

# **ELPA 901: Seminar on Reflective Practice in Higher, Post-Secondary, and Continuing Education**

Spring 2008

Thursday, 4:40-7:15PM

1158 Educational Sciences Building

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**Please Note:** The background on ELPA 901 is that I plan to offer on a regular basis an ELPA course on developing a personal philosophy for educational leadership in higher, post-secondary, and continuing education. The 901 course is *not* that course; 901 is intended to provide participants with a solid introduction to the topic but, in the spirit of learner-centered instruction, it will also be an opportunity for several students to work with me on the development of the course to be offered in the future.

This seminar will be a unique opportunity to learn about the value of philosophy for reflective professional practice, clarify our views about critical philosophical and ethical issues in the field, help shape a new course in the department, and learn about course development as well. My hope is that some of the participants will go on to take the new course when it is offered in Spring of 2009.

Please join me in creating a course that will make a significant contribution to the ELPA program.

-Curt Olson

## **Nature of the Course**

All educators--whether they be faculty, deans, principals, docents, corporate trainers, instructional designers, clinical preceptors, or ESL tutors—have a philosophy of education. What varies is the extent to which that philosophy has been made the subject of critical self-reflection. Reflection is a key component in making one's views explicit, clearly articulated, and supported by a well-developed rationale. This seminar embraces the view that philosophy (or perhaps, "thinking philosophically") can be more than an abstract exercise with little relevance to the everyday issues and challenges of educational practice. By emphasizing the connections with reflective practice, philosophy can also make an important contribution to improving professional practice.

In this seminar, students and the instructor will collaborate to explore the relationship of philosophy to educational leadership in various settings (e.g., how it can serve to improve practice), read what various authors have said on the topic, and consider how to make a course on developing a personal philosophy relevant to the goals, issues, and challenges of practicing educators. Participants will draw on their knowledge, experiences, and relevant literature to assist in the development of the syllabus for the new course. This will include identifying the

purpose, target audience, rationale, goals and objectives, content, structure, learning activities, readings, textbooks, standards/criteria for grading, and a strategy for marketing the course.

## **Course Structure**

The semester will be divided into three main phases, roughly equal in length. The **first third** of course will be devoted to establishing a shared understanding of the topic area through directed reading and in-class activities. The **second third** of the course will consist of a student-led exploration of various aspects of the course being planned. In this phase, students will have an opportunity to contribute in ways that align with their own interests and individual differences. Each student will investigate and report on two topics--one related to the *content* of the course (e.g., different perspectives on forms of knowledge relevant to professional practice) and the other related to the course *design* (e.g., grading of assignments). The **third and final phase** of the course will focus on development of a draft of the syllabus, obtaining feedback from key stakeholders, and assembling a course reader. Attention will also be given to planning to obtain approval of the course and implementation. Students will also be encouraged to consider what they have learned over the semester and reflect on how those insights might be incorporated into their educational practice.

## **Syllabus**

A syllabus for this seminar is being developed and will be available by December 15. If you have any questions about this course, please do not hesitate contact me at 265-8025.