

SYLLABUS
ENGE XXXX: Graduate Student Success in Multicultural Environments
Fall 2019 & Spring 2020

Friday · 1:20–3:50 pm · Goodwin Hall 145

COURSE LEADERS

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COURSE OVERVIEW

The aim of this new seminar is to help new graduate students in the College of Engineering become socialized to the graduate student environment, provide strategies for entering an effective mentee-mentor relationship, and build an awareness of Virginia Tech’s diversity and inclusion values. Leveraging research expertise within the Department of Engineering Education as well as evidence-based curricula developed from funding from the National Institutes of Health, and will provide frameworks for new students as they embark on their graduate journey. We hope it will provide strategies for (1) facilitating clear communication with advisors, peers, or undergraduate mentees; (2) receiving and responding to critical feedback; (3) upholding ethical research practices; and (4) working within a culturally diverse environment.

This one-credit professional seminar will be geared toward new doctoral and master’s students in the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech, and will meet the Graduate School’s new diversity requirement.

Learning Objectives

Following successful completion of this course, students will have strategies for:

- Developing effective interpersonal communication skills
- Establishing and maintaining professional relationships
- Dealing with personal differences in the research environment
- Advancing equity and inclusion in the research environment
- Developing responsible and ethical research practices
- Developing identity, confidence, and independence as a researcher

Course Format

Seminars will be discussion- and case-based. Students can sign up for one of the following options throughout the 2019-2020 academic year:

Options		Dates		Sessions	
Cohort	Semester	Start	End	Total	Duration
A	Fall	August 30	September 27	5	150
B	Fall	October 1	November 8	5	150
C	Spring	January 24	February 21	5	150
D	Spring	March 20	April 17	5	150

O	Spring	TBD	TBD	10	75
W	Winter	January 13	January 14	2	375
X	Winter	January 16	January 17	2	375
Y	Spring	March 9	March 10	2	375
Z	Spring	March 12	March 13	2	375

Each option will include students completing the following five sessions:

1. **Building Your Professional Supports** (aligning mentor & trainee expectations; forming a mentoring and support network; and prioritizing research mentor roles)
2. **Managing Interpersonal Issues** (barriers to effective communication; and constructive and destructive behaviors)
3. **Navigating Personal Differences** (Setting the stage for inclusive discussions; challenges facing diverse teams; privilege and white fragility; and stereotype threat)
4. **Responding to Pressures** (Addressing conflict; feeling overwhelmed; and mental health)
5. **Exhibiting Professional Behaviors** (responding to feedback and navigating sticky situations)

Course Material

Though there is no required text for this class. We will provide readings on the course Canvas site when appropriate. Course material is largely informed by *Entering Research* curriculum developed by the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER), which was originally published in 2010 and has since undergone significant revision and expansion. "A team of 27 scholars representing 15 institutions revised the original curriculum and contributed new activities to better address the needs of undergraduate and graduate research trainees in STEM disciplines." (<https://cimerproject.org/#/curricula/training-materials>)

Graduate Honor Code Statement

All students enrolled in this class are expected to abide by the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code (<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/graduate-honor-system.html>). Any suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Graduate Honor System. Course deliverables are expected to be students' own ideas. As a rule of thumb, to avoid suspicions of plagiarism in this course, you should use quotations marks and appropriate citation of any passages longer than five words in a row copied from course materials or other sources. Simply changing individual words to their synonyms is also unacceptable.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

While we expect there to be demanding discussion and even disagreement during this seminar, we ask that you engage in discussion with care and empathy. We will work to ensure a classroom environment that supports your taking these intellectual and emotional risks as achieving the learning objectives requires a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, while honoring everyone's identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).

Principles of Community

The Virginia Tech Principles of Community will guide all our interactions together this semester; above all, this class should represent an environment in which everyone is treated with respect and encouraged to learn and grow. To that end, the following principles define the basis of our work together:

- We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.

- We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
- We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
- We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
- We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

Because this course is primarily discussion-based, these principles are particularly important as we engage in ongoing dialogue. To engage productively in this dialogue, you will need to come to class ready to both talk and listen with an open and inquiring mind.

Identity

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to according to their personal identity. In this class, you will have the chance to indicate the name that you prefer to be called and, if you choose, to identify pronouns with which you would like to be addressed. We will our my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

Accessibility

In designing this course, I have sought to make it accessible for all, but I am always learning. Thus if the course design does pose barriers, please let us know and, if necessary, contact Services for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. Your notification will remain confidential.

If the course schedule conflicts with religious observances, please let me know as soon as possible.

ASSIGNMENTS

Because this course seminar is graded on a pass/fail basis, you will be evaluated based on your attendance and participation. Participation includes focused attention and collegial discussions. Being a good participant does not mean that you always have to answer a question; it can also mean that you know when to ask questions and when to recognize that the answers have already been offered by the class but need to be synthesized. In addition to your attendance, you will also be required to complete four out-of-class activities and an end-of-course evaluation. Passing the course will require attending each session and completing each assignments.