# INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

## Course Leader

***Susan Sajadi, PhD*,** Assistant Professor of Engineering Education [ssajadi@vt.edu](mailto:ssajadi@vt.edu)

## Teaching Assistants

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**Questions/Office Hours**

If you have any questions, we’re happy to help. Please be sure you read this syllabus and other relevant course documents (such as assignment descriptions). The best way to approach us is by email. If you want to have office hours, please email us, and we will coordinate a time that works.

# COURSE OVERVIEW

The aim of this one-credit professional seminar is to help graduate students in the College of Engineering: (1) develop strategies for entering an effective mentee-mentor relationship; and (2) build an awareness of Virginia Tech’s diversity and inclusion values. Leveraging research expertise of faculty within the Department of Engineering Education as well as evidence-based curricula, the seminar will provide students with success strategies as they embark on their graduate education journey. This seminar is geared toward first-year 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 the ability to...

* Recognize and understand essential relationships found in graduate education
* Assess the consequences of personal actions and language
* Understand and respect the needs, perspectives, and actions of others
* Recognize interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts and identify possible solutions
* Reflect on one’s role in the Virginia Tech community and engineering profession

**Required Text**

All required readings will be provided via Canvas ([https://canvas.vt.edu)](https://canvas.vt.edu)

**Class Meetings (There are multiple sections of the course, please check the CRN you are registered in)**

CRN 84795 - Goodwin Hall 190 - 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM - Wednesdays 9/4, 9/11, 9/18, 9/25, and 10/2

CRN 84796 - Goodwin Hall 190 - 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM - Wednesdays 10/9, 10/16, 11/6, 11/13, and 11/20

CRN 84797 - Surge Hall 104C - 9:00-12:00 and 2:00 to 4:00 PM, Wednesday 8/21 and Thursday 8/22

**CRN 84798 - Online Zoom - 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM - Tuesdays 9/3, 9/10, 9/17, 9/24, and 10/1**

**Course Format**

## Seminars will be divided into the following parts:

| **Week** | **Topics** |
| --- | --- |
| Week 1 | Part 1: Aligning Expectations |
| Part 2: Establishing a Support Network |
| Week 2 | Part 3: Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion |
| Part 4: Understanding Stereotypes and Bias |
| Week 3 | Part 5: Encouraging Ethical Behavior |
| Part 6: Examining Professionalism |
| Week 4 | Part 7: Communicating Effectively |
| Part 8: Dealing with Group Dynamics |
| Week 5 | Part 9: Addressing External Stressors |
| Part 10: Managing Internal Stressors |

# PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

## Participation Expectations

Because this course is graded on a **Pass/Fail** basis, **your participation is mandatory**. Participation includes a) active attendance and participation at class sessions, b) adhering to the ground rules associated with the course, and c) engagement with assigned out-of-class readings/activities.

**Attendance/Absences**

While attendance is required, there are make-up options for absences. If you know ahead of time that you will have to miss part of our sessions, please email Dr. Susan Sajadi (ssajadi@vt.edu) as soon as you know. If you are absent for more than two of the five classes, you will not receive a passing grade for the course; you will receive a Fail and need to re-take the class.

# ASSESSMENT

## Workload

This is a one-credit class, but it does not meet the standard fifteen weeks. We will meet 5 times during the semester. Please note that the PDP assignment is intended to be completed over the course of multiple weeks, so please plan accordingly.

## Assignments and Grading

This is a Pass/Fail class where you are required to complete all assignments to pass.If you participate in each class session and complete all assignments with integrity and thoughtful effort, you will pass this class. When grading, if we feel you did not satisfactorily complete a written assignment, we will give you specific feedback and then request that you revise and resubmit your assignment. If you do not satisfactorily complete an assignment, you will receive an Incomplete (I) for this course until you satisfy all requirements.

Your grade will be based on the following assignments*. Some readings and activities are to be done after each session; please refer to the All Assignments at a Glance document in Canvas.* **See Canvas for full assignment descriptions.**

| **Assignment** | **Submit via** | **Due Date** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|
|  |
| Attendance and Participation | Mentimeter during class | Attend all sessions:  **CRN 84798** - **T** 9/3, 9/10, 9/17, 9/24, and 10/1. |
| Critical Reflection | Canvas | September 22nd at 11:59 PM ET |
| PDP | October 6th at 11:59 PM ET |
| End of Course Survey | Canvas, QuestionPro | October 7th at 11:59 PM ET |

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Virginia Tech consumes. We pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging. Learn more: [https://ccc.vt.edu/index/aiicc.htm](https://ccc.vt.edu/index/aiicc.html)

# 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; it’s ok to discuss the assignment with a peer or mentor, but your submitted written work must be your own. As a rule of thumb, to avoid suspicions of plagiarism in this course, you should use quotation 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. Using ChatGPT or other AI to generate work and misrepresenting it as one’s own original work would constitute cheating or plagiarism under the Graduate Honor Code.

# 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 collectively work to create 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, and honors everyone’s identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).

## Principles of Community

[The Virginia Tech Principles of Community](http://www.vt.edu/principles.php) 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 involves discussions with your peers, 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.

To learn more, see *"What are the Principles of Community and Why are they referenced so often?"*, an InclusiveVT video by Dr. Watford (Associate Dean for Equity and Engagement, College of Engineering): <https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/Initiatives/DiversityEducationandPrograms/inclusive-insights/POC-referenced.html>

**Identity**

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to according to their personal identity. In this class, you will have multiple opportunities 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 do our best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

## Accessibility and Support

In designing this course, we have sought to make it accessible for all. However, we are always learning, so if the course design does pose any barriers, please contact Dr. Susan Sajadi (ssajadi@vt.edu); and, if necessary, contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) ([ssd.vt.edu](https://ssd.vt.edu/)) as soon as possible. Additionally, we recognize that many students taking our class are new to Virginia Tech and may just be starting the process of securing SSD accommodations while taking our class. If you have not yet received your accommodations letter but are engaged in the SSD process while taking our class, please contact Dr. Susan Sajadi (ssajadi@vt.edu) so we can work with you to make class accessible to you. Your notification will remain confidential. Visit [vt.edu/accessibility](https://vt.edu/accessibility.html) to learn about accessibility resources available to you at Virginia Tech.

If the course schedule conflicts with religious observances, please let Dr. Susan Sajadi (ssajadi@vt.edu) know as soon as possible.

We also understand that there is more to you and your life than what we see during class time. If something is going on in your life that affects your ability to participate and engage as a student (e.g., anxiety, depression, family or health crisis, visible or invisible disability, food or housing insecurity, etc.) please contact Dr. Susan Sajadi ([ssajadi@vt.edu](mailto:ssajadi@vt.edu)) and we will do our best to connect you with university and community resources.

There are many Virginia Tech resources available to you, from counseling to writing coaches to social events; you can learn more here: [graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/student-services](https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/student-services.html). There are also resources specifically available to virtual students, learn more here: [tlos.vt.edu/learn/online-teaching/online-support](https://tlos.vt.edu/learn/online-teaching/online-support.html).

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some course material was informed by the *Entering Research* curriculum from the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research [https://cimerproject.org/#/curricula/training-materials.](https://cimerproject.org/#/curricula/training-materials.T) Some parts of the syllabus and course material have been inspired by ideas from Dr. David Knight, Dr. Kirsten Davis, and Aevelina Rahman.