

Psychology of Learning

15:295:580:90

Department Of Educational Psychology
Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Instructor: Dr. Anandi Nagarajan

This is an Asynchronous Online Class: 1st day to log-in: September 10th, Monday.

Topics switch every Monday. Weekly Participation is as per your schedule but deadlines for all assignments and discussions must be met. Please check details below.

Virtual Office Hours: I log in at least 5 times a day and will respond to your queries promptly. If have an immediate concern, email me directly instead of just posting on the discussion board.

E-mail: annagara@rci.rutgers.edu This is the best way to reach me.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to psychological theories of human learning, in particular cognitive and sociocultural theories. We will examine how people learn and how psychological principles of learning are applied to instruction. We will also consider applications of these theories and principles to a variety of settings that include both classroom and out of school situations.

This is a reading and writing intensive course. You are responsible to keep up with the weekly readings and be prepared to participate in the online discussions during the week and submit weekly writing assignments as per the deadlines. Online discussions will be whole-class, small-group, and in dyad settings. **You can expect to put in six – nine hours each week in preparation, participation and homework assignments for this class.** Owing to the online nature of the course, you can determine your own timings, and plan as per your schedule in order to meet the weekly deadlines.

Course Text/Readings

1. Alexander, P.A. (2006). *Psychology in Learning and Instruction*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. The book is available on Amazon or any other online bookstore and ships for free.

2. STELLAR Website: This site contains a learning sciences hypertext and online videocases at <http://stellar.wcer.wisc.edu/step/>. The username is demo2; the password is testing2.

3. Articles available through electronic sources at the library or posted on the course site

Course Structure & Expectations

My instructional goal is to make your experience in this course productive, practical, and personally meaningful. To accomplish this, it is important that you understand how the course will be structured and what my expectations are.

- We will have asynchronous discussions online on a weekly basis on the topic/module under consideration. Throughout the semester, you will discuss the readings from Alexander and other documents that I upload which might include classroom scenarios, videos of learning and teaching, actual artifacts/products created

by school children, and relevant case studies. These activities will help in relating psychological theories to educational practices. You are encouraged to share articles, current news-stories, videos, simulations, and/or other related materials that can help to explain, clarify, or elaborate on ongoing class topics. There will be no tests in this course.

- All components of this course require your active and consistent involvement and participation in class. There will also be a number of papers in this course. **You will need to turn in at least one written assignment every week.** If you have any questions or concerns regarding online participation or writing, please address this with me as soon as possible. Considering the strength of the class and the number of written assignments, **I will not accept any delayed submissions.** You can expect my feedback on weekly papers before the next paper is due.

Course Assignments & Grading

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| • Online Discussion and Facilitation | 20% |
| • 6 Weekly Reflection Papers out of a possible 8 | 60% |
| • Collaborative Case Analysis | 10% |
| • Final Paper | 10% |

Grading Scale

90 and above = A; 87-89 = B+; 80-86 = B; 77-79 = C+; 70-76 = C; 60-69 = D; Below 60 = F

Details of Course Assignments are further discussed below

Online Discussion and Facilitation (20%)

Since this course is online, all of our review, understanding and discussion of weekly readings will be conducted via the e-college discussion board. All students **must** complete the weekly readings, review any additional information that I may have posted including slides and handouts for the week's topic. You are also required to engage in the online discussion by responding to the questions of the week or summarizing your understanding of the given readings. You have 2 roles to play, either that of a facilitator and/or that of a participant.

Each week, 2 students will be assigned as facilitators of the discussion for the following week. I will be the facilitator for the first two weeks and get the discussion started on 9/10 and continue till 9/16. Two students will be assigned to facilitate the online discussion starting on 9/24 and ending on 10/1 and so on for the remaining weeks. Every student will get an opportunity to facilitate at least 1 discussion and possibly 2.

The role of the facilitator is to get the discussion started by either summarizing or asking a BIG IDEA question from the readings. The facilitator should also help keep the discussion going for the week by asking students to justify their thinking and explain their ideas and how they fit with others in the class or group. If some students are not participating or haven't posted a single idea or comment, the facilitators can and should encourage and politely nudge these students to express their opinions. If a comment seems ambiguous, you can ask for elaborated explanations or clarifications.

All remaining students (non-facilitators) are expected to either respond to these questions, identify questions that they have about the readings, and/or share critical ideas that stem from the readings. Posting 2-3 lines of general ideas is **NOT** considered as effective participation and **WILL** reflect on your participation grade. In

order to demonstrate your opinion, understanding, and critical analysis of the reading, you must contribute a significant number of ideas and also respond to other students' questions. I expect that you will each contribute at least 2 initiating comments and/or elaborated questions on different topics within the readings AND respond to at least 2 posts by other students each week. Remember, these postings need not be perfect or represent your final understanding on the topic. These are your thoughts, ideas, and reactions to the reading. Your understanding and final stances on the topics will evolve after sharing, discussing and reflecting on these ideas. **You will learn more if you focus on the content and depth of discussion rather than the number of posts required.** After the week's discussion concludes, you will be ready to write your reflection paper (discussed in the next segment).

Deadline: You must post your comments on the weekly readings by 8PM, Sunday. The discussion is asynchronous and I expect a lot of back and forth exchange of ideas taking place. For the discussion started on 9/10, you must post your comments by 8 PM on 9/16. Please don't wait till the last minute as you need to respond to each other as well. The new discussion topic will start on 9/17, Monday.

Weekly Reflection Papers (6*10=60%)

An effective learning strategy that facilitates understanding and remembering is reflection and review. At the end of every week, you will complete a reflection paper that synthesizes your main understanding from the readings. These reflection papers will provide opportunities for you to reflect on the readings, the course, and your role in discussion. You may consider how what is being discussed would apply in your classroom, counseling practice, or other real world situation. This is where you can demonstrate evidence of your understanding the course material and how it connects with various educational and practice settings. These should not be longer than 1 single spaced/ or 2 double spaced pages (but they should be about that length).

While these are not formal papers, they are also not meant to be bulleted outlines of the readings. Please do NOT summarize the book chapters or the online discussion. Your papers need to reflect your critical thinking and therefore should be given due thought. Feel free to share your experiences that are relevant to the readings, and also why you agree or disagree with the readings. Please do not complete these papers hastily just before they are due. I am not looking for chapter summaries but for the ideas you have developed as a result of reading, discussing, and reflecting. Mere completion does not ensure full credit. I will post samples to exemplify the quality of critical thinking that I expect from you. This is an excellent opportunity to connect the course information to your own teaching and/or other professional experiences.

In all, there are 8 weeks/topics when these papers are due so you get to take 2 weeks off. Basically, you are to submit a reflection paper for 6 of the 8 possible weeks. Check the schedule towards the end.

Deadline: You must submit your weekly reflection papers by 8 PM Monday night before starting discussion on the next topic. For example, discussion for Topic 1: Understanding and Assessment begins on 9/24, comments must be posted by 8 PM on 9/30, Sunday, and reflection papers must be uploaded by 8 PM on 10/1, Monday. The topic switches after 8 PM Monday to Topic 2. Please plan time for reading and completing reflection papers as per your work/school schedule.

Collaborative Case Analysis (2*5 = 10%)

In an effort to apply the psychological concepts and principles we encounter in the readings to practical real-world situations, we will analyze 2 case studies in small groups. The first case study will be a manuscript that provides information on a learning situation and focuses on the learner. The second case study will be a video case that addresses a teaching situation and focuses on teacher techniques and strategies. I will provide a framework for you to discuss the case studies in small groups and then present your conclusions to all students in a whole-class discussion. You will complete a reflection paper after completing the case analysis as a group

on the discussion board. However, your level of participation on the discussion board will impact your grade as well. Please check schedule for deadlines.

Final Paper (10%)

You will write a critical observation report on *a teaching/learning episode* in a context of your choice. This could be a teaching situation you have observed or been a part of, as a teacher or a student. This will count as your final exam.

THIS IS NOT A SCHOOL-BASED ASSIGNMENT. UNLESS YOU ARE ALREADY PLACED IN A SCHOOL FOR SOME REASON, DO NOT CALL A SCHOOL AND ASK TO OBSERVE.

A 4-page double-spaced report should be submitted. This report is to include a brief description of a teaching/learning episode and answers to the following questions:

- What was the learning/teaching context? What was taught? What was the objective?
- What teaching method was used? What theory would you ascribe this method to? Why?
- Talk about the motivation behind the teaching from the standpoint of a presenter/teacher and the standpoint of a learner. That means that you need to elaborate on what motivated the teacher. Also, was/were the learner(s) motivated? How do you know?
- Were there, in your view, any instructional strategies that the presenter/teacher used? What were they? Were they effective?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation? Based on the knowledge gained in this class, what would you do differently, and why?

The main goal of this assignment is for you to connect your classroom observation with the theories and principles discussed in class. When describing the learning method, I expect you will do so in relation to the learning theories we have discussed. At this point in the course, you should be able to provide a professional description, using terms and concepts appropriately to describe the classroom context and learning events.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Class	Topic	Readings	Participation and Assignments Due	Facilitation
9/10 – 9/17	Online introductions, Intro to the course and syllabus How can psychology inform pedagogy?	Syllabus, Intro Survey Alexander - Ch. 1	Read syllabus, complete surveys by 9/12 Contribute to the weekly discussion board. Respond to the main questions and to each other by 9/16.	Anandi
9/17-9/24	What makes a good discussion question?	Hmelo-Silver & Barrows'06 uploaded in Doc-Sharing	Contribute to the weekly discussion board. Respond to the main questions and to each other by 9/23.	Anandi and class
9/24-10/1	Topic 1: Understanding and Assessment	Alexander – Ch. 4 Assessment (refer Ch 13, 14 as appropriate)	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #1 Due on 10/1	
10/1 – 10/8	Collaborative Case Analysis	Case study uploaded in Doc-Sharing	Online Discussion Case Analysis Paper Due on 10/8	
10/8 – 10/15	Topic 2: Domain Learning	Alexander – Ch. 5	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #2 Due on 10/15	
10/15 – 10/22	Topic 3: Transfer	Alexander- Ch. 6	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #3 Due on 10/22	
10/22 – 10/29	Topic 4: Problem-solving	Alexander – Ch. 8	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #4 Due on 10/29	
10/29 – 11/5	Collaborative Video Case Analysis	Case study links and info will be posted	Small-group discussion Case Analysis Paper Due on 11/5	
11/5 – 11/12	Topic 5: Strategic Learning & Strategic Teaching	Alexander – Ch.7	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #5 Due on 11/12	
11/12 – 11/19	Topic 6: Motivation and Affect	Alexander – Ch. 9, 10	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #6 Due on 11/19	
11/19 – 11/26	Topic 7: Collaborative Learning	Alexander – Ch. 11 Additional reading/research	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #7 Due on 11/26	
11/26 – 12/3	Topic 8: Technology	Alexander – Ch. 12 Additional reading/research	Online Discussion Weekly Reflections #8 Due on 12/3	
12/3 – 12/10	Topic 9: Backward Design	Additional readings will be posted	Small-group Discussion No paper is due	
12/10 – 12/17	Work on Final Paper		Final Paper due on 12/17	