AESC 4920 Service Learning

Project FOCUS

(Fostering Our Community’s Understanding of Science)

Course Syllabus

Fall 2006

COURSE CREDITS – 3 Hours

Also available as AESC 6920

OVERVIEW

This course is designed to facilitate a partnership between area school districts and the University of Georgia. Students enrolled in this course will spend significant time in a local elementary school assisting a classroom teacher in science instruction. From this, the following goals are sought:

- Improve the science experiences and science content knowledge of elementary students in the UGA area through relevant and hands-on science instruction
- Increase awareness among elementary students about career opportunities related to agricultural and environmental sciences
- Provide experiences for students and teachers that will bring about more positive attitudes about science
- Improve the content knowledge and confidence of local elementary teachers and foster sustained, positive changes in how they approach science
- Develop a sense of community involvement for UGA students that will continue after graduation
- Promote science knowledge in a positive way to the elementary students and teachers who work with the UGA students
- Enhance the communication and leadership skills of UGA students

Your participation in this program is what will allow these goals to be met.

Contacts

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COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Your requirements in the program are as follows:

Spending time at the school

Prompt Contact

You are expected to start your work at the school the week of August 21. This first week your 3 hour requirement will be filled a bit differently than in other weeks. This will involve meeting your teacher and at least two hours of observing your teacher’s classroom. You and your teacher will need to plan the activities you will be doing the following week.

Students must devote a minimum of six hours each week to elementary activities. This may include planning, preparing, commuting, and facilitating in the classroom. A minimum of three of those six hours must be in the classroom team-teaching science. Your partnering teacher will assess you based on your effort, reliability, professionalism, and ability to communicate ideas.

Please note you are expected to have 40 contact hours with students and your teacher over 13 weeks. This is roughly 3 hours a week. If you are forced to miss a scheduled time in the classroom, you must contact your teacher and also will need to arrange make up hours accordingly.
Reflection Groups
Students meet weekly with a group of fellow students led by educators and/or scientists. During these meetings, students will receive help with science lesson ideas and experiments, discuss experiences, get introduced to “hot topics” in science education, and most importantly support each other.

Journal Entries
Students submit journal entries according to the schedule provided (roughly one/week). It is expected to be thoughtful and reflective. There will be questions assigned to guide your first journal entry and your summary reflection.

GRADING
Everyone in this course starts with the grade of ‘A’. To sustain that grade, all you need to do is complete the following:

1. Facilitate science lessons in your elementary classroom a minimum of 3 hours per week for 13 weeks at the school. Your work on these lessons should indicate to the students and your partner teacher that you have prepared extensively for your teaching time in the classroom.
2. Attend and participate in 12 of 13 reflection sessions. **You are expected to be punctual and courteous at all times, AND STAY FOR THE DURATION OF THE MEETING.**
3. Make a presentation about project FOCUS to a UGA student group.
4. Submit 10 of possible eleven reflective journals on time.
5. Submit reflective summary of experience on time.
6. Receive excellent evaluations from your teacher-partner.
7. Make a best lesson presentation to other FOCUS participants.
8. As required, complete requirements for receiving honors or graduate credit.

GRADE APPORTIONMENT:
Teacher evaluation 30%
Reflective Journals 20%
Reflection Sessions 20%
Summary Reflection 10%
Overall Professionalism and Participation 15%
Best Lesson Presentation 2.5%
UGA Club Presentation 2.5%

SAMPLE TEACHER EVALUATION
Spring 2006 Teachers’ Science Partner Evaluation Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science Partner’s Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Signature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity Names/topic

Rating Scale:
*Please note, the partner is a college student with a science background, but is not a trained teacher.*
4=Excellent (overall outstanding job)
3=Good (performed well in the classroom)
2=Average (acceptable but could improve)
1=Poor (showed minimal effort)
• Arrived at scheduled times
• Dressed appropriately
• Follows school policies and procedures

Preparation 12 Possible Points
• Knowledge of science content area
• Organized appropriately
  _ Had materials ready by scheduled time

Teaching 8 Possible Points
• Promoted learning of science skills through hands-on and inquiry
• Asked students open-ended questions and encouraged them to ask questions

Interaction with children 12 Possible Points
• Communication with students
• Moved around the room/interacted with all students and student groups
• Responsive to student questions

Teaching Plans 8 Possible Points
• Collaborated with you and had approval for activity
  _ Content relevant to QCC

You will have 3 evaluations at 52 points each. These will be totaled at the end of the semester to determine this 30% of your final grade.

A = 141-156 points
B = 125-140 points
C = 109-124 points

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
You are responsible for submitting a Reflective Journal Entry according to the organizational calendar. These entries must be turned in at the start of the reflection meetings. Please include the journal number on all submissions. All entries are to be typed. Additionally, you will submit one Summary of Experience at the end of the semester. Guiding questions will be provided to help you structure the final summary.

WEEKLY REFLECTIVE JOURNAL FORMAT
You should discuss your experiences in the classroom through your reflective journals. Some weeks the instructor will provide you with a specific journal prompt. Otherwise the journals may be written using the following questions as a guideline. Type at least 1 page, single-spaced.

1. What significant learning events happened in your science classroom this week?
2. What caused them to happen?
3. What do you think about these occurrences? How do they affect you?
4. What was your role and what was your teacher’s role in the science lesson?
5. How is your presence benefiting the learning environment?
6. What are some difficulties in the process of schooling?

You may focus on:
• How the children responded to your hands-on activity
• How the children interacted with you, the teacher and each other
• The children’s attitudes toward the experiment or activity
• How the teacher felt about and reacted to the experiment or activity
• Anything you have gained from the experience

You are expected to be thoughtful at all times. If for some reason you cannot or do not teach during the week, you still must submit a journal explaining the situation.

Of the 11 possible weekly journal entries, you are required to submit 10. These will be rated on a five point scale according to thoroughness and thoughtfulness and will determine 20% of your final grade.
SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE FORMAT
After ten or eleven weeks of experience teaching, take a look back at your journal entries (you should have saved these) and think about the changes you have helped make and witnessed in your children, teacher and yourself. We will provide questions to help guide this reflection closer to the end of term. We expect these to be about 3 single spaced pages in length.

WEEKLY REFLECTION SESSIONS
You are required to attend 10 of the 11 reflection sessions you scheduled in Oasis. Your requirements here are to be on time and willing to participate. Your grade for this portion counts 20% and will be determined by the number of sessions you attend and participate in.
NOTE: Attendance implies your presence at the entire session!

UGA CLUB PRESENTATION
Near the end of the semester you are expected to make a short presentation of your work in FOCUS to one of the UGA student club meetings. This does not have to be lengthy, but should inform your peers of what we are accomplishing at the school and your reaction to working there. Ideally, this will work as somewhat of a recruitment tool for the following semester. You will need to turn in an artifact (handout, brochure, etc) of this presentation to your reflection group leader. This 2.5% of your grade is an all-or-nothing area. We will speak more about this toward the midpoint of the semester.

Best Lesson Presentation
During the semester, you will choose a favorite lesson you have taught at the elementary school. In a 5 minute presentation you will share this lesson with other FOCUS students, and you will provide them with a one page hand out, following a sample lesson plan we will provide you, that explains the principles behind the activity as well as how to implement it in a classroom. Your presentation should be lively and engaging, and your handout should make it very easy for other FOCUS students to utilize your lesson plan. These pages will later be incorporated into the online lesson collection on Web CT as well as a resource website for teachers. These presentations will occur over several reflection sessions around the midpoint of the semester.

Overall Professionalism and Participation
This 15% of your grade comprises an assessment of your professionalism and participation by Dr. Knauf and your TA. This assessment will be based on your punctuality, attendance, and participation in reflection sessions, timely completion of assignments, and our communication with your partner teacher regarding your preparation, conduct, and representation of FOCUS and UGA. This may seem non-descript, but if you are in danger of losing points in this area we will be sure to meet with you and point out any areas in which you need to improve.

Graduate Credit
See the instructor to discuss possible projects that will suffice to earn graduate credit for the course. These will be due on or before December 7.