COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:
This course will provide you an opportunity to expand your skills as a learning-centered instructor. Using a case study approach, you and your classmates will work through four Episodes that feature characters who are facing professional and personal challenges very similar to those faced by graduate instructors at the University of Minnesota. By engaging in assigned readings, activities, and collegial discussion, you’ll acquire the ability to plan and implement learning-centered instructional activities and assessment of student outcomes.

It is important to note that even though the case study at the center of GRAD 8200 follows a graduate assistant through the successes and challenges of her first teaching experience, the course is intended to apply to all students preparing to teach at the college or university level, whether you’re a TA or not. Indeed, much of what you will learn in the course comes from the conversations you will have with each other in the online forums; these are prompted by situations raised in the case study, but your answers to the problems can (and should) reflect your own situation and concerns.

The overall goals of the course are twofold: 1) to assist those who are (or will be) graduate teaching assistants to be successful in their appointments and 2) to prepare all graduate students to become successful instructors when they accept their first faculty positions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
Upon successful completion of the course, participants will be able to:

- Articulate strategies to successfully engage students in the learning process
- Distinguish between a student-centered and an instructor-centered learning environment
- Discuss the benefits of student-centered learning, including its relationship to active learning
- Plan active learning strategies that are appropriate for their courses
- Motivate students to do assigned work
- Use classroom assessment techniques to gauge student learning meaningfully
- Create a student-centered syllabus
- Create a teaching philosophy statement
- Articulate their personal beliefs about grading
- Talk with students about grades in ways that promote learning
- Discuss strategies for handling student problems and requests

COURSE WEB SITE:
Our course activities will be conducted using Moodle, a course management system that allows for information sharing, communication, and assignment submissions. All the materials you need to
complete the course can be found on our Moodle site. To access Moodle, log in to your MYU portal page (https://www.myu.umn.edu/) using you U of MN internet ID and password, click the “My Courses and Teaching” tab, and then click the “Moodle Site Link” under GRAD 8200 Section 001.

COURSE READINGS:
You’ll find resources for each of the Episodes by following the links in the Episode’s text block. These resources will help you think and write about the issues raised in our course. You should look at each of the resources to see what they contain, reading carefully those that seem most useful and interesting to you.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE INSTRUCTOR AND OTHER STUDENTS:
To contact the instructor, just email or phone directly using the contact information listed at the top of the syllabus. You can expect a reply within 24 hours Monday through Friday.

If you want to communicate with other students in the class privately, use email. Email addresses can be found by clicking on a student’s name in a forum post or by clicking the “Participants” link in the right navigation bar.

We will use a course mailing list for general announcements and course-related communication. You will be automatically subscribed to the list. The most appropriate use of the mailing list is for announcements and to share resources with one another; feel free to use it for that purpose.

Please note that all course-related announcements will be sent to your U of MN email account; if you use another account, please set it so that U of MN email is automatically forwarded. Please check your U of MN email account daily if you don’t already.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME AS AN INSTRUCTOR:
I am a student-centered teacher, and as such my primary responsibility is to foster an instructional environment in which learning can thrive. I don’t believe that the best way to achieve this goal is by simply transmitting information to you. Students must be actively engaged with the material and each other in order for deep learning to occur. Thus, I conceive my role in this course as facilitator—one who encourages students to contribute, providing the opportunity for them to interact with one another and build a community as they construct knowledge together. A facilitator fosters dialog in which everyone participates and offers feedback to support student development.

Our conversations with one another will occur mainly in the Discussion Forums for each Episode. Generally I prefer to remain in the background of those discussions, reading the posts and chiming in to prompt replies to the questions and issues raised. It’s been my experience over the years that the students themselves are the best resources in this course, and I want to give the floor to you. I believe this practice encourages a more lively dialog between students (with each serving as expert) rather than a one way exchange of information (from instructor to student).

I am eager to assist your development as an instructor, so feel free to contact me if you want to discuss any issues raised further.

ASSIGNMENTS:
Discussion Postings:
Within each of the four Episodes, you’ll compose regular, brief postings. These consist of your response to prompts within an Episode’s various scenes. You will also participate in “roundtable discussions” which require you to synthesize and respond to the ideas raised by your classmates. I encourage and expect that you will pose questions, ideas, and observations in our discussion forums and that you respond to the questions and observations of others.

My goal for our discussions is a discursive give-and-take that affords you an opportunity to process the material we’re reading actively and deeply while at the same time allows you to interact with and
learn from your classmates. Such online forums are engaging, interesting, and dynamic. When done well, they make online learning exciting and immersive, and it’s our responsibility as participants in this course to make sure that our discussions rise to this level. Posting due dates can be found in the course calendar.

Syllabus:
The following writing assignments are meant to help you draft a syllabus for a course you expect to teach. In order to complete these assignments, read the articles found in the “Course Design” section of the “Effective Teaching: Resources for Instructors” (Episode 1). You’ll find further information about how to construct a syllabus for your field of study in the resource titled “Course Syllabus Issues” (Episode 1). Feel free also to consult the Center for Teaching and Learning online syllabus tutorial: http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/syllabus/index.html.

Note that in addition to submitting the assignments below you will also be required to participate in peer review of a classmate’s syllabus draft after each submission.

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**SYLLABUS ASSIGNMENT**

1. Imagine a course you would like to teach. Create the following pieces of the syllabus for that course:
   - course description
   - goals and objectives
   - expectations of students

Post your draft as a Word document in the “Syllabus Draft 1” forum found in the “Assignment Submission” text block. To do so, create a new message in the forum and attach your syllabus to it. **DUE: October 17.**

2. Develop the body of your syllabus by creating the following:
   - assignment descriptions
   - assessment descriptions
   - grading section (Make sure to include a statement about what and how you will communicate with students about grades, a statement about how you will handle grading complaints, and a statement of how you will handle plagiarism / academic dishonesty.)
   - overall course structure and calendar (Note: for purposes of this assignment you don’t have to provide a complete reading schedule—i.e., noting articles and chapters from text books for each class session—unless you want to. A brief sketch of the topics covered and their sequence is enough.)

Post your draft as a Word document in the “Syllabus Draft 2” forum found in the “Assignment Submission” text block. **DUE: November 7.**

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**Teaching Philosophy:**
A teaching philosophy is not only a personal statement reflecting your beliefs about teaching; it is also a statement that illustrates how you put your beliefs into practice by discussing concrete examples of what you do (or anticipate doing) in the classroom. Teaching philosophies typically run
The Teaching Philosophy assignment consists of the following submissions:

**TEACHING PHILOSOPHY ASSIGNMENT**

1. First Draft of the Teaching Philosophy: Post your draft as a Word document in the “Teaching Philosophy Draft 1” forum found in the “Assignment Submission” text block. To do so, create a new message in the forum and attach your teaching philosophy to it. **DUE: November 21.**

2. Teaching Philosophy Peer Review: You will be assigned a partner and will provide substantive, constructive feedback on his/her teaching philosophy. A rubric for this activity will be provided. Your comments should be attached in a reply to the author’s original post in the “Teaching Philosophy Draft 1” forum. **DUE: November 28.**

3. Polished Teaching Philosophy
The final draft revised based on readers' comments and review of resources. Post your draft in the “Assignment Submission” text block. **DUE: December 5.**

**ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICIES:**
Ensure that Discussion Postings, Teaching Philosophy, and Syllabus assignments are submitted no later than 12:00 midnight Central Time on the due date noted on your syllabus. Check back after the posting is due to view what your classmates have posted.

Thoughtful posts and responses to classmates’ posts ensure that all will benefit from this course. Your comments should be substantive and reflect comprehension and thoughtful consideration of the issues raised. To achieve this in an online environment, make your posts clear and concise, respond to specific points, offer ideas and examples. Draw from your own experience as an instructor or your observations and experiences as a learner.

Comments need not be lengthy, but posts of less than a few hundred words are rarely substantive enough to reflect serious thought on the part of the writer or to elicit a meaningful response from the reader. Posts such as “Hello,” “I agree,” and “great stuff!” are not sufficient and do not satisfy the requirements of the assignment. Use proper English (grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation) in your postings and observe the rules of considerate academic discourse.

Regular participation in an online class is important to success—both for yourself and your classmates. It’s important that you keep up with the posting schedule. If you fall behind it becomes very difficult to catch up. Don’t wait until the deadline to submit your postings, especially in cases where others are asked to respond to your work. It’s a good idea to submit your postings as early as you can and check back frequently to see what other classmates have added to the discussion.

**GRADING:**
GRAD 8200 uses a contract grading system in which participants decide for themselves at the beginning of the term whether they would like to work for a grade of A or B. Participants will complete a grade contract by the second week of the term committing to their choice and must complete all assignments satisfactorily to earn the grade option they choose. Note that if a student’s work is of insufficient quality to merit the grade contracted for, the instructor will revise the student’s contract downward (from A to B, or from B to C). See the performance expectations below for the level of work expected for different grades.
In addition to completing all assignments mentioned previously, those contacting for an A will do two extra assignments: 1) a syllabus review assignment due September 26 & October 3 and 2) an extra roundtable discussion assignment due November 14 & November 21. Descriptions of these assignments will be posted on the Moodle course site.

Students often choose a contract of A or B based on their other commitments during the term and the amount of time they can devote to GRAD 8200. Students contacting for a B can expect to spend approximately 50 hours on the course over the semester; those contracting for an A can expect to spend an extra 10-15 hours.

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**PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADES:**

A = Completed more than 95% of posts (including Assignment discussions and reviews of other students’ work) on time and in a thoughtful manner. Discussion participation and quality of posts were exemplary, markedly contributing to a dynamic learning environment. Participated actively in the discussion forums, including roundtable forums, contributing well beyond the required Assignments by posing questions and responding to the prompts of others. Teaching Philosophy and Syllabus drafts are submitted on time. Peer review comments are of high quality and show a careful, professional reading of the peer’s work. Final teaching philosophy statement is of high quality and reflects adherence to the rubric given. Syllabus is of high quality.

B = Completed 90% of posts (including Assignment discussions and reviews of other students’ work) on time and in a thoughtful manner. Some submissions were late and completed after the deadline. Discussion participation and quality of posts were acceptable (e.g., participated in the discussion and roundtable forums, but rarely went beyond the required postings and so did not play a significant role in shaping the class discourse.) Teaching Philosophy and Syllabus drafts are submitted on time. Peer review comments are acceptable but somewhat shallow, showing a less than thoughtful reading of the peer’s work. Final teaching philosophy assignment is of acceptable quality and reflects adherence to the rubric given. Syllabus is of acceptable quality.
C = Completed fewer than 90% of posts (including Assignment discussions and reviews of other students’ work), many in a perfunctory or less than thoughtful manner. Posts and assignment submissions were occasionally or frequently late. Discussion participation and quality was below an acceptable level (e.g., posts were brief and showed little true engagement of the issues, while engagement with other students beyond the required postings was unacceptable or nonexistent). Teaching Philosophy and Syllabus were completed, but the quality is low and much revision is still needed. Peer review comments were perfunctory and shallow, showing little effort to meaningfully critique the peer’s work, while the student’s own teaching philosophy and syllabus show little or no revision improvement from draft to draft.

F = Completed fewer than 75% of posts (including Assignment discussions and reviews of other students’ work), most often in a perfunctory or less than thoughtful manner. Posts and assignment submissions were frequently late. Discussion participation and quality was well below an acceptable level (e.g., posts were brief and showed little true engagement of the issues, while engagement with other students beyond the required postings was unacceptable or nonexistent). Failed to complete some additional writing or peer review assignments. The writing assignments completed fall well below the level expected of graduate work.

NOTE: The nature of this course is such that the work in it cannot easily be made up at a later date. For this reason, I do not readily grant incompletes. If you are having trouble completing the course, please contact me for a meeting as soon as possible.

COURSE POLICIES:
It is expected that all students will behave professionally and with respect to one another in their course communications. Failure to do so may result in grade penalties.

For a complete list of university policies—including academic dishonesty, accommodations for students with disabilities, student conduct, and sexual harassment—see http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/SYLLABUSREQUIREMENTS_APPA.html
ORIENTATION TO COURSE AND WEB TOOLS
SEPTEMBER 4 – 7

Read the Welcome Letter (sent by email to your U of MN account on September 4) and complete the tasks outlined in it by September 7.

EPISODE 1 “GETTING STARTED”
SEPTEMBER 7 – SEPTEMBER 26

By Sept. 12: Read: Episode 1: Scenes 1-5
Post: Scene 4: Assignment 1
       Scene 5: Assignment 1

By Sept. 19: Read: Episode 1: Scene 6
              Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
Post:       Scene 6: Assignment 1
              Roundtable Discussion Post 1

By Sept. 26: Read: Episode 1: Scene 7-8
              Read your classmates’ posts and Roundtable Discussion from the previous week
Post:       Scene 7: Assignment 1
              Scene 8: Assignment 1 & 2
              Roundtable Discussion Post 2
              Syllabus Review Activity—A Contract Only

EPISODE 2 “DURING THE TERM”
SEPTEMBER 26 – OCTOBER 24

By Oct. 3: Read: Episode 2: Scenes 1-3
            Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
Post:       Scene 2: Assignment 1 & 2
            Scene 3: Assignment 1
            Syllabus Review Activity Part 2—A Contract Only

By Oct. 10: Read: Episode 2: Scenes 4-7
            Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
Post:       Scene 4: Assignment 1
            Scene 5: Assignment 1 & 2
            Scene 7: Assignment 1
            Roundtable Discussion Post 1
By Oct. 17:  Read:  Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
Post:  Syllabus Draft 1 in Assignment Submission text block
        Roundtable Discussion Post 2

By Oct. 24:  Read:  Carefully review your peer review partner’s Syllabus Draft 1
Post:  Read Roundtable Discussion posts
        Post review comments on your partner’s Syllabus Draft 1 by replying to
        his/her original message
        Post midterm self-evaluation

**EPISODE 3 “END OF TERM”**
**OCTOBER 24 – NOVEMBER 14**

By Oct. 31:  Read:  Episode 3, Scenes 1-5
Post:  Scene 2: Assignment 1
        Scene 4: Assignment 1
        Scene 5: Assignment 1

By Nov. 7:  Read:  Episode 3: Scenes 6-9
Post:  Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
        Scene 6: Assignment 1 & 2
        Scene 8: Assignment 1
        Scene 9: Assignment 1
        Syllabus Draft 2 in Assignment Submission text block

By Nov. 14:  Read:  Carefully review your peer review partner’s Syllabus Draft 2
Post:  Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
        Post review comments on your partner’s Syllabus Draft 2
        *Roundtable Discussion Post 1—A Contract Only*

**EPISODE 4 “BEYOND SURVIVAL”**
**NOVEMBER 14 – DECEMBER 5**

By Nov. 21:  Read:  Review “Writing Your Teaching Philosophy” resources (Episode 4)
Post:  Teaching Philosophy Draft 1 in Assignment Submission text block
        *Roundtable Discussion Post 2—A Contract Only*

By Nov. 28:  Read:  Episode 4: Scenes 1-4
Post:  Carefully review your peer review partner’s Teaching Philosophy
        Draft 1
        Scene 3: Assignment 1
        Review your partner’s Teaching Philosophy Draft 1 by replying to
        his/her original post

By Dec. 5:  Read:  Read your classmates’ posts from the previous week
Post: Final Draft of Teaching Philosophy
       Final Course Evaluation

All Teaching Philosophy Statements will be returned with instructor comments on or before
December 20