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A Retrospective Evaluation of EDEL 508 through the CIPP Lenses

Hem Raj Kafle*
Kathmandu University School of Education, Nepal
hrk@ku.edu.np

Abstract

In this paper, I present a review of EDEL 508, a Master-level course I facilitated at Kathmandu University School of Education in Fall 2022. I carry out retrospective analysis of the course using the evaluation questions suggested by Fry and Hemmer being based on the CIPP evaluation model. My purpose here is to produce an objective evaluation of the course and reflect on my own successes and failures as the course facilitator. I intend this paper to model for teachers a structured reflective approach to evaluating any subject they teach at a university.

Keywords: *course evaluation, reflective approach, retrospective analysis, CIPP Model, summative review*

*Corresponding Author
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Background

During Fall 2022 (August-December), I facilitated EDEL 508 Critical Traditions in English, a course offered in the third semester of the Master of Education in English language Teaching (MEd-ELT) program at Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED). It was a 3-credit course consisting of four modules including history of English critical traditions, the text and the author, the reader and the culture and movements. The syllabus stated the course objective as to "make the students aware of the theories of reading in contemporary western world, and to have a basic understanding of the 20th century philosophical and literary movements in the west." Understandably, my key responsibility involved helping adult students internalize literary and critical theories through engaged reading and discourse. The syllabus comprised such seminal theories as mimesis, catharsis, literary sublime, romanticism, realism, naturalism, structuralism, modernism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and critical perspectives like new criticism, formalism, deconstruction, reader-response criticism, feminism, psychoanalysis, historicism, cultural studies, rhetoric and Marxism.

In this paper, I reflectively present a summative-retrospective review of my engagement with EDEL 508 during Fall 2022 by following the CIPP model developed by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007), which comprises aspects like context, input, process and product. I particularly utilize the evaluation questions proposed by Fry and Hemmer (2012, p. 298) to reflect upon various dimensions of planning, facilitation, assessment, and review. In the process of evaluation, I revisited the syllabus, my semester plan on the Moodle platform, my presentation slides, and video recordings of the class sessions and additional handouts. I also reviewed the students' post-class reflections, assignments, and answers from the end-semester assessment. The following sections highlight the findings from the CIPP evaluation. I end the paper with a brief post-semester reflection of my performance and contribution.

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Context Evaluation

EDEL 508 was designed to substantiate the two consecutive courses in the reading of literary genres, EDEL 506 English Fiction and Prose (first semester) and EDEL 507 English Poetry and Drama (second semester). The course also expanded at least two components – discourse analysis, rhetorics and translation – from EDEL 514 Applied Linguistics offered in the second semester. Thus, the contents of EDEL 508 included diverse critical perspectives (both textual and cultural) for teaching/reading literary texts. Discussion of theories and critical perspectives had to accompany relevant literary texts, mostly short poems and stories. Students received customizable theories and critical approaches embodying a different lens to English (language) studies. Primarily, however, the course aimed to promote intensive reading and extensive writing as extended literacy components in the overall training of prospective ELT practitioners. The participants were expected to produce critical (textual and cultural) readings of complex texts.

The obstacles to achieving effective learning through and meeting the needs of the course were subtle and minimal. I taught this course for the first time at KUSOED, and it was the first time in my life. I did not know the learners' backgrounds except that they had completed two semesters by taking classes online. They had little or no experience in literary theory and criticism and limited exposure to reading a university course in literature. Besides, the course was taught online and engaged interactions, which could ensure maximum internalization in learners, were not always possible. If anyone wanted to pretend inability to join the class and participate in discussions, the online environment would be very convenient. Moreover, some students would be complacent against the need for innovation and creativity; procrastination would be rampant because of the availability of online resources.

I believe I had the necessary expertise to facilitate the course. I have a background in English studies, rhetoric and communication. I am a creative writer and also have published critical appreciations of different literary genres. Thus, I could create or collect sufficient samples of creative artefacts of my own. A reliable and responsive IT department backed up the technical aspects of the class. We had a barely retarding Moodle platform, and the IT staff and colleagues could help with unanticipated technical glitches. I had an up-to-date notebook with relatively recent configurations – i-7 10th generation processor, licensed Windows 11 and Office 365, the latest version of Google Chrome, licensed Google Meet with recording facility etc. and a reliable internet connection both at home and in my rented room.

The best part of the facilitation was that no apparent financial backing was required except for the need to buy mobile network data when there was a power outage or internet shutdown. I utilized the data facility incurred in the University's Close User Group (CUG) purchased from Ncell. Apart from this, no costly physical resources were required. If needed, the Department could invest in equipment like a webcam, mouse, headphones, earphones etc. If the students were called for a short-term physical class, there would be some financial liability. I held the class online considering its theoretical-interactive nature and no requirement for students to invest time and money in travel.

Input Evaluation

I prepared a clear yet flexible semester plan with 15 sessions of three hours each. I spared one session named 'Scholars' Recommendation' to accommodate a critical theory/concept unanimously selected by the class. I selected one to two readings for each session from the standard textbook (Luois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today*) and other references availed on digital platforms. I also introduced inter-platform facilitation (between Moodle and Google Drive) to ensure proper archiving of the class recordings, practice texts and reading

resources. I designed interactive lectures, student presentations, discussions and dialogues. I spared specific time for in-class writings with applications of taxonomy inherent in the critical approaches. I planned guest lectures. Above all, I designed an action research model for developing critical reading and writing skills in the students. This included interviews and focus group discussions on reading and writing tendencies and critical analysis of students' written responses to specific literary texts.

I designed the assessment in in-semester and end-semester parameters. For the in-semester, I set five criteria including thematic presentation, writing about literary artefacts, crafting a critical essay, rhetorical criticism, and reflection and performance. I also mandated each student to write a 'post-class reflection' after each session, hoping to accumulate around three hundred (19 x 16) responses at the end.

The overall input plan was feasible in the given circumstances. It was dynamic and was designed to suit students' interests and competencies. The readings were diverse and comprehensive though I was a little skeptical about getting students to complete the selected readings. With regular internet connection during class hours and fair knowledge of ICT handling in the students, inter-platform facilitation was convenient. As the majority students were inquisitive and my approach invitational, the sessions were expected to be interactive. After two-semester exposure at KUSOED and with their background as schoolteachers of the COVID -19 era, it would be possible with the students to organize presentations on Google Meet. Similarly, discussions, in-class practices, and guest lectures were doable activities at KUSOED, and I was fully prepared with unique artefacts, cooperative colleagues and administrative support. I also expected that action research on developing critical reading and writing skills in students was feasible because it could be done online through integration into the regular sessions and assessment criteria.

The input plan was almost costless, except for the occasional minimal investment for mobile network data. The course came to my regular load as a full-time teacher. I used free books and references collected from open sources or my own archives. The hardware (laptop) and software used for the class were purchased by KUSOED in bulk and did not require immediate maintenance and upgrade. As classes and activities were conducted from homes, the cost of electricity (however small it was) was on the individuals, not on the Department. Even the action research would not involve any expense for being a part of the regular semester work.

Process Evaluation

EDEL 508 was implemented in line with the plan. The class, held every Wednesday, began on 10 August 2022 and ended on 28 December 2022. A twenty-four-hour end-semester examination of 50 marks was held from 21 to 22 January 2023, and the final assessment was completed on 10 February 2023. The classes were either teacher-led or student-led. Each teacher-led class started with a retrospection of previous activities followed by a lecture, practice, discussion and summary. A student-led class involved retrospection followed by presentations, feedback, discussion, practice, and final review. I mostly used PowerPoint slides supplemented by texts crafted by myself.

A few components of the plan could not be managed. I had planned at least three guest lectures but could include only one because two guests could not manage time. Some student presentations were not original; the contents were lifted from the internet. I did not make much fuss about the source of the content when the presentations were comprehensive and explained the theories very well. Moreover, I could not make the reading of theoretical texts as in-depth as planned. Monitoring student progress was somehow superficial because of my own limited

engagement with the texts. But I worked best with the expertise and experience gained in the discipline through my prior exposure in MA, MPhil and PhD studies.

The evidence of course implementation was archived in three digital spaces. All the files (syllabus, course plan, lecture slides, readings and references, class videos, etc.) were stored in a separate folder on my laptop. Selected readings, assignments and student reflections were on the Moodle page of EDEL 508, made accessible for future use. Class recordings, practice files and relevant documents were kept on a Google Drive for the course drive, to be administered with and shared as required through my official email. In addition, the course activities were largely on the schedule requiring rare modifications. I had to reschedule the class only two times because of some crucial engagements. I gave two complementary sessions on Saturday. I communicated with students early when I had to postpone a particular session. The changes did not have any budgetary implications. The course ran smoothly and efficiently. I did not receive any explicit complaints about my performance. I just had limited time to prepare lectures from the designated texts. Since the content was familiar, if not the texts, I could conveniently complement student presentations through in-class readings and criticism. However, the planned action research on developing critical reading and writing skills could not be carried out because of the lack of time.

I believe the students had no choice but to participate in classes. The majority (12-14) attended the classes most of the time. They wrote assignments. Seven, on average, wrote reflections till the end. All regular attendees gave presentations. On the bleak side, some students copied the slide contents from the internet. Two of them skipped the final exam for unknown reasons. Likewise, out of 19 signed into the class, one dropped out of the program, one opted to rejoin later, one did not attend any class, and two remained mostly absent. Similarly, out of 304 reflections anticipated, only 82 were submitted. Some students wrote frequently. Hence the number was lower than expected. But I remained lenient on reflections. Those submitted sufficed to give me a glimpse of how I was performing myself. Since I was not grading the reflections, I did not make it explicitly mandatory. Likewise, I had set four major assignments, which most students did seriously. For example, 14 submitted the first, 13 the second, 13 the third, and 14 the fourth. Finally, 15 turned up in the end-semester exam. While 12 passed the course, five had it incomplete.

The only hitch I would register about the course is that cent per cent attendance could not be ensured. One student based in Norway was almost absent, and one based in Kathmandu implored exemption from the class, having reported some psychiatric problems. While one disappeared without notification, one turned up at the beginning and never reappeared in the rest of the classes. Moreover, the course seemed difficult for students who had no reading habits or were too busy to attend the classes. For some students, taking classes and doing assignments appeared like a ritual. Delayed entry, occasional absence, and intermittent quitting and rejoining were the most common dimensions of this online class. At some point, the attitude like ‘everything is on the Internet’ or ‘everything should be done by the teachers in return for the fees we paid’, and relevant cocksureness sounded explicit in some students’ behavior. Curbing the use of ChatGPT was difficult. I could smell plagiarism in some assignments but was helpless, not having got a surefire tool to prove duplication.

As an implementer and the Head of the Department with obvious responsibility and mandate of facilitating about a dozen other facilitators, I had to address the implementation problems judiciously. Apart from using my intuition, I consulted my colleagues regularly about how their classes were going with the same group. I sent the students regular alerts on their to-dos and used every opportunity available for counselling. Since the implementation problems were not technical/physical but attitudinal and outside the Department’s administrative scope,

communication, consultation, and counselling were the most significant ways of striking a balance between too much nonchalance and too high expectations.

As stated earlier, I did not receive apparent complaints about the process of facilitating and ending the course. My experience with this group shows that adults do not complain much because they cannot keep their own promises. But those who are genuinely engaged in their studies do not shun registering good advice on how teaching-learning can be improved in the given circumstances.

Product Evaluation

The students expressed in their in-class and post-class reviews that their learning was cumulative. They were engaged in creative and critical discussions on literary artefacts. They said some of the critical skills would go to their own classrooms. This was true and encouraging in that most of the students were schoolteachers and aspired to teach at colleges after their graduation. This is why I did not anticipate a negative outcome of the course facilitation. I believe the course did not evoke any distaste in any of them towards literature and literary artefacts. Most of the students had a liking for creativity as they appreciated poetry and lyrics. Just that they initially did not seem oriented to glorify literature and literary discourses. But subsequent classroom discussions offered them new perspectives on literature and literary appreciation and helped them recapitulate their earlier exposure to fiction, prose, poetry, and drama.

The intended outcomes were largely realized at the end. Most of the students participated, appreciated and replicated the learning from the course. The assignments, reflections and final examination papers evidenced the realization of the outcomes. At times, seeing the students' interest in serious reading diminish, I had to adopt the strategy of short artefact readings during class time itself. Application of the theories/criticism on short artefacts was a revised strategy. I had actually planned at the outset to use only literary masterpieces by canonical writers.

Two students performed excellently throughout. One remained absent from the class but wrote assignments very well by referring to the class recordings. I had expected both of them to perform as well in the final examination and secure A, but they ended up with A-. One could not compensate for the poor attendance with rich performance. Also, there were major flaws in his final answers. The other slackened in one of his answers by excluding a compare-contrast argument. Similarly, the American lady, whom I had expected to sustain the semester, dropped midway. One student from Bangladesh, who participated enthusiastically at the outset, demonstrated a visible decline in attendance and commitment towards the end of the semester ending up with a B. Three students who were regular throughout did not complete the course.

Overall, I realized that the syllabus was a little more complex and condensed for students who had little or no background in English literature. It was equally so for those who had joined the program in a long gap after their undergraduate study. The syllabus, therefore, required revision for the upcoming cohorts, keeping only the most intriguing and applicable theories/critical perspectives like mimesis, romanticism, realism, naturalism, new criticism, formalism, Marxism etc. In the same way, new and more interactive approaches to teaching complex literary theories needed to be applied.

A longer-term implication of such realization should be both vertical and horizontal alignment of the course in the entire two-year (four semester) program in ELT. The vertical alignment would involve ascribing a logical coherence between the existing courses, such as Fiction and Prose (first semester), Poetry and Drama (second semester), Critical Traditions (third semester), and Applied Linguistics (fourth semester). A horizontal alignment would be

to integrate some of the critical theories in Research Project and allow students to carry out literary/critical analyses as one of their preliminary projects. Students could even be encouraged to perform literary studies as their culminating dissertations. Moreover, the syllabus could be aligned with the students' work needs (teaching and research) and even extended to their training internships. Alternatively, this 3-credit course could be divided into two 3-credit courses, one comprising literary theories (mimesis, romanticism, realism, naturalism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, modernism, postmodernism, etc.), and the other critical perspectives (new criticism, formalism, deconstruction, reader-response criticism, Marxism criticism, rhetorical analysis, cultural studies, etc.). While the first could be put in the third semester, the one in theories could be a part of the fourth semester, horizontally aligned with Applied Linguistics. This readjustment could give the entire two-year MEd curriculum a semblance of an English language studies program with a visible balance between English language teaching and literary studies.

I would not claim EDEL 508 to have made tangible impacts on the students so that its outcomes were manifest in their performance and behavior. However, I can say that students understood the value of literature in language teaching. The course compensated for the absence of a subject like Literature in the Language Classroom. Students from ELT backgrounds had a new takeaway in the form of comprehensive critical-theoretical engagement with literary artefacts. From this point of view, the course can be considered to have been effective. Its sustainability was unquestionable, though. A course in literary studies must be a core subject of a program like English Language Teaching or English literature. I can at least not imagine graduates in English (whether ELT or English literature) becoming fairly trained to teach English without orientation in literary theory and criticism. This is to say, the outcomes of the facilitation of EDEL 508, however intangible, were sustainable.

The teaching of literature and therefore of literary theories and movements and critical perspectives is a perennial necessity. Learning from one semester always guides the more effective implementation of the course in succeeding semesters and groups. The students must thereafter be confident to teach courses and write papers at par with the graduates of MA English literature. The course elements, as I indicated above, could be aligned with the courses in genre-based readings, research projects and practicums. The Department could create a collaboration platform among the course facilitators for sharing resources and pedagogical approaches. Above all, the components of EDEL 508, through alignment with or integration of elements from other courses in the program, could evolve into a Masters/MPhil program in Applied English.

Conclusion

I would sum up the evaluation of EDEL 508 by applying the model of post-semester reflection I used with my students after the end of the semester. The model comprised three questions: How did the semester go? How did I perform and contribute? What would I cherish from my one-semester engagement with the course? The first question seeks to explore the aspects of observation and sense-making of the class activities in totality. The second demands an assertion of fair performance and visible contribution. The third allows the celebration of accomplishment through the transfer of learning.

For me, the semester with EDEL 508 was of experiment and exposure. This was the first course in core reading and writing that I had decided to facilitate at the Master's level. I began it with some reluctance, thinking that I would not be able to give enough time to read the complex theoretical texts. But I could manage my time somehow and could complete the course as planned, if not as expected. My expectation was not only of students' thorough attendance and engagement but also their knowledge and intelligence in literary scholarship.

This is where I found myself only partly able to understand my priorities. But I am sure my own attendance, engagement, knowledge and intelligence were sufficient to prepare me for another group in Fall 2023.

I can name my performance as moderate, and my contribution near perfection. I gave lectures taking heed of the fact that the cohort was multinational (Nepalis, Bangladeshis, American), multicultural, mixed-ability and mixed-attitude. I did not compromise in preparation and delivery. I ran discussions ensuring equal participation of all the students. I designed assignments befitting their interests and competencies. My contribution was manifest in the way I revised the syllabus to incorporate seminal theories and critical traditions, especially romanticism, naturalism, and rhetoric. To substantiate learning in a pragmatic environment, I used a plethora of literary artefacts such as poems, songs, stories, essays and excerpts from masterpieces. I mostly utilized my fresh creations so that students would not bother finding ready-made critiques online but try appreciating the artefacts independently. Best of all, I tried to incorporate the experiences of both Nepalis and foreigners while observing critical and creative practices in diverse cultural settings.

As a teacher and Head of the Department that implements the course, I must relish the fact that my facilitation of EDEL 508 in Fall 2022 was not perfect, and I had to work harder to make it a very impactful and learning-oriented course in the future. If I shy away from admitting and learning from my imperfections, I will not be able to encourage others to minimize theirs. But I cherish at least three aspects from that semester. First, this course inaugurated my long-coveted involvement in graduate-level teaching of a course in literary theory and criticism. This gave me a platform to apply my knowledge and creativity and hone my delivery competencies in the subject. I will, therefore, hold dear the creative assignments I introduced to generate interest in the students. Second, this single course and the nature of student tendencies toward literary studies revealed a need for proper horizontal and vertical realignment of components across the semesters. I would certainly try to utilize this revelation in the next phase of the program revision. Third, I got an opportunity to facilitate learning for and interact meaningfully with more than a dozen highly committed and curious educators from Nepal and abroad. Getting to know people were itself a great reward and a matter to cherish. The critical sensibility exhibited by some of them in writing and oral communication was another significant element to remember as a teacher.

To conclude, I do not intend this course review to represent a comprehensive application of the CIPP model. I would, however, state a four-dimensional contribution through this academic pursuit. First, it presents a micro-level application of the CIPP model, with a syllabus as the subject of study leading to implications for the overall curricular and pedagogical nature of managing a graduate program online. Second, it exposes the critical relationship of one course with other courses in the given program and signals the need for content realignment so as to make the program both vertically and horizontally well-organized. Third, it reveals a fairly productive curricular engagement of the students amid several technical and pedagogical limitations on a virtual platform. Finally, it offers a structured yet adaptable narrative of a course facilitator's professional growth through a semester-long engagement with adult learners in a moderately flexible learning environment.

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The Authors

Hem Raj Kafle is a professor and the dean at School of Education, Kathmandu University.

AI Declaration

No generative AI tools are used in the creation of this paper.

ANNEX I:

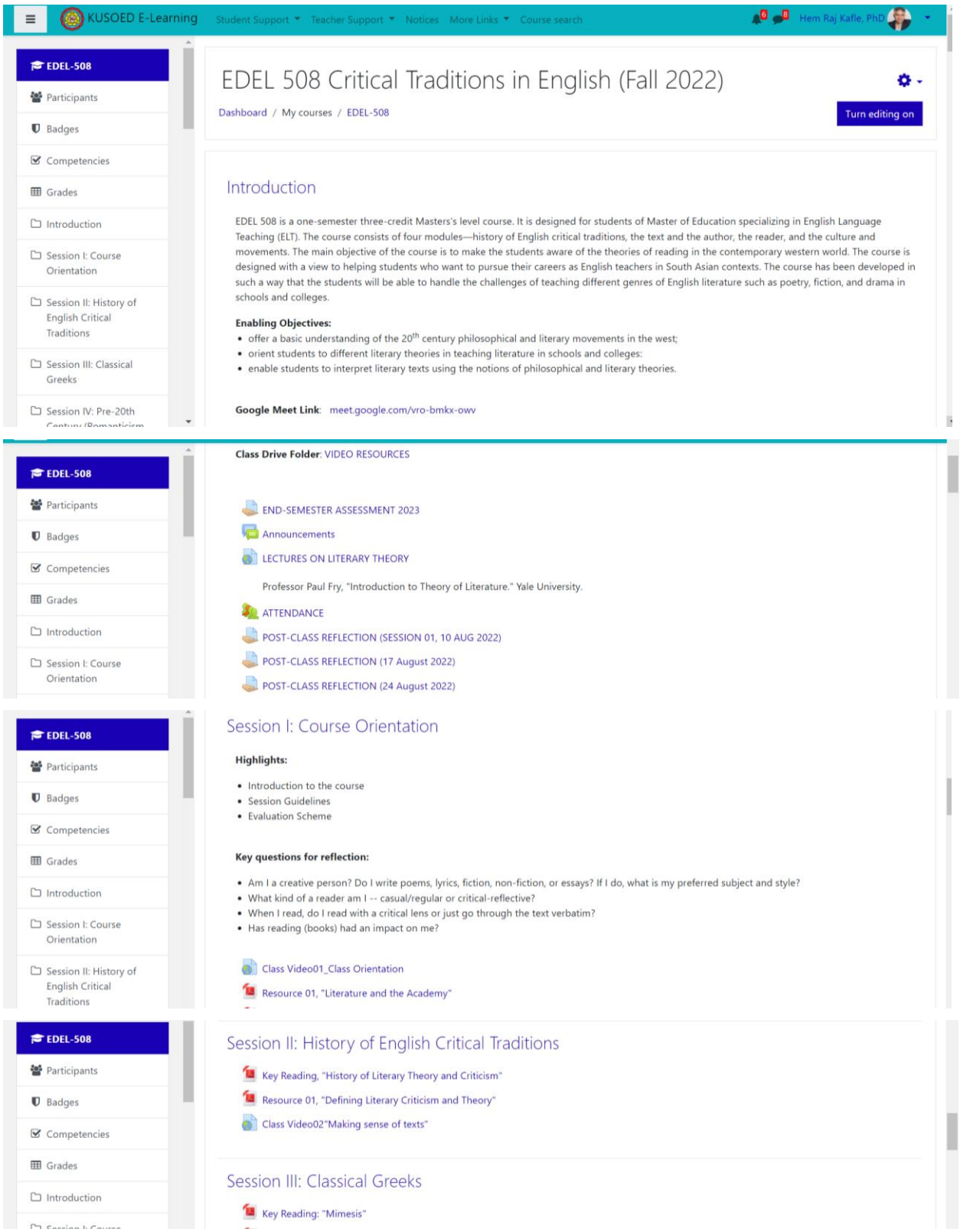
Evaluation Questions Common to CIPP

Context	Input	Process	Product
• What is necessary or useful: in other words, what are the educational needs? • What are the impediments to meeting necessary or useful needs? • What pertinent expertise, services, or other assets are available? • What relevant opportunities (e.g. funding opportunities, administrative support) exist?	• What are the potential approaches to meeting the identified educational need? • How feasible is each of the identified approaches, given the specific educational context of the need? • How cost-effective is each identified approach, given the specific educational context of the need?	• How was the program actually implemented, compared to the plan? • How is/was the program implementation documented? • Are/were program activities on schedule? If not, why? • Is/was the program running on budget? If it is/was over or under the planned budget, why? • Is/was the program running efficiently? If not, why? • Can/did participants accept and carry out their roles? • What implementation problems have been/were encountered? • How well are/were the implementation problems addressed? • What do/did participants and observers think about the quality of the process?	• What positive outcomes of the program can be identified? • What negative outcomes of the program can be identified? • Were the intended outcomes of the program realized? • Were there unintended outcomes, either positive or negative? • What are the short-term implications of program outcomes? • What are the longer-term implications of program outcomes? • What impacts of the program are observed? • How effective was the program? • How sustainable is the program? • How sustainable are the intended and positive program outcomes? • How easily can the program elements be adopted by other educators with similar needs?

(Fry & Hemmer, 2012)

ANNEX II:

Screenshots of the Moodle Page for EDEL 508



ANNEX III:

Guidelines for Post-Class Reflection

Points	Focuses
HOW DID THE CLASS GO?	- Setting (physical, temporal aspects) - Teacher activities: What did the teacher do? What did the teacher not do? (anything that you found unique for the day) - How did the class respond in general? Did anyone behave in particular/striking ways? - How could the class have been more effective (in terms of light, temperature, timing, teacher performance, teaching materials, student response, etc.)
HOW DID I PARTICIPATE AND CONTRIBUTE?	- How did I respond to the class (write, listen etc.)? - What unique thing did I do (laughed out loud, blurted out, felt bored, yawned, fell asleep, fell sick, got frustrated etc.), and why? - Asked questions? Initiated a discussion? Led a seminar? Made a presentation? Debated with a peer? Read a journal entry? - Presented a unique experience related to the text? - Overall, how did I help in the teaching-learning process?
WHAT WOULD I CHERISH (REMEMBER, REFLECT, TALK, WRITE ABOUT) FROM THE CLASS?	- Anything you learned from the text? - Any anecdote or story or joke the teacher told, which you would love to remember? - Anything the teacher told in the form of counseling? - Any epiphanies of the day, which you would love to share in any creative forms?