EDST 404 (1): Ethics and Teaching

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The professional standards that educators in British Columbia are expected to meet include many ethical concepts, such as “care,” “trust,” “honesty” and “integrity.” However, what does a “caring relationship” look like, and how can educators balance the demands of fairness with the demands of care? What other ethical dilemmas do educators face, and based on what ethical principles or other grounds do they make decisions in such situations?

This course explores the “codes of ethics” prescribed by professional organizations, then moves beyond these codes to consider ethics as ethos or disposition. Students will be asked to examine their moral values, where these values come from, and how they reconcile these values with professional demands in concrete situations. Through this examination students will gain insight into what they, as teachers, stand for and how they conceive of their role as agents of positive change.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
At the end of this course, students will be able to:
• identify the relevant laws and policies that frame the teaching profession in BC in general, and expectations of professional conduct in particular;
• recognize how education systems reflect social values;
• appreciate that ethical questions arise not occasionally but continuously in the practice of teaching;
• articulate values that guide their own ethical framework for teaching;
• understand how different approaches to moral education themselves reflect different values.

COURSE OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 1 (3 hrs): Ethical Inquiries into Educational Situations and Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
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| **Guiding Questions** | • When and where do ethical questions arise in teachers’ practice?  
| | • What ethical dilemmas have you faced in your practicum?  
<p>| | • What other ethical dilemmas do you anticipate facing in your practice? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Possible Readings</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guiding Questions</td>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>When Ethics and Law Disagree: A Case Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>Guiding Questions</td>
<td>• What have teachers done when their professional values have been at odds with the educational laws and policies?</td>
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➋ http://bctf.ca/fsa.aspx |

**Unit 2 (3 hrs): Ethical Frameworks**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Introduction to Ethics</th>
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| Guiding Questions | • What is a “good” person and how do we decide what the right thing to do is?  
• How have people in different times and places answered this question? |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Ethical Purposes for Education</th>
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| Guiding Questions | • How do our ethical frameworks shape education?  
• What are the different basic values that different ethical frameworks put first (e.g., Brighouse’s liberal emphasis on individual autonomy vs. Noddings’ emphasis on caring relationships) |
http://www.jstor.org/stable/1085252  
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/social_resp.htm |
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Ethics and Social/Ecological Justice</th>
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| Guiding Questions | • How is education connected to the larger questions of justice in society and the world?  
• How might education look different if we adopted different values (e.g., Singer’s utilitarian emphasis on equality and the reduction of suffering)? |

**Unit 3 (3 hrs): Laws, Codes of Ethics, and Professional Conduct**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>The Legal Context of Teaching in BC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Questions</td>
<td>• What are the relevant laws that frame the teaching profession in BC?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Professional Conduct and its Grey Areas</th>
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| Guiding Questions | • What is professional conduct?  
• How do ideas about professional conduct change?  
• What should teachers do if their personal values conflict with the requirements of professional conduct? |
| Possible | ☑ Coulter, D. et al. (2007). A question of judgment: A response to Standards for |
**Readings**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Professional Conduct in the Digital Age</th>
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<td><strong>Guiding Questions</strong></td>
<td>- How do digital technologies create new questions and challenges for teachers’ professionalism?</td>
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**Unit 4 (3 hrs): Moral Education**

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Virtues and Character Education</th>
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| **Guiding Questions** | - What is “character education” and why is it so popular in schools today?  
- What are the critiques of character education? |

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Compassion and Empathy</th>
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<td><strong>Guiding Questions</strong></td>
<td>- (How) can compassion and empathy be taught?</td>
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</table>
**Possible Readings**  

**Topic**  
Benefits and Risks of Service Learning

**Guiding Questions**  
- What is “service learning” and who benefit(s) from it?

**Possible Readings**  

**COURSE ASSESSMENT**

The course is graded on a pass/fail basis. In a professional faculty, passing a course entails both good academic performance as well as active participation in learning activities. Students are expected to meet all criteria to receive a passing mark in the course. In cases where students fail to meet expected standards, they will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit the written assignment. There is one assignment for this course. Students can choose from among the two options described below.

1. Write an ethical dilemma that you have faced or believe you may come to face in your teaching practice. In analyzing the dilemma, make reference to the different responses to it that various ethical frameworks would suggest.

2. Identify and explain three core values that inform your teaching, analyze how you came to hold these values, and give examples of how these would translate to your practice. In reflecting on and anticipating your practice, identify particular approaches to moral education that fit well and not so well with the core values you have identified.

**Assessment criteria for the written assignment:**

*Pass:* (1) readable (well organized; concise, proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors); (2) provides examples; (3) makes a clear argument (e.g., supports claims, makes clear transitions); (4) highlights an important educational issue; and (5) includes your insights and conclusions.

*Fail:* (1) contains recurring errors of grammar, spelling, and punctuation; (2) lacks examples; (3) lacks transitions between thoughts or fails to make an argument; and (4) fails to address an important educational issue.
POSSIBLE READINGS

NB: Please note that more readings are listed here and in the outline than should be assigned each week. Instructors of the course should make a selection of these readings, in order to achieve a student workload appropriate for a 1-credit course.


http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/social_resp.htm

http://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/Standards/StandardsDevelopment.aspx

BC Teachers Federation. *Code of Ethics*.
http://bctf.ca/ProfessionalResponsibility.aspx?id=4292

BC Teachers Federation. (n.d.) *Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA).*
http://bctf.ca/fsa.aspx


ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES


- http://digitaltattoo.ubc.ca/

- http://www.rootsofempathy.org/

- http://www.seedsofempathy.org/


- Community Service Learning at UBC. http://csl.ubc.ca/csl.html

- Satirical parody “Nice white lady,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVF-nirSq5s
RELATION TO THE BC MINISTRY OF EDUCATION STANDARDS
The readings, class discussions and assignments in this course primarily contribute to teacher candidates’ attainment of Standard 2: Educators are role models who act ethically and honestly. The course helps teacher candidates understand the education system in BC and the law as it relates to their duties. Second, it helps them reflect upon what it means to act “ethically” from different perspectives on ethics. Third, it helps them appreciate how ethical decisions saturate the practice of teaching, and how teachers are expected to be ethical role models both within and outside of the school.