RUTGERS
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Understanding the Adult Learner
15:233:543

3 Credits

Instructor: Alisa Belzer	Email: alisa.belzer@gse.rutgers.edu
Phone Number: 848 932 0778	Website:
Office Hours: Synchronous, one on one by appointment Asynchronous, submit questions to virtual office	Prerequisites or other limitations: None
Mode of Instruction: ___ Lecture ___ Seminar ___ Hybrid **X Online** ___ Other	Permission required: **X No** __Yes Directions about where to get permission numbers: from the instructor

Learning goals

- Understand the learning needs and characteristics of diverse adult learners in the varied social contexts and environments in which adult learning occurs, including non-formal, informal, and formal education
- Be able to critically analyze and reflect upon the adult education literature concerning adult learner characteristics and participation, adult development and adult learning
- Be able to use adult learning and development theories to reflect on and analyze teaching and learning

Course catalog description

Understanding the Adult Learner (15:233:543) has the overall goal of guiding you through an exploration of the multiple dimensions of adult learners by immersing you in key theories, concepts related to adult learners and practices that are appropriate for meeting the needs of this population. This course is designed to give you the opportunity to investigate the physiological, psychological, and psychosocial changes in the adult life span and the implications these changes have for adult learning.

Course Overview

This is a hands-on course and your participation in all activities is as important as completion of the readings and formal assignments. You should do the assigned reading first, listen to any posted lectures second, and then complete the weekly activities. It is very important to stay on schedule so please put aside time on the weekend to do the reading ahead of the week. There generally are multiple steps to doing the weekly activity and some depend on your classmates, so you will need to stay on schedule.

The course is designed to be an adult learning experience. This will give you opportunities to experience and reflect on the adult learning theories in real time and think about how they relate to practice. This is my first time teaching this class fully online and for many of you this will be your first semester taking a fully online class. Consequently, it is important that we do our best to make the technology work for us and provide feedback and ask questions when there are problems so that we can engage in problem solving quickly and (hopefully) efficiently.

Required Books:

- Merriam, S.B., & Bierma, L. L. (2014). *Adult learning: linking theory and practice.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Other related materials and readings will be posted on the class website

Assignments:

Class participation: You are expected to complete all reading assignments, fully and professionally participate in the online discussions and activities, and submit assignments on or before their due dates. All assignments should be submitted through the course website. All written work should have a cover page, be double spaced, use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, and include a properly formatted reference page using APA style. For more information about APA and guidance on formatting, visit https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/.

Please note that instructions of where or how to submit assignments is available in either the left-hand menu of the course webpage (for assignments 2, 3, and 4) or within the description of the activity on the weekly activity page.

1. **Online discussions/Weekly activities (20% of overall grade):**
Weekly activities are designed to help you enhance your understanding of assigned texts, draw connections between them and your current experiences, critically analyze their relevance to adult education contexts, and synthesize across topics from week to week. You are expected to participate fully in all weekly assigned discussions/activities. The rubric below details how your participation will be assessed. The learning benefits of participating in weekly activities are cumulative. Although assessment points for each individual weekly discussion/activity are few, your diligent participation adds up to your being successful in completing all assignments and fully benefitting from the course.

Online Discussions/Weekly Activities Rubric

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	Below Expectations	Average	Above Average	Superior	Weight
Content Quality of Initial Posts	Post does not relate to the prompt or is missing.	Post responds to prompt but ideas are not stated clearly and/or fully elaborated.	Post responds to the prompt and ideas are stated relatively clearly; ideas are elaborated. There is little or no reference to the text or other sources	Post responds to the prompt, ideas are stated clearly and are well elaborated, and connections are draw to the text and/or outside references.	50%
Responses to classmates	Does not respond to posts from classmates.	Responds to fewer than required number of classmates.	Responds to required number of classmates, but response is not particularly meaningful or substantive.	Responds to required number of classmates in meaningful and substantive ways.	30%
Timeliness	Does not submit assignment on time	N/A	N/A	Submitted assignment on time.	10%
Spelling, grammar, and punctuation	Significant errors in spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation detract from the clarity of communication.	Some errors in spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation which may detract from clarity of communication.	Errors in spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation are minimal but fairly noticeable; they do not detract from clarity of communication.	No or very few punctuation, spelling, or grammar errors.	10%

2. Design and facilitate weekly activity (20% of overall grade).

Beginning in the sixth week, students will work individually or in pairs to provide one supplementary resource on the week's topic and design and facilitate a related interactive

activity. This must be completed and approved by the instructor no later than one week prior to its implementation. In order to complete this assignment, the following steps must be followed:

1. Select and sign up for the week you will facilitate ASAP (2%)
2. Read assigned text for that week
3. Choose a relevant, related resource and design an interactive learning activity that helps students synthesize, critically analyze, and make meaning using the selected resource and assigned reading (12%)
The design should include
    a. a clear description of what students will do during the week to engage with the assigned texts
    b. a timeline and expectations for participation including whether work should be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups, and links to any online tools needed to complete the task. If you don't know how to use the tools or what tools are available, the instructor is available to assist. You dream up the task and we'll figure out how to make it work! If the work is to be done collaboratively, there should be information about who works with whom.
    c. facilitator plan that explains in what ways and on what schedule the facilitators will participate in the week's activities
4. Submit proposed resource and weekly activity to instructor for feedback and approval at least 10 days prior to the selected week. Note that instructor may require you to make a different selection or revise the activity design in order to maximize the potential for the whole class to benefit from the week's activities Resource and activity design is not complete until it is approved by the instructor. (2%)
[Instructor will post assignment by 9 am on the Saturday prior to the selected week]
5. Implement facilitation plan (2%)
6. Submit reflection on the experience within two weeks. Reflection should include observations about the ways in which the resource and activity addressed the week's learning goals, what seemed to influence student engagement and meaning making, and lessons learned/implications. Draw on the experience and what you have learned so far about adult learning. (2%)

Design and facilitate weekly activity rubric

	Below Expectations	Average	Above Average	Superior	Weight
Appropriate Materials and Activities	Does not choose an appropriate resource or activity	Resource is on topic but not engaging; activity does not help learners synthesize materials	Resource is appropriate and activity helps learners synthesize materials	Resource is appropriate, very engaging and activity helps learners synthesize, critically assess, and/or construct	50%

				new meaning	
Facilitator Engagement	Facilitator does not participate in assigned activity	Facilitator participates in a limited way	Facilitator is an active participant	Facilitator actively participates and helps elevate the discussion	20%
Reflection	Facilitator is not reflective about the experience of completing the assignment	Facilitator does some reflection on the experience of completing the assignment	Facilitator reflects on what has been learned about planning and facilitating an adult learning experience	Facilitator reflects on what has been learned and identifies implications for practice	20%
Timeliness	Many of the steps of the assignment are not completed on time	Some of the steps of the assignment are not completed on time	Most of the steps of the assignment are completed on time	All of the steps of the assignment are completed on time	20%

3. Learn something new this week, then teach someone what you learned (30% of overall grade)

This assignment creates a laboratory situation that gives you an experience of being an adult learner and an adult educator and prompts you to reflect on what you have learned as a result. It also gives you the opportunity to learn about several digital tools that may be of use to you as an adult educator.

This is a three part assignment. You will carry out Part 1 and 3 individually and Part 2 with a small group (to be assigned by the instructor after the first week of class). Your small group must create a lesson schedule (by the end of Week 2) which includes the following information: who will present what lesson, when, mode of lesson (synchronous/asynchronous), and who will be responsible for providing feedback (individual or collaboratively composed among group members). Everyone must teach one lesson to at least one student (although you can have more than one student), and everyone must be a designated learner at least once (although you can be a student more than once). Lessons should be completed between Weeks 4 and 13. It is highly recommended that you space them out during this period.

Part 1: Learn/Reflect (10%)**.**
   a. Select a digital tool (by week 3) you would like to learn how to use. The tool should be something you could imagine using in your practice as an adult educator and are interested in

knowing more about. I have provided a list of suggestions below which focus mainly on presentation type tools, but you can go beyond the list. Whatever you select should be something you can learn how to use in about two hours.

b. After you have learned how to use the tool, write a reflection on why you chose to learn this task, how you went about learning it, how the learning process went, and with regard to being an adult learner, what you got from the experience (2-3 pages).

Part 2: Teach/Learn and Give/Get Feedback (10%)**.**

a. Based on the schedule you and your group have arranged, teach members of your assigned small group how to use the tool you learned (20-30 minute lesson). Do not simply replicate how you learned how to use it. Think about how to improve on how you were taught, and plan accordingly. Your lesson should have a learning objective, explain what the tool is and what it can be useful for, and it should draw on adult learning principles. Your lesson need not lead to tool use competency, but rather focus on tool affordances and introduce learners to some of its key features and how they are accomplished. You can use any digital tools you find helpful to present your lesson. Your lesson should be interactive, not just a lecture/demonstration.   It can be completed synchronously or aynchronously.

b. Everyone in your group must be a designated learner at least once. This means participating in the teaching session and providing feedback. Or a group can decide that they will all be learners for all members' sessions and will work collaboratively to provide feedback. However, you can also participate in as many training sessions as you like (no feedback necessary beyond the one you signed up to provide feedback for).

c. The designated learner should give written feedback (submitted within 5 days of the lesson to the student instructor) which draws on adult learning theories we have learned so far. The feedback should address questions such as: What was a strength of this lesson? What challenged you as a learner? In what ways did the instructor make the learning experience "adult"? What suggestions could you give the instructor to improve instruction?

Part 3: Synthesis (10%)

Reflect on your teaching process based on your initial reflections and your "student's" feedback. Draw on adult learning theories you have learned so far to help you understand and make meaning from the experience (2-3 pages). Submit initial reflection, feedback, and synthesis by the end of the semester.

Suggested Tools to Learn (these are all free or have free trial versions)

Voice thread
Screencastomatic
Pictochart
How to make a video
How to do a screen cast
Campus pack learning objects
Youtube (uploading and adding captions)
Google apps for education
Prezi
Gliffy (mind mapping)

Asana (project management)
Haiku Deck
Slides
Powtoon
Sparkol
Debategraph

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Learn something new/Teach someone rubric

	Below Expectations	Average	Above Average	Superior	Weight
Lesson	Lesson is not presented in a clear and engaging way. The purpose and usefulness of the tool is not explained.	The lesson is not presented in a clear and engaging way or the purpose and usefulness of the tool not fully explained	The lesson is presented in a clear and engaging way and the purpose and usefulness of the tool is explained	The lesson uses digital tools in an outstanding way to make the lesson clear and engaging and the purpose and usefulness of the tool is fully explained	30%
Feedback	Feedback is not provided or is very limited in depth, description, and helpfulness	Feedback provides some useful information, but may just skim the surface of description	Feedback describes the lesson and makes useful suggestions about how to improve the lesson	Feedback is descriptive, analytic, and provides in-depth and meaningful	20%
Reflections	Facilitator is not reflective about the experience of completing the assignment	Facilitator does some reflection on the experience of completing the assignment	Facilitator reflects on what has been learned about adult learning and teaching and the online tools learned.	Facilitator reflects on what has been learned about adult learning and teaching and the online tools learnedand identifies implications for practice	30%
Group Cooperation	Does not participate work with group to complete assignment	Works with group to complete assignment but is late or not very responsive	Works with group to complete assignment, is on time, and responsive	Works with group to complete assignment, is on time, and responsive;	20%

				takes a leadership role	

4. Adult Learner Autobiography (10 pages/30% of overall grade)

For this assignment, you will compose a learning autobiography that describes your experiences as an adult learner. The purpose is to consider your experiences in relationship to the theories and concepts we have covered during the semester as a way to synthesize what we have covered. You should focus on memorable and meaningful learning experiences and explain why you consider these to be significant; use the topics we covered this semester to help you gain a more theoretical perspective on them. You should organize your paper in such a way that allows you to integrate and make connections with the adult development and adult learning theories covered in this class. The autobiography may include representations of your experiences from childhood (if they are relevant to who you are as an adult learner) to adulthood.   It should conclude with a discussion of how reflecting on your own experiences as an adult learner shapes your thinking about being an adult educator. Your autobiography must include:

--An introduction to you and the learning experiences you select to share
--Well written descriptions of key learning experiences
--Analysis of how your learning experiences and your response to them would be supported by the adult development and adult learning theories discussed throughout the semester
--Implications for your practice as an adult educator

Your final project can take the form of a traditional paper (8-10 pages), integrate multimedia with text, or use digital story telling as ways to present your adult learning autobiography.

Adult Learning Autobiography Rubric

	Below Expectations	Average	Above Average	Superior	Weight
Content Quality Paper	Submission does not respond to the specific description of the assignment or is missing.	Responds to most of the specific description of the assignment but is not very clear, does not make any reference to any assigned texts, does so in a	Responds fully to the description of the assignment, in a clear way, but does not go very deep into analysis/reflection, is not completely clear, or makes little reference to	Responds fully to the description of the assignment, in a clear way, is fully analytic/reflective and makes substantive reference to assigned texts.	80%

	surface way, or does not go very deep into analysis/reflection	assigned texts.			
Timeliness	Did not submit assignment on time	N/A	N/A	Submitted assignment on time.	10%
Spelling, Grammar, and punctuation	Significant errors in spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation detract from the clarity of communication.	Some errors in spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation which may detract from clarity of communication.	Errors in spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation are minimal but noticeable; they do not detract from clarity of communication.	No or very few punctuation, spelling, or grammar errors.	10%