INTERVIEW 2 – ONE PAGE VERSION
Theories of Development and Engineering Thinking
Taught for the first time by a pair of associate professors (one is the interviewee here)

In looking at this [story, I am] immediately thinking of what would it have been like to have the Big Book of how to teach this class, the placeholder for the key points, the goals, written as if it's meant to be shared, and how would I have used it... We're teaching a class for which the faculty member didn't show up. We had all of a day to sit down, pull together stories from the students who took the class [last year], the materials we had from the last time it was taught, and very, very quickly come up with something to give to students so that there was some stability. It was just wide open. We didn't really feel comfortable just saying "we will do exactly what she did" because we don't know exactly what she did. Well, we can't be her. We have to be whatever it is that we can be.

We had copies of all the readings, the syllabus. Lots of words on the [old] syllabus are things about "if you don't show up for class..." we didn't change that. We kept the structure. We had to change the course project because we didn't really have the resources to [grade] 20 papers. Time, time. It's the one thing that you can't go and get more of. Even though there were people who were willing to help, that actually had its own cost at the get-go [and] we needed to do something as quickly as possible. [My co-instructor] and I came together for coffee for an afternoon [and] we rewrote the objectives because we needed to think about what were the big ideas. Because we would look at the stuff [from last year's class] and go "why is she having you read all this stuff, it's like 200 pages, does she really expect you to read all that?" I can't assign readings if I'm not going to read them and be responsible for it. I don't have time in my life to read 200 pages...

We kind of came up with our own stories of things. You're going to be reading a whole bunch of theories about human development. We're not going to give you a test at the end of the week and say "which one said this?" We wanted to develop your ability to be able to engage with these ideas. There's not a single, universal theory. The reason they all exist is because they are each speaking to a weakness or something that wasn't addressed somewhere else. So that ended up being an enduring idea, [making] sense of these things on your own. Once we did that we came back and looked at each week at the readings we selected. We tried to make sure that there was some sort of reading that was talking about strengths or weaknesses [of the theory of the week], [and] a reading that either illustrates how you use this to do research or how this might relate to designing learning environments.

In the process of doing that we're noticing that some of the [reading] selections are not what I would have chosen. For example one of the key things about Vygotsky is the idea of a zone of proximal development. She didn't have any readings that went really into that. So I looked around for that one and came across a paper by one of the authors that we were going to do the week after, talking about the people that we had read before him. What a great opportunity to have this person sort of sit back and talk about these two theories, because these are real people. Their ideas didn't come out of some magic box. It sort of carried a story line connecting the various people that we were reading.

If there was a Big Book of "this is how to teach the class," I don't know if I would have necessarily gone "ah, here is the recipe." I probably still would have tried to figure out what were the big ideas. Is there such a thing as the Big Magic Book that has all the answers? Ultimately I had to make it my own. The Big Book is me and [my co-instructor] sitting down and talking to each other, a place [that doesn't] necessarily look pretty but captured conversations about the class. The [Big] Book is coming out of the process.