**Evaluation and Assessment in English Language Arts Education**

**Summer 2024**

**Dr. Mike Cook—Associate Professor of English Education**

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**Course Number:** CTSE 7540

**Course Title:**  Evaluation and Assessment in ELA Education

 **Credit Hours:** 3 semester hours

 **Prerequisites:** Graduate Standing

 **Corequisites:**  None

**Term:** Summer 2024

**Classroom:** Library 4127

 **Day/Time:** T/TH 9:00-11:15

 **Instructor:** Dr. Mike Cook

 **Office:** Haley 5056

 **Contact Information:** mpc0035@auburn.edu (Office phone: 844-4415)

 **Office Hours:** 11:30-12:30 and by appointment (Phone and Zoom meetings are also an option)

**Texts:**

Stommel, J. (2023). Undoing the grade: Why we grade, and how to stop. Hybrid Pedagogy, Inc. 9798986676425

Sackstein, S. (2022). *Hacking assessment: 10 ways to go gradeless in a traditional grades school* (2nd ed.).Times 10 Publications. 9781956512212

Additional readings will be provided on Canvas

**Course Description:**

This class will introduce you to theories of assessment and evaluation in ELA education, classroom applications of assessment and evaluation procedures, and the implications assessment holds for justice and equity. You will explore a problem related to assessment and evaluation in a variety of ways (e.g., developing and implementing assessments and assessment plans, independent research and/or teaching projects). This course aims to help you improve as a reader and writer of research related to assessment and as a classroom teacher who practices assessment and evaluation toward anti-oppressive, equity-based, and contextually wise ends.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

**NCTE Teacher Preparation Standards**

I. Candidates apply and demonstrate knowledge of learners and learning to foster inclusive learning environments that support coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, and antiracist/antibias instruction to engage grade 7-12 learners in ELA.

II. Candidates apply and demonstrate knowledge and theoretical perspectives, including antiracist/antibias ELA, pertaining to texts, composition, language, and languaging.

III. Candidates apply and demonstrate knowledge of theories, research, and ELA to plan coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, antiracist/antibias instruction and assessment.

IV. Candidates implement planned coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, and antiracist/antibias ELA instruction and assessment to motivate and engage all learners.

**Our Collaborative Course Goals**

* How to give clear, useful feedback that drives students forward
* How to involve students in classroom assessment
* How to get students on board with non-traditional methods
	+ And keep them engaged
* How to de-center grades
	+ And maintain accountability (e.g., due dates)
* How to justify our assessment choices and methods
* How to emphasize student choice in assessment
	+ In manageable ways
* How to collaborate with peers around assessment
* How to communicate with students about equity and fairness
* How to ensure our grading systems match what students do in the classroom
* How to honestly reflect on our own assessments and beliefs

**Assessment**

Let me open with this: I believe that grades generally get in the way of learning. This, of course, has consequence for teaching, for student growth, for our democracy, and (I might add) for humanity. As a result, “grading” in this class may be radically different than anything you’ve experienced in your prior schooling.

While final course grades are unavoidable (Auburn requires that you each receive a letter grade), your work throughout the semester will NOT receive grades. But…and this is key…there are a few requirements you will have to meet for your assignments to be officially “turned in.” Requirements for each assignment include, but are not limited to:

* Submitting initial drafts on/by relevant due dates
* Engaging in required revisions (sometimes multiple rounds) and resubmitting on/by relevant due dates

Final assignments will not be considered accepted (and turned in) until all rounds of required revision have been successfully/adequately completed. Once an assignment is accepted, it is understood to represent the equivalent of an ‘A’. **Note:** It is important to keep in mind that while I have a no grade policy, your course requirements are just that—requirements and not options.

The real idea here is to remove grades as a barrier to learning and growth and to make your experiences in this course more about learning itself and about developing as teachers, and not about the grade. Designing instruction and assessments and teaching itself are iterative processes, those we never master but use experience, feedback, and even failure to develop and get better. Thus, grading individual assignments is inauthentic in this course. I want you to grow as ELA teachers and scholars and as people tasked with providing relevant, equitable, and just educational experiences to your future students. I want you (and your future students) to focus on something other than competition and about focusing on what one needs for an ‘A’. Instead, I want you all to focus on what you need to do to improve and to grow. And I want to make your learning and your development as teachers humane and useful.

We’ll be talking quite a bit about this throughout the semester, and I look forward to your thoughts and perceptions. \*I am more than happy to schedule time to chat with any of you if you have questions or concerns.

**Note:** During the first two weeks of the semester, we will collaboratively establish any necessary course policies, norms, expectations, consequences, etc. I believe this should be a team and democratic effort, and I hope this serves as one example of how you can include your future students in such discussions and classroom policy development. Among the policies we may establish together are:

* Attendance
* Due Dates
	+ Expectations and consequences
	+ Managing issues that inevitably arise (i.e., being proactive)
* Classroom norms
	+ Discussions—creating a supportive and critical space for difficult and complex issues
	+ Accountability
	+ Creating space for and talking about race, ethnicity, gender
	+ Language

After we collaboratively create these policies, I will add them to the syllabus and share a final version with each of you.

**Collaborative Course Policies**

**Course Content and Schedule:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class Date** | **Readings Due** | **Assignments Due** |
| Tues. May 16**Online (asynchronous)** | Read Syllabus Begin reading *Undoing the Grade* (Stommel)Explore possible topics for final project |  |
| Tues. May 21**Online (asynchronous)** | Continue reading *Undoing the Grade* (Stommel)Continue exploring possible topics for final project |  |
| Thurs. May 23**Online (asynchronous)** | Continue reading *Undoing the Grade* (Stommel)Continue exploring possible topics for final project |  |
| Tues. May 28**Face-to Face** | Finish reading *Undoing the Grade* (Stommel)Inoue Introduction: Laboring Toward Grading Contracts and the Inner Dikes (pp. 3-20) | Discuss course assignmentsBook groups and text selectionRefine project topics |
| Thurs. May 30**Face-to-Face**  |  | Finalize project topics |
| Tues. June 4**Face-to-Face**  | Begin reading *Hacking Assessment* (Sackstein) | In class conference and work time |
| Thurs. June 6**Online (asynchronous)** | Continue reading *Hacking Assessment* (Sackstein) | **Proposals for Final Project** |
| Tues. June 11**Face-to-Face**   | Continue reading *Hacking Assessment* (Sackstein) | In class conferences and work time*Hacking Assessment* Reading Check-Ins |
| Thurs. June 13**Online (asynchronous)** | Continue reading *Hacking Assessment* (Sackstein) | **Response Paper 1: Final Draft Due** |
| Tues. June 18**Online (synchronous—Zoom)** | Continue reading *Hacking Assessment* (Sackstein) | **First draft—Outline of Project**Workshopping and Conferencing Project Outlines*Hacking Assessment* Reading Check-Ins |
| Thurs. June 20**Online (synchronous—Zoom)** | Continue reading *Hacking Assessment* (Sackstein) | Workshopping and Conferencing Project Outlines*Hacking Assessment* Reading Check-Ins |
| Tues. June 25**Online (asynchronous)** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group |  |
| Thurs. June 27**Online (asynchronous)** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group |  |
| Tues. July 2**Online (asynchronous)** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group |  |
| Thurs. July 4 | **No Class** | **University Holiday**  |
| Tues. July 9**Online (asynchronous)** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group |  |
| Thurs. July 11**Online (asynchronous)** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group | **Response Paper 2: Final Draft Due** |
| Tues. July 16**Face-to-Face** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group |  |
| Thurs. July 18**Face-to-Face** | Article Groups—Read Selected Articles with Group | **Due: Assessment Letter to Students and Families** |
| Tues. July 23**Face-to-Face** |  |  |
| Thurs. July 25**Face-to-Face** |  | **Due: Final Projects****Article Group Presentations**  |
| Tues. July 30**Online (asynchronous)** | **No F2F Class Meeting** | Study/Reading Day for Final Exams |
| Exam Week**Face-to-Face** |  | **Final Project Presentations**  |

 \*\*Tentative Course Schedule—All readings and assignments are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes made to the schedule will be announced in class, via email, and/or through CANVAS.\*\*

**Course Requirements**

Attendance and Participation

Response Paper 1

Response Paper 2

Assessment Letter to Students and Families

Final Project

**Assignments and Projects**

**Attendance and Participation**

Class participation is a vital part of the course and consists of

* careful reading of assignment texts (including bringing those texts with you to class);
* expressing your questions, insights, and criticism of readings and emerging issues;
* participating in class activities;
* applying course concepts to your present and future teaching situations;
* taking risks in your writing and thinking;
* supporting the thinking of your colleagues through listening, encouragement, and constructive dialogue.

Your participation in class activities (whether face-to-face or on Zoom) and through CANVAS and other means will help students build knowledge together and explore various aspects of the readings to apply them to their own future teaching and contexts. In order to participate, students must be present (physically and cognitively) and have thoughtfully completed the assigned readings. Ongoing failure to contribute to class activities will result in a lower grade. Failure to attend class will result in a lower grade.

Article Groups

In addition to our shared course texts, you will collaborate in book groups to select additional articles to read and discuss together. I will provide articles organized by category and will ask you to select one reading from 4 of the 6 total categories. The goal here is two-fold: one, I want you to have some choice in what you read and how you engage it and two, I want you to experience the possibilities that accompany membership in a professional community (in this case, focused on sharing educational readings). Throughout the summer, I will provide opportunities for you and your group members to provide in-process updates on your reading, collaborative experiences, and growth. At the end of our semester, your group will also share a more formal presentation (20 minutes) that articulates your experiences and learning. This can include, among other things:

* A summary and synthesis of the texts you read
* The big questions they elicited for you as readers (and that came up as part of your discussions)
* Key take-aways
* Connections to teaching ELA
* Ways they readings challenged your thinking
* How they helped you evolve as teachers
* Etc.

Note that only one group will be able to select a given text (from a given category). This is to introduce us all to a broader range of professional readings. I will provide instructions for selecting and signing up for your readings.

Categories for Article Groups:

* Labor Based and/or Contract Grading
* Standards-Based Grading
* Equity and/in Assessment
* Gen-AI and Assessment
* Practical Approaches to Assessment
* Self- and Peer-Assessment

As part of this assignment, your article group should meet (face-to-face or virtually) at least once per week from the beginning of the week of June 25 to the end of the week of July 18.

Article Group Presentations will be on: Thurs. July 25

**Response Paper 1**

This initial response paper serves as a culminating assessment for the first (approximately) half of our course and will focus on the assigned readings to that point.

Just as our in-class discussions provide you with immediate, in-process, and informal opportunities to react to our content and to reflect on your learning, the response paper offers an opportunity to reflect more broadly across the first few weeks of the course so that you can synthesize concepts from our shared texts and articulate your own perspectives in the scholarly conversation. Thus, your discussion should be grounded in the authors and ideas from the course syllabus, and your paper should foreground your insights.

For this response paper, consider questions such as:

* What is assessment? And what is it not? And why/how does that matter?
* What is (in)equity as it relates to assessment?
* Via assessment: What is knowledge and what is worth knowing? Who decides this? And why/how?
* What is the purpose of teaching and assessing? And how do we know if we’re effective?
* How can people – educators, students, families, communities and community members, and other stakeholders – determine what students know?
* What is the responsibility and place of English education and English educators in these broader debates about curriculum, knowledge, and assessment?

Your response paper should be 2-5 pages (not including any cover page or references) and should follow APA style guidelines. It should include citations from Stommel, Sackstein, and at least one additional academic source not included on the syllabus.

Due Date: Thurs. June 13

**Response Paper 2**

The second response paper serves as a culminating assessment for the second (approximately) half of our course focusing mostly on the articles you select and read in your groups.

Just as our in-class discussions provide you with immediate, in-process, and informal opportunities to react to our content and to reflect on your learning, the second response paper offers an opportunity to reflect more broadly across all of your experiences in the final half of our course. This paper asks you to synthesize concepts from the texts you and your group members read together and to articulate your own perspectives in the scholarly conversation. Thus, your discussion should be grounded in the authors and ideas you read and discuss together in your article reading groups and should foreground your insights.

For this response paper, consider questions such as:

* In what ways have these readings helped you rethink the question: What is assessment and evaluation in the ELA classroom?
* Given what you’ve read and discussed in your group: What is equitable and just assessment of learning? And what does that suggest about the current state of affairs in ELA? Stated another way, what roles does assessment play in English education, and what role should it play?
* What shifts in thinking about assessment are necessary to fulfill our promise to students, families, and communities?
* What shifts in thinking are you able to see within yourself from these readings (and this course more broadly)?

Your response paper should be 2-5 pages (not including any cover page or references) and should the APA style guidelines. It should include citations from each of your group’s selected readings.

Due Date: Tues. July 11

**Assessment Letter to Students and Families**

This semester we’ve wrestled with assessment ideologies and with practical considerations of and approaches to assessment in ELA classrooms. We’ve drawn on Stommel’s discussions of equity in assessment and the need to rethink grading. We’ve wrestled with Sackstein’s ideas for “hacking” traditional assessment. We’ve talked about Inoue’s thoughts on language and writing instruction as inequitable and as grounded in whiteness and white supremacy. And each of you, in collaboration with our article groups, has selected and engaged scholarship that addresses and questions assessment in a variety of ways (e.g., via the categories provided). In short, each of these authors have challenged us to think about not only what we assess and how we assess but also why we assess and in what ways we articulate the answers to those questions to the people most directly and intimately affected by our choices: students and families. As a result, this assignment provides a sort of culminating assessment, one in which you continue (and articulate) your thinking about your stance(s) on and use(s) of assessment in your future classroom.

For this assignment, you will write a letter that outlines your philosophy and practices with respect to assessment and grading that is designed for students and families in secondary ELA education. You might imagine this letter as part of a syllabus you provide to students at the beginning of the school year or as an actual letter you send home to families. In the letter, you must address two major topics.

* First, what is your overall philosophy or stance on assessment and grading? What do you believe as a teacher and why?
* Second, how does your philosophy manifest in what you do with academic work in your classroom? What do you do? How do you do it? And why do you do it in those ways? In short, what can students expect when they enter your classroom?

Keep the audience in mind here and ensure that you practice full disclosure and hold yourself accountable. This letter is not a formal academic paper as the first two responses were. Instead, it is designed to be read by secondary students and their families.

Due Date: Thus. July 18

**Final Project**

Each of you will be completing an individual project that will serve as the culminating assessment for the course. For everyone, this will involve research around the topics of curriculum, knowledge, grading and assessment, and ELA/literacy education. This project must involve, in some capacity, theorizing and designing an assessment plan, product, or so forth that can be used in your (current or future) ELA classroom. It will begin by finding, reading, and analyzing scholarship on these topics, but it might move beyond this as well and ask that you draw on all you’ve read and thought about to create something for the classroom. While you get to propose what it will look like and include, it must focus explicitly and in meaningful ways on removing—or at least radically de-centering—grades (and thus intentionally centering equity) and include practical materials to articulate how it would/could be used in your own classroom.

We’ve read a variety of examples this summer, from de-centering grades in very traditional spaces (and even assignments) to focusing on standards rather than grades to removing/ignoring grades all together. Thus, what I’m asking you to do is start playing around with what you, as a teacher, might do in your own classrooms and with your own students. I would like for you to be creative in the direction of your individual project, noting of course that I will provide feedback and guidance to help you along the way—that is, the topic, nature of the project, and the end product will be negotiated in collaboration with me. A brief list of examples might include:

* A labor-based or contract based grading plan for a course, unit, assignment, etc.
* A standards-based plan for assessing your students across the semester/year
* An assessment plan framework for one (or more) of your courses
* Methods for including students, families, community members, and/or others in the assessment process
* And so forth

For doctoral students, we will collaborate to design an additional project, one focused on producing a written product that you might submit for a conference presentation or a manuscript suitable for a journal in your field (e.g., *The ALAN Review*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *English Journal*, *Voices from the Middle*, etc.).

You will need to put together a one-page proposal for your project to submit to me by Tues. June 6. The proposal should discuss the following:

* Your topic
* The project that you will complete
	+ Explain what you will do—for example, for a traditional research project, you should be specific about the extent and parameters such as what books you might read or the number of sources you’ll seek
* The final product that you will produce
* Why the topic, research, and final product are meaningful for you

Ideally, I would like to meet with each of you individually prior to your proposal submission. We can generate ideas, and I can provide feedback and suggestions. Based on your submitted proposal, we will interact a second time where I’ll give you feedback again, and you can move forward to complete the project.

At the end of the semester (currently scheduled for our exam session—TBA), you’ll (1) submit your final product to me and (2) present your project to the class (15-20 minutes, including a visual aid such as a PowerPoint and/or handout). This will summarize and give an overview of the final project that you produced.

**Course Policy Statements:**

I expect students to attend all scheduled class meetings, arrive on time and not leave early, come prepared, and contribute by participating in discussions and activities.

**Absences**. The university considers certain absences to be “excused,” and I abide by university guidelines. For what constitutes excused absences, see the latest edition of the Student Policy eHandbook; the URL is [www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies](http://www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies).

 If you have to be absent, please follow the procedures teachers do. That is, just as teachers make arrangements ahead of time for a known absence, so, too, you must make arrangements ahead of time for a known absence. Just as teachers must notify their schools as soon as possible for an emergency absence such as illness, so, too, you must notify me as soon as possible for an emergency absence such as illness. Send me an email.

Attendance: I expect students to attend all scheduled class meetings, arrive on time and not leave early, come prepared, and contribute by participating in discussions and activities. The university considers certain absences to be “excused,” and I abide by university guidelines. For what constitutes excused absences, see the latest edition of the Student Policy eHandbook; the URL is [www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies](http://www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies).

As a class, we will discuss our attendance policy, but note that unexcused absences may impact your final course grade. If you must be absent, please follow our collaboratively-composed policy and procedures, which should include contacting or visiting with me before your anticipated absence.

Tardies: Make every effort to be on time for class. Coming in late, not matter how quite you try to be, can create a disruption.

Make-Up Policy: If you are absent, you are still responsible for turning in work that is due and for finding out about material presented and assignments made. As per the Student eHandbook, you are the one responsible for initiating and turning in make-up work for an excused absence.

Note: Full credit will not be given for work missed due to an unexcused absence.

Late Work. See collaboratively designed grading policies above.

University Rules: I abide by all university rules, including those concerning academic honesty and harassment/discrimination (see below for additional details).

Academic Honesty Policy: All portions of the Auburn University student academic honesty code (Title XII) found in the *Tiger Cub* will apply to university courses. All academic honesty violations or alleged violations of the SGA Code of Laws will be reported to the Office of the Provost, which will then refer the case to the Academic Honesty Committee.

Disability Accommodations: Students who need special accommodations in class, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act, should arrange for a confidential meeting with the instructor during office hours in the first week of classes (or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately). The student must bring a copy of their Accommodations Letter and an Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. If the student does not have these forms, they should make an appointment with the Program for Students with Disabilities, 1288 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Course contingency: If normal class and/or lab activities are disrupted due to illness, emergency, or crisis situation, the syllabus and other course plans and assignments may be modified to allow completion of the course. If this occurs, and addendum to your syllabus and/or course assignments will replace the original materials. Additionally, I will make every effort to send you an email message ahead of time.

Professionalism: As faculty, staff, and students interact in professional settings, they are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors as defined in the College’s conceptual framework. These

professional commitments or dispositions are listed below:

* Engage in responsible and ethical professional practices
* Contribute to collaborative learning communities
* Demonstrate a commitment to diversity
* Model and nurture intellectual vitality