**Teaching Philosophy Assignment[[1]](#footnote-1)\***

**Assignment and Rationale:** Many of you need to have a statement of teaching philosophy prepared as you move into student teaching. This assignment will prepare you for that requirement and will also allow us to consider important questions in teaching English—the who/why/where/how/what/when of it. It’s likely that the questions we’ve been considering together in your pen pal letters and class discussion might influence your thinking.

Although your teaching philosophy will undoubtedly be modified and refined over time, there is much value in making a statement of your beliefs at the beginning of EDUC463. Doing so will allow you to establish a baseline of your attitudes so that you can trace how they might change or be reinforced throughout the semester. In addition, the act of teaching will undoubtedly affect your philosophy. But the goal for this assignment is to state what you can right now, today, and then plan to be flexible.

**Content**: To some extent, a teaching philosophy is personal in that you are talking about what *you* believe. However, it is often written for a public audience, even one that has some power over your future in terms of student teaching or hiring.

Here’s a useful definition of the genre. As you think about the content, you may want to include some of the elements Van Note Chism identifies:

*A Philosophy of Teaching Statement is a brief reflective essay concerning one's understanding about how students learn, how instruction can best assist that learning, and actions that you take to enact such instruction. It may also include your teaching goals, your learning goals for students, and areas in which you would like to further improve your teaching abilities.* (Nancy Van Note Chism. 1998. "Developing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement." *Essays on Teaching Excellence.* 9 (3). Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.)

Regardless of the elements you choose to include, this is the question I will be asking in determining whether or not the content of your teaching philosophy is sufficient:

***Does the content of this teaching philosophy illuminate, in concise terms,***

***the elemental personal beliefs (the non-negotiables) that will guide this person’s teaching?***

**Format:** Your teaching philosophy should be *no longer than one page single-spaced* in a font *no smaller than 10 pt.* Larger font (11 or 12-pt.) is better because ultimately, your teaching philosophy is likely to be read quickly by teachers and administrators who are sifting through a stack of applications in order to determine whether or not you are a good fit for their school. Your writing must demonstrate impeccable grammar, mechanics, and usage. You cannot proofread enough. This does not mean that you cannot “break the rules” for stylistic reasons, but again, you need to consider your audience—school administrators and teachers.

**Audiences:** Your immediate audiences are your colleagues (i.e., your classmates and me). Your distant audiences are the teachers and/or administrator who have the power to decide if you will teach in their school. Thus you need to think about what is important to a person in such a position—ability to work with others in the department or school, confidence or self-assurance that will indicate ability to learn to control a class, willingness to learn, and so forth. In addition, that person will want to be sure that you know your content and are likely to be able to teach it.

**Grading and Due Dates**

I will evaluate content based on thoughtfulness, clarity, precision, and its appropriateness as public statement for the audiences described above. I will evaluate format based on length and adherence to the conventions of Standard American English. See the scoring guide for details. Observe the following due dates:

1. A substantial draft is ready to workshop on **Mon., 1/27.** Bring two hard copies of the draft for workshopping.
2. A revised final hard copy, *including your conference response form*, is **due inclass on** in class on **Mon., 2/3**.

1. \* This assignment sheet draws heavily on Louann Reid’s example. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)