**Education 364**  
**ImagineNation Matters Mentor Seminar—Winter 2012**  
**Tuesdays 1-4, 2328 SEB**

**Instructors:**  
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**Overview**

You are about to become a part of a unique collaborative endeavor. During the summer of 2005, a team of educators, teachers of students from elementary school through college, began work on a project aimed at invigorating the study of Michigan for fourth graders. This project began as an initiative of the Oakland (MI) Writing Project (OWP), part of the federally-funded National Writing Project, an organization whose goal is to nurture creativity in teachers through writing-based professional development. OWP staff and teachers partnered with faculty from our Schools of Information and Education, and we worked together to craft a vision for the *Michigan Matters* project. The project has moved forward over the ensuing years as teams of UM students designed a virtual, trans-historical tour of Michigan and other fascinating experiences, each connected to a significant event, an important social and/or cultural signpost, or a situation with rich instructive possibilities.

This term we will be continuing to work with the virtual “storybooks,” mentoring upper elementary school students as they work their way through our story modules as part of what we now know as *ImagineNation Matters*. Our new name reflects the broadening scope of our modules across a range of writing, social studies, and science topics. One module explores the Underground Railroad and the social turmoil around slavery at that time. Other modules look at Mackinac Island and the debate over closing the Island to automobiles, at the experience of Arab-Americans, and contrast state government with student government. New this year are modules about healthy eating and physical fitness, and about the economics, and the inter-personal complexities for three kids who start a business.

We will explain further in class, but one of your tasks will be to really get to know some of these modules and learn about the relevant social, historical and cultural issues they cover, so you can interact with the students as they work their way through the modules. Your challenges will include helping students with their written expression and helping them to think through their own ideas while seeking to creatively challenge and intrigue them. Another of your significant tasks will be to participate in the creation of a new module.

This class is different in several ways. First, we expect that you will have a multi-dimensional experience, one that will involve research and teaching, and one that
will make ample use of your creative imagination. Second, you will take on responsibility not just for your own learning, but also for that of the younger students. In order to fulfill that responsibility, you will need to deepen your knowledge of Michigan’s history and to understand and articulate a range of cultural and historical perspectives as filtered through the personalities whose stories are told in our modules. Third, you will be engaged in design work, creating a new tour stop for our virtual tour (more about that in the coming weeks). Finally, we will not have a midterm or a traditional final for this class. You will see that our system for evaluating your performance, which is described below, places great emphasis on your being an active, self-motivated, and creative participant in the seminar every week of the term and in being a dedicated and patient mentor to your students. We look forward to working with you on what we hope will be an exciting process of discovery.

**Components of the Class/Evaluation**

**Online Participation   30%**
You will be expected to **engage substantively and consistently** with all of the student participants in your modules. There will be groups of elementary students and their teachers who will be relying on you to be a regular presence, responding to the students and helping to carry the conversations, and the adventure, forward. This requires **work every week of the term** beginning in Week 3. We expect this will take from 2-3 hours each week.

**Written Work   10%**
We will also have periodic written assignments for class, including one that will be due at our second meeting (see below). We expect this will take about 2-4 hours for each of approximately 5 assignments.

**Class Participation & Attendance   20%**
Because this class is more like a small working group, we place a special value on the **quality of your thought as shown by your consistent participation in seminar conversations**. We expect that you will **be present for every class session**; absences are permissible only with an excuse requested in advance of class. You must be actively engaged in seminar so that what we discuss can inform both your mentoring and your design work. You will also be making two classroom visits during class time so that you can meet some of the students with whom we’re working.

**Design Work   30%**
Each of you will take part in the design of a new module. We expect that you will be actively engaged in this task and that you will be self-motivated. Indeed, because of the “working group” nature of the course (and because there are
teachers and kids waiting to work with projects you design), it is essential that you consistently demonstrate initiative, creativity and a high degree of responsibility. We’ll develop the specifics of this work together throughout the term. We expect this will take approximately 4 hours/week.

Final Reflection 10%
Instead of a final examination, you will each write a four-page essay in which you’ll reflect on your experience as a mentor and module designer. This reflective essay will include:

* discussion of what you learned about yourself and where you were challenged in your mentoring work as you attempted to help your students to better express their ideas and to think more deeply about issues.

* description of how you approached and carried out your module design work, as you brought your intellectual and creative abilities to the task of designing an inspiring learning space for your students.

* reflection on our classroom visits (and skype conversations) and what you learned from direct interactions with the kids. It is said that we learn by teaching, and we will be challenging you to articulate in detail how this teaching and learning process unfolded for you.

For next week, January 17:

We want each of you to take a close look at two of our modules, but to do so in rather different ways...

For the first module, write a 2-3 page essay which reflects your research into the history, background, and/or social context of the module. Conduct your research and write your paper in response to these questions:

1) “What is the story of this event, this place, or these people?”
2) “What is the significance of this event, this place, or these people?”
3) “What historical context can I offer my readers so that they can better understand the significant issues related to the subject of this module?”

Please submit by next week’s class via CTools and be prepared to discuss your findings in class next week.

To find the modules, go to the following URL: http://imagine.icsmich.org/
Use "mentor2012" as both login and password.

In order to do this assignment, you’ll need to read the entire module, and you’ll want to use the materials in the TEACHER RESOURCES section to help you get a better sense of the historical context and to steer you to links where you can find more information. To access the teacher resources for any module, follow
the TOURS link along the right, opposite the big list of modules. Find your module __________________ and click on TEACHER RESOURCES next to it.

For the second module, we would like you to focus on the teaching and learning opportunities you see and on the story itself. Please respond to the following three questions:

1) What are the major themes of the module?
2) Looking through the pages of your module and at the questions at the bottom of the pages, what are some of the more interesting "thought opportunities" that you see presented to the students?
3) What’s the nature of the conflict or the drama within the module?

**Early Schedule**

**January 10th**: Introductions; describe project and class; show and talk through one of the modules; review syllabus and assignments; Mentoring, part one; ImagineNation “Switch” game.

**January 17th**: Mentoring, part two; Discussion of your research into the modules; Introduction of the task of creating our module.

**January 24th**: More discussion of our module design project; Mentoring, part three; phone call with facilitator. MENTORING BEGINS!!

**January 31st**: Reflections on mentoring; Questioning activity; Preparation for classroom visit.

**February 7th**: Classroom Visit.

**February 14th**: More reflections on mentoring and on previous week's classroom visit; Updates on design work.

*It is the objective of this class to create, modify, use, and improve over time the ImagineNation Matters modules crafted by individuals and teams of students and used by upper elementary students and their teachers. Students in this course can still use any of the material they’ve created in whatever other ways they find appropriate outside the class. If you are not comfortable with this policy, we advise you to elect some other course from the School of Education offerings.*