Demonstrates and models ethical, professional, and appropriate language conventions in all communication
- Demonstrates an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity, and limits to knowledge (e.g., self, student, content, context) and how this might influence learning (e.g., environment, instructional cycle)
- Develops, personalizes, and revises when necessary, a philosophy of teaching.

Approach to Teaching

Instruction in this course will be founded on social constructivism principles. Through dialogue individuals articulate their understanding of a topic and come to realize the strengths and weaknesses of their understanding. Within a process of offering ideas, engaging in discussion, individuals clarify and extend their understanding. In addition, the identification of theoretical, professional, and practical understandings facilitates the development of connections between different orientations to the content of the course. The improved personal understanding combined with understanding different orientations will enable implementation of personal changes in teaching practice.

As this approach to instruction is based on discussion, sharing understandings, and exploring different orientations, it is important for participants to be active in the course in a manner that allows for sharing and deliberation. This implies that participants should be engaging in the course on different days through the week. In particular, it is important that engagement does not become compressed – this is not a weekend course. That said,

the course begins and ends on Tuesday. In light of this, the course will run on a Tuesday to Sunday cycle with Monday being a turn-around day. On Mondays, anyone tasked with setting up a seminar will have to accomplish that, otherwise it is a day for reflection about the previous week and preparation for the coming week.

Note that all postings, emails, and assignments should be professional in tone and content, and in keeping with the Foundations of Professional Practice as found on the website for the Ontario College of Teachers. Please exercise respect and diplomacy when it comes to issues where you want to voice an opinion that may challenge your colleagues' points of view. Please also appreciate that you may find your personal ideas challenged in this course and your response should be respectful and diplomatic. If you have doubts about a response – sleep on it; you can always post it tomorrow.

Any assignment or evaluation that will not be completed according to the schedule should be addressed via email with the instructor. This will be done in advance, when feasible.

Required Text and Resources

Noddings, N. (2012). *Philosophy of education* (3rd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

American Psychological Association (APA), (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Note both are available through the Nipissing University bookstore
<http://www.bkstr.com/nipissingstore/home>

Assessment and Evaluation

In terms of assessments and evaluations, this course will use APA6 in all aspects of the course. Note, however, that we will treat all submitted work as a final document and not a draft. This means that single spacing of lines should be used. It also means that there should only be one space after each period. It is standard with academic journals that word counts do not include the listing of references, and that standard is used here as well.

All assignments are to be submitted through BlackBoard. However, if you run into issues when submitting an assignment, please email your assignment directly to the instructor.

1. Students are expected to make regular contributions with respect to three perspectives in this course. Firstly, there is a theoretical discourse regarding the philosophical concepts and how they relate to one another. Second is the professional implications that are broad in scope, can inform policies, and operate at an organizational level. Third, is the practical consideration of what the theoretical ideas mean in terms of teaching. Notes are assessed in terms of progress within the course and 20% of the course value is based on the notes when the notes are not contributing to the seminar described below.

Table 1. Rubric for Online Postings			
	70-79	80-89	90-100
Theoretical	Uses concepts from the chapter in a meaningful way.	Synthesizes or analyzes different perspectives in a comparative manner.	Draws on the research literature or brings several concepts together.
Professional	Interprets ideas in terms of policies or organizational practices.	Critical appraisal of policies based on the theoretical underpinnings.	Utilizes the academic literature to inform the connection between theory and policy.
Practical	Explains context specific examples in terms of theoretical concepts.	Appraisal of contextual choices, in terms of theoretical concepts.	Utilizing both the academic literature and the theoretical concepts to examine teaching practice more thoroughly.

2. Articulate an area of concern/interest that will be the basis for a final essay in this course. This will be at most 500 words and needs to clearly explain what you will explore in detail in the final essay of the course. The purpose is to provide details about the circumstance of the area of concern/interest. The value is 15% and the due date is Tuesday, October 20.

Table 2. Rubric for area of concern/interest			
	70-79	80-89	90-100
What is the concern/issue	A focus is articulated but lacks clarity.	A clear concise explanation.	A very strongly articulated explanation with some support*.
What is not the concern/issue	The delineation of aspects is unclear.	Separation according to what is and is not the concern/issue is clear.	Very detailed consideration of the scope.

* - Note that “support” may be a newspaper article, a mandate from the school board, or other working document. Where access is an issue, please include a scanned copy. It is not intended that this statement will use the academic literature (that will fit with the essay).

3. You will participate in running a seminar. This requires that materials for the seminar be set up by Monday night. The setup requires that you have a set of 3-6 questions that will develop conversation (Please do not use questions from the ends of the chapters.). During the week you are tasked with providing clarification but also promoting further

thought by the rest of the class. You also need to augment the chapter reading with two additional readings that fit with the chapter. The schedule for the seminars will be determined during the first week. At the end of the seminar week (Sunday afternoon), you will need to post a summary of the seminar discussion. Overall value is 25% of the course.

Table 3. Seminar Rubric

	70-79	80-89	90-100
Materials	Limited connection to the focal topic.	Three perspectives (see #1) are addressed in a balanced manner.	Three perspectives are brought out as an integrated whole.
Clarification/further thought	Limited engagement arising from the seminar.	Ongoing engagement during the seminar.	Discussion is holistic and brings different lines of thinking into theoretical perspective.
Summary	An overview of the topic and main aspects of the discussion.	Main themes of the discussion are highlighted with references to postings.	Main themes of the discussion are developed by bringing postings and theoretical ideas together.

4. An essay of 5500 to 6000 words that develops the area of concern/interest in terms of the theoretical, professional, and practical concepts that have been developed throughout this course. As with all academic writing, there should be a clear statement of purpose in the essay. You do not need to reiterate the content of assignment #2, but should integrate key details as needed so that your essay is self-contained. The essay does not have to resolve the area of concern/interest, but should develop a coherent theory around the concern/interest or a plan of action to develop a detailed understanding of the concern/interest. The value of the essay, to the course as a whole, is 40%. The due date is Monday, Nov. 23.

Schedule

Table 4. Schedule for the course

Week 1 Sept. 8-14	Instructor will run this week. There is an initial survey to gain an understanding of who is enrolled in the course. Also there will be a sign up for running a seminar based on chapters 2 to 12 with the exception of chapter 5. Reading is chapter 1.
Week 2	Instructor will run this week. The focus is on fallacies in reasoning and how recognition of these informs critical thinking. The state of logic will be addressed. Note that this week will not use chapter 5 of the book though it is based on related content. You do not have to read the chapter. Reading: To be determined.
Week 3	Seminar chapter 2.
Week 4	Seminar chapter 3.
Week 5	Seminar chapter 4.
Week 6	Seminar chapter 6.
Week 7	Seminar chapter 7.
Week 8	Seminar chapter 8.
Week 9	Seminar chapter 9.
Week 10	Seminar chapter 10.
Week 11	Seminar chapter 11. Please note that this chapter is an American view and care needs to be taken to give proper representation to a Canadian view.
Week 12	Seminar chapter 12.

Other Important Details

Students are advised to use their Nipissing e-mail address when emailing the course instructor. If you do not check your Nipissing e-mail regularly (i.e. daily) then you should use the automatic forwarding feature (look for a button with a gear icon, then a settings menu, then a forwarding tab).

Students are responsible for keeping back-up copies of all written work and assignments for this class. (Note that one inexpensive strategy is to email yourself.)

All of the components for evaluation must be completed in order to gain the credit associated with this course. Assignments have identified due dates. Work must be submitted on time. Extensions must be negotiated prior to the due date and will only be considered in cases of extenuating circumstance and at the discretion of the professor. A late penalty of 4 percent per calendar day (including both weekdays and weekends) will be assessed on all late assignments. In view of the use of calendar days, if a late assignment is not being handed in electronically then an email indicating the availability of the hardcopy is required.

Please refer to the Nipissing University policy on academic dishonesty in the Course Calendar - <http://webcal.nipissingu.ca/Page528.html>

For appeals unrelated to academic dishonesty, please refer to the Student Appeals Committee guidelines - <http://webcal.nipissingu.ca/Page526.html>

Students who require additional services and accommodations in class and for exams are encouraged to self-identify with disability services at the beginning of the term so that accommodations can be made to meet the students' needs. All accommodations are arranged through Disability Services, not by the course instructor. Please refer to the Disability Services site for more information and forms -

<http://www.nipissingu.ca/departments/student-development-and-services/disability-services/Pages/default.aspx>

The university attendance policy is found at the following link:

<http://www.nipissingu.ca/calendar/regulations/academic/Pages/Attendance.aspx>

Please recognize that in an online course this requires regular ongoing participation.

The grading policy is found at the following link:

<http://webcal.nipissingu.ca/Page523.html> Please take note of the word "exceptional".