

## **PSYC 400 - Applied Research in Higher Education**

### **Seminar instructor:**

Jill Atkinson, PhD. [Jill.atkinson@queensu.ca](mailto:Jill.atkinson@queensu.ca)

Office hours by email appointment

### **Practicum instructor:**

Meghan Norris, PhD. [UGchair.psyc@queensu.ca](mailto:UGchair.psyc@queensu.ca)

### **Class hours:**

Wed 3:30-5:30 HUM 223 seminar

Fri 9:30-11:00 HUM 131 practicum

Thanks go to Dr. Joe Kim at McMaster University for his mentorship and generosity. This course was modeled after one of his.

### **Course description**

The goal of this course is to introduce you to the scholarship and practice of teaching. In this course, we will explore what it means to be a scholarly teacher, how pedagogy research informs educational practice, and how people effectively learn complex information. The theoretical elements will be explored through journal readings, critiques, small group and class wide discussions. The practical elements of the course will include delivering mini workshops and weekly teaching practica.

The presentation and group facilitation skills gained in class as well as the teaching skills honed through weekly teaching practica will not only benefit you in consolidating your own understanding of applied educational psychology and psychology in general, but will also provide you with practical skills and experience that will benefit you in future coursework as well as in volunteer and paid employment. A high level of active participation, reading, writing and constructive peer feedback is critical to success in the theoretical and practical components of this course. Upon successful completion of PSYC 400, you will be eligible to apply for a position as a TA in PSYC 100B during the winter term.

Each year that this course has been offered, student feedback has been critical to informing changes made to the content or structure of the course. Throughout this syllabus, I have incorporated some of the comments I have received from past students through USAT and instructor-designed evaluations, both to provide you with some of the rationale for different course components and to demonstrate my continued commitment to improving the learning experience in this course. One past student suggested that we *“improve the syllabus so that it's more clear, effective, and easy to follow – with this class having a lot of assignments and deadlines, it would alleviate a lot of stress and confusion.”* Below I have attempted to do just that, so please take the time to review this information carefully.

## Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of, this course, you will be able to:

### *Knowledge/Understanding*

- critically evaluate applied educational research
- explain how people learn complex information
- identify and describe effective teaching strategies
- identify and describe the principles of effective course design

### *Teaching Skills*

- demonstrate competency in active teaching strategies
- evaluate and recommend strategies for improvement to learning sessions for undergraduate students by actively contributing to instructional team

### *Learning/Reflective Skills*

- identify your assumptions about teaching and learning and describe how and why they have changed over the semester
- reflect on your teaching skills, integrating peer and instructor feedback
- cooperate with, and enhance the learning of, others through active involvement and by providing constructive feedback to peers in a nonjudgmental manner

## Course format

The first 2 hour seminar each week will be made up of two components: student facilitated discussions of educational research based upon journal readings (or, in other words, small-group discussions), and instructional strategy ‘mini-workshops’. The Friday practicum session will be devoted planning for PSYC 100 learning labs with all facilitators, both undergraduate and graduate (9:30-11:00). During this session, you will be applying what you have learned in the seminar as well as using that knowledge to evaluate the PSYC 100 leaning labs.

There will be no lectures; instead, you will be responsible for learning the material by completing readings in advance then discussing them in class. Although some students may find this format daunting at first, in our experience (and in past students’ experiences, see below) this structure best fosters active learning and meaningful engagement with the course material. *“The structure of the course was excellent, having peer instruction and presentations as well as the class-wide discussions and small group discussions. I felt prepared for class, the readings really contributed to my understanding of the material. My ability to think critically and deeply about materials was improved through the small and open nature of the course.”* In addition, you will participate in a Teaching Triangle to observe and provide feedback to two partners and to learn from their feedback (more details below under Evaluation Details).

## Workload

This is a six unit course and thus you can expect to devote approximately 18 hours per week to it during the fall term, with approximately six hours of contact time, several hours devoted to reading and thinking about the research literature and then completing your weekly assignment, a few hours preparing for, and marking, your two lab sections and finally, pockets of time to work on the bigger assignments. I strongly encourage you not to take more than three other courses.

## Readings

A list of readings and resources is posted on OnQ. You must complete the assigned readings before class each week and upload assigned preparatory work to OnQ before class (or bring a hard copy with you to class). Past students identified this prep work as something they really valued in the course: “*The assigned work made sure group members were familiar with the content and elevated the calibre of our discourse.*” Yet we also received feedback from past years that students would like “*other ways to interact with the readings than annotated bibliographies,*” and thus these assignments will have some variety. They will include annotated bibliographies as well as assignments like thought papers, active reading activities (e.g., a set of questions to work through), and knowledge translation activities (e.g., creating an infographic or poster). On certain weeks, you will be assigned the role of facilitator and your prep work will be to submit questions and prompts that demonstrate how you will ensure that your group thinks critically about the theories and research.

## Evaluation

<b>Knowledge</b>		<b>50%</b>
Journal Readings (weekly prep work)	25%	
Final exam	25%	
<b>Application/Teaching Skills</b>		<b>35%</b>
Learning Lab Evaluation	15%	
Instructional Strategy ‘mini workshop’	15%	
Teaching Triangle	5%	
<b>Participation/Reflective Skills</b>		<b>15%</b>
Peer Evaluation	5%	
Journal	10%	

***If you miss any component of the assessment, please provide an appropriate reason IN ADVANCE if possible and we will discuss how best to accommodate.***

## Academic Integrity

It is important for all of us to promote academic integrity at Queen’s. This is achieved by coming prepared to class, contributing your ideas, treating your classmates, fellow TAs, instructors and staff with respect, and submitting only your own work, while acknowledging where you have relied on others’ ideas and/or words. In return, Meghan and I will do our best to provide an interesting and challenging course and to provide the support necessary for you to fully understand the material and prepare for your learning labs. Any lapse of academic integrity is taken very seriously. These may include any act or failure to act in a way that may result in unearned academic credit or advantage, such as plagiarism and improper collaboration. In your role as a lab facilitator, *nonacademic* integrity includes behaving professionally with your students and arriving promptly to all of your labs (or making alternate arrangements when needing to be absent). Departures from academic integrity can result in penalties such as a grade of 0 on the assignment or in the course, and may become part of your permanent record. Please take time to read Regulation 1 regarding Academic Integrity in the Arts & Science calendar. You are responsible for abiding by this, and the remaining regulations, in the calendar.

<b>Topics</b>	The reading list is posted on OnQ with links to the articles.
Week 1	Getting to know one another and the course expectations/Starting to reflect.
Week 2	Situating the scholarship of teaching and learning (Design a research study)
Week 3	Cognitive models of Learning (Complete assignment sign up)
Week 4	Cognitive models of Learning
Week 5	Can we improve lectures? (Workshop on Peer Instruction)
Week 6	Small group learning (Workshop on Team Based Learning)
Week 7	Learning Styles (Universal Design for Learning)
Week 8	On line learning/Instructional Design - best practices (Community Service Learning)
Week 9	Assessment (Workshop on CBL/PBL Learning – guided inquiry)
Week 10	Course and curriculum design (Workshop TBD)
Week 11	The Open Classroom Debate (Workshop TBD)
Week 12	Review and reflection

*If you must miss a class, please let me and your group know in advance and send them your work.*

## **Evaluation Details**

### Participation (5%)

Active participation is essential to your success in this course. At Week 6 and 12, you will be asked to submit a self-evaluation, as well as an evaluation of the participation of the other members of your team using an online form. You will be assigned an interim formative grade and a final summative grade - the interim grade is to provide you with feedback and will not count, whereas the final grade will contribute 5% to your overall mark.

### Reflection (10%)

Reflection provides an opportunity to identify what you have learned, apply this knowledge or skill where possible and draw conclusions, and then apply this learning in future situations. Throughout the course, you will be expected to make 12 entries of approx. 150-200 words each to your journal. Your completed journal is due 48 hours after the final exam and will be worth 10%.

## Journal Readings (25%)

- i) Preparatory Work (e.g., annotated bibliographies, readiness assessment quiz) (20%)  
During 8/10 weeks, you must bring prep work or prepare for a quiz that will cover all of the assigned readings (as discussed above).
- ii) Discussion Facilitator (5%)  
During 2/10 weeks, you will act as a Discussion Facilitator. Your duty as a Discussion Facilitator is to ensure an overview of the key points of the articles, ample opportunity for group members to make connections between articles, and to apply the research to their understanding of teaching and learning. You will do this by facilitating the discussion of the assigned articles by providing questions, prompts, etc. as needed to get group members actively involved (30 mins.).

As a Facilitator, your prep work is to submit your prepared discussion questions and prompts along with your rationale for choosing them (i.e., their type and purpose) by the beginning of class but be sure to have a copy with you as well! (1-2 pages).

Here are two resources that may be helpful in structuring effective discussion questions:

Stanford Teaching Commons on Designing Effective Discussion Questions

<https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching/student-teacher-communication/designing-effective-discussion-questions>) and some helpful question “stems” to promote deeper thinking (<https://www.lavc.edu/profdev/library/docs/promotethink.aspx>) . . .

(Have to cut and paste this last url into your browser I’m afraid.)

## Learning Lab Evaluation (15%)

Once during the term you will complete a Learning Lab Evaluation, which requires you to critically review different aspects of one of the PSYC 100 Learning Labs. The goals of this project are to increase the teaching effectiveness of you and your classmates, and to encourage you to apply the content of the PSYC 400 course to your Learning Labs.

During the week following one of the Learning Labs, you must submit an individual written report reflecting on the learning lab. This report will have two components:

- i) Report upon how the lab was received by your students (student evaluation results) and reflect on the learning lab you presented. Include a reflection on both your personal performance during the lab (things you did well, things you will strive to improve), *and* on the content of, and preparation for, the learning lab given to you (things we did well, things we should strive to improve). This section should be approximately 2 pages.
- ii) Apply the concepts we are discussing in PSYC 400 to the Learning Lab you are evaluating. For example, you might analyze the cognitive load aspect of the lab, whether groups were formed effectively, or the degree of active learning taking place, etc. Note that you are meant to analyze the lab *content* itself (the lesson plan, the activities, etc.) and not your personal presentation. The journal articles on our reading list should provide enough context for your analysis, but you may choose to perform a small amount of additional research if necessary. This section should be approx. 2 pages.

### Teaching Triangle (5%)

The goal of this component is to improve teaching through structured, non-evaluative classroom observation from your peers and reflection through self-evaluation.

Practical: A Teaching Triangle consists of 3 members who:

- observe one full learning lab (ideally the same one) taught by each of their two partners
- as Observer, objectively record class experience and complete the Worksheet
- after you host an Observer, prepare your own reflection by completing the Worksheet
- share feedback and reflections with partners

<b>Week</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Task</b>
6-7	Initial Meeting	Make arrangements for class visits.
7-9	LL Visit 1 LL Visit 2	Visit each of your partner's LL's once. As the Observer, carefully observe and record the events of the class. Send a copy of your written feedback prepared from your recorded observations to your partners by Friday that week. When your LL is being observed, prepare a written reflection on your independent view of how the session went.
8-10	Reflection and final meeting	Reflect on these reports along with your own self-reflections as you prepare for your Final Meeting. Share your personal observations with your partners.
9-10	Brief Report	Your brief report is due the following Friday

### Brief report – a reflection on teaching

In this approx. 300-500 word report, you are being asked to examine your experience from two perspectives, personal and academic and to articulate what you have learned from this teaching experience, and what you wish to improve going forward. Please refer to the Teaching Triangle reflection instructions in OnQ for more information on how to complete this assignment.

### Instructional Strategy workshop (15%)

In groups of 3 or 4, you will investigate one of the following instructional strategies

- Peer Instruction
- Team Based Learning
- Community Service Learning
- Case/Problem Based Learning
- TBD
- TBD

Your group will design and facilitate a 45 minute workshop for the class. Your workshop should help the class understand the principles upon which the instructional approach is based, how it works (demo or videotape), and whether, and in which situations, it is effective.

You are encouraged to interview someone who uses this type of teaching at Queen's and, if possible, to observe it in action. Prepare a brief (2 page) pamphlet/brochure for the class summarizing the main points along with 2 or 3 references. Send your references to Jill two weeks before your workshop and then book an appointment to meet with her the week before your workshop to review your teaching plan. These preparations contribute to your grade!

### Final Exam (25%)

The goal of the final exam is to provide you with an opportunity to further consolidate what you have learned and communicate it clearly in writing. There will be several short answer questions requiring approximately two hours but the exam room will be available for three hours.

### **A Final Note:**

At the end of the course, past students have told us: *“This course challenged me because the assignments could be tricky, and there were many topics that broke me out of my previous ideas of what teaching and learning are.”* This course is meant to be challenging, but it is also a lot of fun! Past students have thoroughly enjoyed facilitating PSYC 100 labs, and getting to know their classmates and peers in a team-based setting unique to this course. As one student put it: *“This course also helped me make friends in my program. I feel like I'm more a part of the psychology department and the Queen's community.”* We hope this course provides you not only with foundational knowledge in pedagogical research, but also with experiences and skills that will serve you as you continue your journeys as life-long learners and teachers.