

15:295:510 Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

Class Meets:	Room 347, GSE, Wednesday 4.50 – 7.30 p.m.
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Course Materials

1. Required text: *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning (1999)*. Edited by Angela M. O'Donnell and Alison King. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
2. Journal articles will be posted on www.sakai.rutgers.edu

Objectives of the Course

My goals for you during this course are to have you:

- Become familiar with and critical of various theories that purport to explain the benefits of collaboration/cooperation
- Learn to critique original research in cooperative learning
- Develop a peer learning technique that will be helpful to you in your work
- Work with other people in the class to develop an understanding of the complexity of effective peer learning
- Engage in critical discussion of work in the field

Course Description

The course presents an overview of current theory and research on cooperative and collaborative learning techniques with particular reference to classroom learning. The course is not intended to be a *methods* course but rather focuses on theoretical perspectives on cooperative learning that will inform the practical choices to be made in classrooms. We will consider examples of techniques and discuss the research findings on the effects of cooperative learning on cognitive and affective outcomes will be discussed. We will also address the role of high level discourse and the teacher's role in supporting such discourse by the selection of tasks and the prompting of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. We will examine cooperative and collaborative learning from different theoretical perspectives including those from developmental, social, and cognitive psychology, sociology, and sociolinguistics and the limitations of these various approaches.

Evaluation

ACTIVITY	DUE DATE	% GRADE	RESPONSIBILITY
Weekly Notes	Weekly	20%	Individual
Article Critique or Design a Technique	Oct 24th	20%	Individual
Presentation/Lead Class Discussion	BA	25%	Individual
Term Paper	Dec 19th	30%	Individual

Weekly Notes

Purpose:

The purpose of writing weekly notes is to have you articulate your specific reactions to the assigned reading materials/lecture about particular content in the course.

The Task.

You will need to write a 1-2 page reaction paper to the assigned reading each week. You can provide one of the following different types of responses.

- (1) *Questions about the readings:* In this type of assignment, you will be asked to identify 3 questions that you have about the assigned readings for the week. You will need to justify why your questions are interesting or important.
- (2) *Theory critiques:* I will provide a problem to the class and ask how it might be explained from a particular theoretical viewpoint. For example, I may present a case of a student with learning difficulties and suggest how a particular theory might explain the situation. Your task would be to critique the limits of the theory to explain the case.
- (3) *Identification of limitations.* You will need to identify a limitation of a theory or principle from the readings of the week. You will provide an explanation of the limitation and provide a constructive suggestion for how this limitation could be ameliorated.

Critique of an Article on Cooperative Learning

Purpose: The goal of this activity is to have you learn to critically evaluate an empirical research article on the topic of cooperative or collaborative learning. You will need to select an article from a reputable research journal such as those listed below. Other journals may be suitable but you should verify the appropriateness of the journal with me before proceeding.

Journal of Educational Psychology.	Journal of Educational Research.	Journal of Experimental Education.
Reading Research Quarterly	American Educational Research Journal.	Journal of Research in Mathematics Education
Cognition and Instruction.	Review of Educational Research.	Journal of Special Education.
Instructional Science.	Journal of Learning Disabilities.	Learning and Instruction
Educational Psychology Review	Journal of Research in the Teaching of Science	College Composition and Communication

Your paper should be 5-6 pages in length, typed, and double spaced. Your title page should include your name, your course number, and you should indicate that the paper is being submitted in order to satisfy the research participation requirement in your class.

Your paper should include the following kinds of information. Some sample questions which might guide your critique are given below, but you should not limit yourself to addressing only these. An empirical article typically has an introduction, a methods section, a results section, and a discussion/conclusions section.

Introduction:

You should provide a summary of the objectives of the research reported. Why was the research conducted? You should critique the stated objectives of the research by addressing whether or not the rationale for the research reported was convincing. Was the problem addressed an important problem?

Was adequate background information to the problem presented? Was the educational significance of the topic discussed? (yes or no answers to these sample questions are not acceptable.)

Methods

You should describe how the research was conducted. Was the subject population adequately described and appropriate to the questions addressed? Could the objectives of the research be met by the methods used to conduct the research? Was the description of the procedures clear and detailed enough to allow someone else to replicate the research?

Results

What were the results of the research?

Discussion/conclusions

What were the theoretical implications of the results?

What were the practical implications of the results?

Could the results be generalized?

What were the limitations of the research?

OR Design a Technique

Purpose: The purpose of the activity is to provide you with an experience of designing a cooperative technique that you can use in either your workplace or in your classroom.

The Task

You will be asked to design a cooperative learning technique for use with a particular age group and subject matter. You will decide on the age and subject matter. You will need to provide instructions for a new teacher that would allow the teacher to use your cooperative learning technique effectively. Your plan should include the following:

- a) A description of how the technique works. The description should be detailed. Sample worksheets that might be necessary to support the work should be included. Trial videotapes of the technique in action might also be included.
- b) A description of the age of the students for whom the technique is intended and a rationale for the appropriateness of the technique to the age group.
- c) A rationale for the appropriateness of the technique to the subject matter chosen.
- d) A description of important decisions made (e.g., use of group rewards). Outline your rationale (supported by reference to the research read in the course) for important decisions.
- e) A description of possible sources of problems that might be encountered and your suggested solutions to those problems.
- f) Descriptions of hypothetical problem individual students and how you solve their particular problems (2 students should be described).
- g) A description of the kinds of tasks for which your technique is appropriate. Explain why these tasks and not others are appropriate.

- h) Suggestions for how to get started using the technique. Specifically, what should students be able to do before the technique can work successfully? Outline plans to teach those skills they may not already have but might be necessary.

TERM PAPER

This will consist of a thorough literature review on a topic chosen by you. The paper is worth 30% of your grade. The topic of your paper should be relevant to the content of the course. The paper should be written using APA style, which is the style of the American Psychological Association. If you do not already have a copy of the APA Style Manual (5th edition), you can get access to one at the reference section of the library. The final paper should be between 15 and 25 pages long, excluding references. For the purpose of the literature review, a convergence approach is probably the best approach to adopt, that is, you should start with general ideas and converge on specific issues which you feel have been ignored in the current literature, or are interesting and worth pursuing. You should provide me with a title and abstract of the paper (general idea of what you might include) of the paper on March 10th. The final paper is due on April 28th. A detailed description of how to do a literature review can be found at the end of the syllabus.

Tentative Schedule of Class Meeting and Readings

Date	
Sept 5	Introduction
Sept 12	Chapter 1
Sept 19	Chapter 2
Sept 26	Chapter 5
Oct 3	Tutoring: Chapter 3 Mathes, P. G., & Fuchs, L. S. (1994). The efficacy of peer tutoring in reading for students with mild disabilities: A best-evidence synthesis. <i>School Psychology Review</i> , 23, 55-76. Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., Mathes, P. G., & Simmons, D. C. (1997). Peer-assisted learning strategies: Making classrooms more responsive to academic diversity. <i>American Educational Research Journal</i> , 34, 174-206.
Oct 10	Roles in Groups Chapter 6
Oct 17	The role of the teacher: Chapters 9, 10
Oct 24	Cooperative Learning in the Inclusion Classroom Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., Mathes, P. G., & Martinez, E. A. (2002). Preliminary evidence on the social standing of students with learning disabilities in PALS and no-PALS classrooms. <i>Learning Disabilities Research</i> , 17(4), 205-215. Jenkins, J. R., & O'Connor, R. E. (2003b). Cooperative learning for students with learning disabilities: Evidence from experiments, observations, and interviews. In H. L. Swanson & K. R. Harris & S. Graham (Eds.), <i>Handbook of learning disabilities</i> (pp. 417-430). New York: The Guilford Press.

Oct 31	<p>Group Composition</p> <p>Webb, N. W. (1982). Group composition, group interaction, and achievement in cooperative small groups. <i>Journal of Educational Psychology</i>, 74, 475-484.</p> <p>Webb, N. W., Nemer, K. M., & Zuniga, S. (2002). Short circuits or superconductors: Effects of group composition on high achieving students' science assessment performance. <i>American Educational Research Journal</i>, 39, 943-989.</p>
Nov 7	<p>Status Characteristics</p> <p>Cohen, E. G., & Lotan, R. A. (1995). Producing equal-status interaction in the heterogeneous classroom. <i>American Educational Research Journal</i>, 32, 99-120.</p> <p>Chapter 7</p>
Nov 14	Quality Interaction Chapters 4 and 5
Nov 21	Thanksgiving Break
Nov 28	<p>Antil, L. R., Jenkins, J. R., Wayne, S. K., & Vadasy, P. F. (1998). Prevalence, conceptualizations, and the relation between research and practice. <i>American Educational Research Journal</i>, 35, 419-454.</p> <p>Webb, N. W., Nemer, K. M., & Ing, M. (2006). Small-group reflections: Parallels between teacher discourse and student behavior in peer-directed groups. <i>The Journal of the Learning Sciences</i>, 15(1), 63-119</p>
Dec 5	Social motivational perspectives on peer learning (to be assigned)
Dec 12	<p>Selection of Tasks</p> <p>Cohen, E. G. (1994). Restructuring the classroom: Conditions for productive small groups. <i>Review of Educational Research</i>, 64, 1-36.</p> <p>Chapter 8</p> <p>Lotan, R. A. (2003). Group-worthy tasks. <i>Educational Leadership</i>, 60(6), 72-75.</p>
Dec 19	<p>Accountability, Reflection, and Processing</p> <p>Cohen, E. G., Lotan, R. A., Abram, P. L., Scarloss, B. A., & Schultz, S. E. (2002). Can groups learn? <i>Teachers College Record</i>, 104(6), 1045-1068.</p>