

Fall 2011: 05:300:306:09, Educational Psychology: Principles of Classroom Learning

Mondays, 4:30-7:30, [MU-111](#)

Course Instructor: Dessislava Gradinarova-Kirova

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*Required text: O'Donnell, A. M., Reeve, J. M., & Smith, J. K. (2009). *Educational Psychology: Reflection for Action* (2nd Edition); Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley. Available at New Jersey Bookstore, Somerset Street.*

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

The purpose of the course is to introduce you to the theory and research that underlies instructional practice. In this course you can expect to learn about your own thinking skills and learning strategies. In order to better understand the processes of learning and teaching, you will have to complement your practical experience with a deep appreciation of the psychological basis for human thinking and learning. The primary goal for this course is to stimulate your reasoning about these processes in light of the contemporary educational research and theory. As the title of the textbook suggests, you will be expected to consider instructional issues and classroom problems with regard to research-based ideas and to formulate action plans. The course will introduce competing theories of learning and motivation with a focus on understanding how different theories may have different implications for decisions made in the classroom.

GOALS FOR THE COURSE

In this course, you will be learning to connect abstract principles to concrete examples. The text is written to encourage “reflection for action” so that you can consider alternative strategies in the classroom. At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- *Describe and critique the major theories that seek to explain how humans learn.*
- *Explain how human memory is thought to work and describe the implications of this understanding for how you would teach.*
- *Characterize the role of motivation in classrooms and analyze the relationships between motivation and competence.*
- *Describe various approaches to defining intelligence and explain the effects of these views on teachers and students.*
- *Explain the implications of individual differences such as socioeconomic status, race, gender, and ability for classroom instruction.*
- *Explain the rationale for a variety of practical instructional methods and choices such as cooperative learning, individual practice.*
- *Understand your own strengths and weaknesses as a learner.*

GENERAL RULES

Performance evaluation: the evaluation of your performance in this course is based on a points system. It is possible for you to earn a total of one thousand points for this course (A=900+; B+=870; B=800; C+=770; C=700; D=600; F=<600). All notifications posted through Sakai are sent to your Rutgers email account. It is your responsibility to get notes, including handouts, from another student if you miss class. If you miss class when exams are returned, you will need to come to office hours to look at your exam.

Academic Integrity: in this course you are expected to comply with standards of academic integrity. If you need assistance in understanding an assignment or course content, please seek assistance from appropriate resources. Assignments should be the product of your own intellectual work. The consequences for violating policies of academic integrity and other elements of the student code of conduct are serious and can have a tremendous negative impact on your academic progress and future career. Please familiarize yourself with the university policy on academic integrity: (http://www.rcstudentservice.rutgers.edu/academic_integrity.html)

ATTENDANCE

You are expected to attend class and participate. Not attending class will have an influence on this portion of your grade since you can not participate if you are not in class. The learning in the class is cumulative, so absences will negatively affect your ability to do subsequent work as well as your peers in the class. More than three unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your final grade as indicated: 3 absences - reduction of a half a grade; 4 absences--reduction of 1 full grade; 5 absences--reduction of 2 full grades; 6 absences - failing grade in course. It is your responsibility to get notes, including handouts, from another student if you miss a class. Attendance sheets will be distributed each week and attendance records for all students will be kept. Leaving early and coming late for class will count as ½ absence.

Make Up Exams: Make-up exams will NOT be scheduled unless you miss an exam because of a religious observance or because of a properly documented illness. Proper documentation means that you provide a doctor's note that states you were unable to attend class on the specific day of the exam. No exceptions will be made.

CELL PHONE AND LAPTOP USE

You are strongly discouraged to use your cell phone during class. Texting, browsing, e-mailing and completing written assignments during class sessions is unacceptable and you will be asked to leave class. The use of laptops during class is limited to access of course related web content, and all other web activity will negatively affect your participation grade. Emergency cell phone calls should be taken outside of the classroom.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. Critique of empirical research publications (2 x 50 points)

During the course of the semester you will be required to write and submit two critical summaries of educational

research.

Purpose: The reason for this assignment is to understand the underlying relationship between theoretical approaches and their testing and implementation in practical contexts. You will be asked to search for and identify two separate publications of educational research dealing with instructional methods and practices based on particular theoretical approaches (behavioral, constructivist etc.). Your task will be to critically comment on the publications, with a focus on their theoretical perspective.

Required Elements: Your paper should include specific discussion of the methodology of the article, and the theoretical perspective that is employed in the study. Your critical comments on the publications should be based on the material covered in the class.

Submit/Format: The expected paper length is 2 double-spaced pages. The paper must be submitted through Sakai web site, and the automated Sakai submission notification should be forwarded to deska@rci.rutgers.edu.

Grading: For these assignments please check the due date outlined in the schedule of classes and the Sakai web site. Papers will be considered late if they are submitted after the due date posted on Sakai. Papers will lose 5 points for each day they are late. For these assignments there will be a writing rubric available through Sakai web site.

2. Mid-term examination (200 points):

Purpose: The mid-term examination is intended to test knowledge of course content presented in the assigned readings.

Format: The exam will consist of multiple-choice items and short answer items.

Grading: Grading is based on the number of correct answers on the multiple-choice questions, combined with scores from the alternative format questions. Make-ups will NOT be scheduled unless there is an explicit conflict with a religious observance or other properly documented absence.

3. Paper: Practical Application of Theories of Learning (200 points).

Purpose: This paper is intended to provide opportunities for you to apply your knowledge of theories of learning in solving practical issues that could occur in a teaching/learning context. You will be able to choose one from a choice of three different classroom scenarios, for which you will have to provide a practical solution based on your knowledge of theories of learning and cognition. You will be asked to elaborate on your practical solution, incorporating one or more of the concepts and theories that we will cover in the course.

Required Elements: Your paper should include specific discussion of the theoretical perspective that you choose to incorporate and how specifically this theory(s) could be helpful in solving the issue.

Submit/Format: The expected paper length is 5-6 pages. The paper must be submitted through Sakai web site, and the automated Sakai submission notification should be forwarded to deska@rci.rutgers.edu.

Grading: For this assignment please check the due date outlined in the schedule of classes and the Sakai web site. Papers will be considered late if they are submitted after the due date posted on Sakai. Papers will lose 10 points for each day they are late. For this assignment there will be a writing rubric available through Sakai web site.

4. Group project (200 points):

The collaborative project in this course is intended to give you an alternative perspective on the academic material covered in the course. It is a way for you to think about and recognize the wide scope of practical implications of the theories of learning and development. You will be provided with a detailed timeline for this project, as well as with a list of possible project topics.

Purpose: This particular assignment's goal is to let you explore issues that are of interest to you and will allow you to talk about these issues in your own voice.

Format: The format for this assignment is the group's choice: web site, blog, PowerPoint presentation etc.

Grading: Grading will be based on the requirements outlined in the group project rubric (will be available through Sakai).

5. Final Examination (250 points):

The final exam is cumulative. Reasons for a cumulative final include an appeal to the cumulative nature of knowledge and a chance to capitalize on previous success. The exam will consist of multiple-choice and generative format questions. Exams are not permitted in the last week of classes. Please see the following website for the regulations governing final exams: <http://finalexams.rutgers.edu>

Purpose: The final examination is intended to test knowledge of course content presented in the assigned readings.

Format: The exam will consist of multiple-choice items and short answer items.

Grading: Grading is based on the number of correct answers on the multiple-choice questions, combined with scores from the alternative format questions. Make-ups will NOT be scheduled unless there is an explicit conflict with a religious observance or other properly documented absence.

6. Participation/preparedness (50 points):

You are expected to come to class prepared to answer questions and discuss the assigned readings. Your personal contribution to the class discussions and activities will be of great importance and will directly affect your grade. When completing the assigned readings, you are encouraged to take notes and come to class with your questions/comments about particular topics that are challenging and/or of interest to you. Asking questions, discussing your classmates' answers and generally being proactive in the learning process is vital for your academic achievement in this course.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

	Weekly Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1 September 8	Introduction	Locating Reflective Practices: Findings From a Self-Study: available in Sakai Resources.	
Week 2 September 12	Teaching	Chapter 2	
Week 3 September 19	Behavior Learning Theory Group projects kick-off	Chapter 6	
Week 4 September 26	Classroom management	Chapter 7	
Week 5 October 3	Cognitive Theories of Learning	Chapter 8	1st Critical Summary Due
Week 6 October 10	Cognitive Development	Chapter 3	
Week 7 October 17	Social Development	Chapter 4	Submit Group project outline
Week 8 October 24	Mid-term examination		
Week 9 October 31	Individual Differences	Chapter 5	
Week 10 November 7	Complex Cognition and Social Constructivism	Chapter 9	2nd Critical Summary Due
Week 11 November 14	Peer Learning	Chapter 10	
Week 12 November 28	Motivation and Engagement	Chapter 11	Paper Due
Week 13 December 5	Motivation to Learn	Chapter 12	
Week 14 December 12	Group project presentations		
Week 15	Final Exam Dec 22, 2011: 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM		

Due to time constraints, we will not be able to cover all of the assigned readings in the same detail in class. Students are responsible for the content listed above.

Thank you and have a great Fall semester!