C&T 331: Instructional Approaches for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the Middle/Secondary Classroom is an introductory theory and methods course in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) program. I first taught 331 in Spring 2015. During the semester I assigned several high-stakes assignments, many of which revolved around writing lesson plans.

To address the problem, I have redesigned this class (focusing primarily on tasks and assignments) by applying the strategy of backward design. To make sure my goals are sound, stated up-front, supported, and measurable, I have:

- **Grounded my assignments in theory.** To create theoretically sound and motivating assignments, I have spent time exploring research related to the various tasks I incorporate in class to see what others have learned from their approaches. I have also grounded my practice in theory so that it is more effective. One assignment in particular that will benefit from this grounding is my Mini (micro) Teaching Demonstrations.

- **Created grading rubrics.** Last year, not wanting to stifle the students' creative potential to produce work or responses that I may not have considered in the grading rubric, I chose not to use rubrics in the course. Though there is merit to this thinking, especially for a redesigned class, I have come to recognize that rubrics not only benefit students directly, but also influence how thoroughly and explicitly I state the goals and objectives in my course assignments (and how they reinforce the overarching course goals). Below is an excerpt from one of my new rubrics.

While the students generally performed well on the assignments, and though they demonstrated some learning around the skills of writing lesson plans based on the principles of English-language learning, I found the work they produced was not theoretically grounded nor reflective of the key pedagogical skills they needed to take away from the class.

As a first-year assistant professor in the School of Education (that’s me, above – the tall one), I was not yet familiar with the scope and sequence of the program, and thus not certain what skills students could and should demonstrate within their program of study. Now that I am more familiar with the program, I can better design assignments and tasks that reflect and encourage deep engagement with the theoretical knowledge and instructional practices (Content-Based Instruction) at the heart of the course.

I will teach C&T 331 again in Spring 2016. I will assess student learning (measured by the ability to apply theoretical knowledge and practice) primarily through three high-stakes assessments that draw upon real-world tasks and instructional challenges. A screenshot of one of these assignments (taken from my course Blackboard site) is featured below. The assignment is drawn from the PBS video “Pass or Fail in Cambodiotown.” In this assignment, students are challenged to incorporate culturally inclusive instructional practices into a 60-minute lesson plan.

*Maria Hinojosa, producer. “America by the Numbers with Maria Hinojosa: Pass or Fail in Cambodiotown” (2014). PBS.