Course Description

This course is designed to invite you into the professional conversation surrounding teachers, teaching, and schools as a means to inspire you to consider your essential—and demanding—role as classroom educators.

This course is aligned with the three components of the Neag School of Education Conceptual Framework. As learners, we expect you to gain a strong professional knowledge base and skills for implementing evidence-based professional practice. As leaders, we expect you to develop a commitment to inquiry, transformative leadership, and moral leadership. And, as agents of social change, we expect you to embrace diversity and succeed in meeting the challenges posed by the ever-changing world, to inspire and motivate your students and colleagues to promote equity and human rights.

To achieve these ends, we will participate in and evaluate several philosophies and pedagogical approaches (Strand One). Additionally, we will explore the larger context in which the work of teachers takes place, gaining insight into the complexities of working in schools and communities. In this process, we will examine both theoretical and practical documents recognized in the field to find both exemplars and offer critique of the teaching tradition (Strand Two). And, we will explicitly address the needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse learners to develop our skills and stance toward culturally responsive teaching (Strand Three).

Over the duration of the course, we will explore what it means to be a professional educator, focusing particularly on the rights, responsibilities, and expectations that accompany our choice to work as teachers. Teaching is a multifaceted endeavor. The complexities inherent in teaching, including the perception of conflicting
academic and moral dimensions, comprise the basis for widespread disagreement concerning the responsibilities of teachers. As a result, teachers are often marginalized as mere technicians and offered little autonomy or respect. The re-conceptualization of teaching as a true profession is a fundamental precursor for educational reform. Indeed, there is no single element of schooling as important as teachers. All children in America’s classrooms deserve nothing less than a well prepared and caring professional who has both the knowledge base and power to ensure that the young people in his/her care reach their full potential.

**Course Readings:**


Supplementary articles and writings provided by the teachers

**Course Requirements** (further clarification of expectations will be provided as needed):

1. **Attendance and Active Participation:** Your involvement is a key component of this course; your voice is especially important. We value inquiring minds, particularly those that ask critical and tough questions. Show us that you are grappling with the material through your thought-provoking comments and well-thought-out agreements and disagreements.

2. **Reading Reflections:** To help you reflect upon the course text and teacher-provided readings, you will have the opportunity to respond creatively in a variety of formats. As you complete each activity, strive to think through and capture clearly and thoughtfully the ideas that you believe best encapsulate those of the given author(s). Aim to make well-conceived connections between the text and your own opinions, beliefs, experiences, and perceptions. Please complete Reading Reflections prior to the start of each class meeting and bring a paper copy to share and submit for evaluation.

3. **Discussion Groups:** To learn from one another in our exploration of schools, communities, and what it means to be professional educators, we will engage in regular break-out session discussions. During each class meeting, you will use the Resource Readings, Reading Reflections, your own knowledge and experiences, and any other pertinent information to engage in small and large group dialogue. During each discussion, attempt to find a balance between dominating the conversation and choosing silence. Your voice matters, but learning to be an effective listener can expose us to ideas we have not yet considered, making us more informed and able to construct and support our own arguments in the process.

4. **Statement of Educational Philosophy:** To provide a foundation for your further coursework and experiences in education, you will have the opportunity to compose a written statement that reflects your ideas and beliefs about the key
components of our course experience. In the completion of the statement, you will draw from course readings and conversations to provide evidence for the claims you make. This document will be revisited as you move through the program, allowing you to reflect upon and revise your work as you gain increased knowledge, awareness, and experience in education.

The statement should describe your beliefs on the following issues:

** The purpose(s) of education

** The realities and effects of educational disparity and inequities

** The relationship between the community and the school

Additionally, you should:

** Support your claims by citing authors read and studied over the semester. Please use APA format for in-text references and the list of references. For guidance, see, http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/, http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/, and other links along the left margin of the website.

** Support your claims by providing clear, thoughtful, and descriptive examples drawn from your own experiences as learners, observers, scholars, and teachers.

*Post your statement to Taskstream as a single Word file (please do not cut and paste) on or before Dec. 15. Please be sure to include your name, your program area, and the name of your program area advisor.

**Course Grades:**

Grades will be based upon the following point distribution:

*Reading Reflections 30 points each (x 5)

*Statement of Educational Philosophy 150 points

*Other Assignments as They Arise Points vary

**Course Schedule**

9/1 or 9/2  

* Purposes of Schooling

*Essential Questions: What is/are the purpose(s) of schooling? What should an educated person be able to know, think, and do?
Resource Readings:
Eaton, Parts 1-3

Reading Reflection: Select five sentences or passages from the text that you found interesting, frustrating, ridiculous, inspiring, etc. Generate a discussion question for each. Please note the page number and a few key words for each passage.

Example:
1) Passage: “To many of the families… represented an unreachable aspiration” (5).

Question: How does Eaton’s description of Windsor compare to your vision of the American Dream? Do we all share the same vision, or might multiple versions of the Dream exist? Is having an education necessary to achieve the American Dream?

9/21 Disparity and Inequities

Essential Questions: How do limited resources affect a school’s ability to attain the purposes of schooling? What societal and institutional forces influence school communities?

Resource Readings:
Eaton, Parts 4-6

Reading Reflection: Drawing inspiration from the reading, take and print two photographs, one that captures your impressions of shame and the other of hope.

10/12 Community

Essential Questions: Do the purposes of schooling shift given the differences between school communities? Should the culture, race, language, values, and beliefs of a community shape the purposes of schooling in a given school or district?

Resource Readings:
Eaton, Parts 7-8 and Afterword

Reading Reflection: In a typed, single-spaced page, think back upon your own school experiences. Select a school you attended. In what ways did this school reflect the views and perceived needs of the larger community? Consider the school environment (how it felt emotionally and physically to attend school here), curriculum (what you studied and who studied with you), and services (available clubs and extra-curricular activities, the role of teachers and counselors, etc.).
To put our thinking into concrete, realistic practice, we will host a gathering of students, teachers, scholars, administrators, and community members to discuss the shift in demographics in CT public schools, with particular emphasis on English Language Learners, their teachers, and their school communities. Leaders at each table will facilitate a discussion that aims to address our course-related questions regarding the purpose(s) of schooling, disparity and inequities, and the relationship between the school and the community in the context of ELLs. Each table will generate a set of recommendations to share with the larger group.

**Resource Readings:**
ELL articles provided by teachers

**Reading Reflection:** In one, typed, single-spaced page, complete each of these initial phrases:
- These readings made me feel that….
- realize that….
- wonder about….
- wish that….

### 12/7 Considerations for Moving Forward

**Essential Questions:** What can we expect from the program? What does the program expect from us? What do we expect from ourselves? How are these expectations shaped by our perception of teachers and teaching?

**Resource Readings:**
Poems provided by teachers

**Reading Reflection:**
Various metaphors have been used to define teachers (teacher as traffic cop, bridge, artist, stand-up comedian in a loud café, etc.). Using a metaphor, define the kind of teacher you aspire to be and explain your thinking in one, typed page.

**We are so looking forward to working with you!**

Please don’t hesitate to let us know how we can help make our experience together meaningful and worthwhile.