CEP 800
Psychology of Learning in School and Other Settings
Summer 2007
(May 21-July 9)

Course Information

This course will acquaint students with major theories for explaining the learning that goes on inside and outside of school. Students will read descriptions of a range of learning theories, then deepen their understanding of these theories by critically examining videotaped examples of teaching and learning, working with on-line tools designed to teach concepts and skills in a variety of subject areas, and discussing readings and examples with other students in the course. Students will also connect theories of learning to their own experiences as learners -- inside this course, in other courses, on the job, and in other settings. The course itself will exemplify some central course concepts, such as the idea that learning can be seen as active, socially-mediated construction of knowledge. A recurrent course theme is that learning theories suggest ways in which academic tasks should vary, depending on instructional context, the knowledge or skills to be learned, and the characteristics of the learners.

Instructor Information

Let me introduce myself.

I am Bob Floden, a Professor at the MSU College of Education the instructor for this on-line section of CEP800. I've been at MSU for almost 30 years, in a variety of faculty and administrative positions. I currently have a joint appoint, split between Teacher Education and Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education (CEPSE). My

research and writing has focused on teaching and teacher learning, with a focus on mathematics teaching. Two outside-school areas where I am currently an active learner are tennis and music.

I can be reached via email at floden@msu.edu, or by phone at 517-355-3486.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to give its students a deeper understanding of how people learn, inside and outside school. In particular, students will

- Gain an understanding of several different theories about how people learn
- Learn to use those theories as lenses to examine examples of learning
- Come to understand some similarities and differences between learning that occurs in schools and learning that occurs in other contexts, such as learning on the job
- Get some appreciation for connections between the content learned and the applicability of different theories of learning
- Get a sense of how aspects of their own learning can be viewed from the frameworks of these theories

Course Structure

This course will be divided into seven modules. Each module is about a week in length. The first module will be used to build our learning community and familiarize us with the course content and structure. The following six modules will relate to various learning theories both in and out of school situations. The course will culminate with a reflective essay on learning.

By the third module, students will be divided into their permanent groups. Much of the coursework will be dependant on group discussions and tasks. To ensure timely participation, students will have two deadlines within each week's module, **Thursday by 11:59 p.m**. and the following **Monday by 11:59 p.m**. (unless otherwise noted).

Modules will contain assigned readings and thoughtful reflections or discussions. Students will have individual and group tasks throughout the semester. The text, assigned articles, electronic journals, the Internet, and video clips will be among the sources students will utilize to investigate the many perspectives on learning.

A brief overview of Learning Modules:

- **Module 1: Building our Community**
  - Editing your personal profile
  - Short narrative on yourselves as learners
- **Module 2: Behaviorism**

- o Reading about and discussing core ideas of behaviorism
- o Engaging in academic tasks based on behaviorist theories
- o Seeking and evaluating behaviorist based learning tools on the Internet
- **Module 3: Problem Solving**
  - o Reading and discussing studies of expert and novice problem solving
  - o Tracing your own processes for solving problems
  - o Starting a search for studies of problem solving in subject area
- **Module 4: Piagetian Structures**
  - o Discussing writings about the progression of change in children's concepts
  - o Comparing conceptual development across subject areas
  - o Using interviews to make inferences about others' concepts
- *Mid-Course Survey*
- **Module 5: Social Constructivism**
  - o Discussing readings as a way to construct the meaning of articles about constructing meaning
  - o Viewing classroom discussions in mathematics and history
  - o Trying to reach group consensus – a process of social construction?
- **Module 6: Learning in the Workplace**
  - o Learning in our university class about learning outside the school walls
  - o Looking at job settings to discern the curriculum of work
  - o Comparing school and work: what is learned? By what process?
- **Module 7: Learning to Teach**
  - o Discussing accounts of how teachers learn. In what ways like going to school? In what ways like learning at work?
  - o Considering teachers' descriptions of professional development.
- *Submission of Final Reflective Essay*

Expectations for Students

You should expect this on-line course to be as demanding of your time and effort as a 3-credit face-to-face course. Following the rule of thumb that students should spend two hours outside class for every hour in class, the amount of time you will devote to the course should be roughly 45 hours in class (3 hours per week for 15 weeks) plus 90 hours outside class, for a total of 135 hours. With the accelerated pace of this seven week course, that is almost 20 hours per week. That should give you time to work to understand every reading, participate thoughtfully in group discussions and projects, and write thoughtful essays.

Since both individual study and group work are important in this course, I have expectations for your work in both areas:

Expectations for Individual Work

- As you complete each assignment, try to draw on what you have learned from the readings, discussions and your other experiences in the course

- Be punctual in posting comments to group discussion boards
- When you post comments, make your ideas clearer by giving examples, including some examples from your own experience
- As you read the comments from other students, work to understand what they are saying, rather than just "getting the general idea"
- Share your ideas and experiences with other students in the class
- Submit your individual assignments by the designated due dates
- To keep up with the announcements I post, and comments from your classmates, try to check the course web site every day

Expectations for Group Work

- Treat your work on group projects as seriously as you treat your individual work
- Pull your weight in completing group projects
- Pay carefully attention to the recommended structure for group interaction, which will vary somewhat from project to project
- As with individual work, draw on what you have learned from your previous work in the class as you complete group tasks
- Follow designated due dates

Grading

As you complete course assignments and engage in discussion with others in the course, you will have the opportunity to make your own thinking visible in various ways. In assessing the quality of your work, I will pay particular attention to the following:

- the degree to which you engage and interact with the ideas of the readings as well as the ideas of your class colleagues.
- the degree to which you make use of and integrate multiple sources in developing your thinking: course readings, on-line discussions, web-based resources, your own teaching practice, and your ongoing experiences as a learner.
- the degree to which you are able to critically analyze both the benefits and limitations of various theories of learning as applied in specific contexts.

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following assignments.

Class Participation in On-line Discussions	20%
Written Essays (2)	30%
Assignments (4)	30%
Final Reflective Essay	20%

Class Participation in On-line Discussions

For each module, I will evaluate your participation in the group discussions, which will vary in structure. Sometimes I will ask you to respond to what another student has posted;

in other cases I will only ask you to post a response to a question, usually about a reading. (You are always welcome to respond to what others post.) Sometimes you will be in a discussion with the entire class; at other times you will be having a discussion in a smaller group.

As I look at your participation, I hope to see comments that are thoughtful and show good understanding of the course concepts. I also expect you to post your comments according to the schedule set out in the course calendar. I will giving you two grades for your class participation: one after module 4 and one for the remainder of the course.

Written Essays

You will be writing two essays of 750-1,000 words, one due during Module 4 and one due during Module 6. I will be looking for well-organized, thoughtful analyses that show an understanding of the material are reading.

Assignments

For Modules 2, 3, 5, and 7, you will have assignments that require you to engage in or examine learning experiences and connect what you have done to concepts about learning. In the reports you post, I will be looking for clear descriptions of the experiences and for thoughtful responses to the analytic questions I pose.

Final Reflective Essay

On the last day of class, you will drop off a 1,000-1,750 word reflective essay, in which you describe what you have learned in the course and explain how you learned, using learning theories you studied. I will be evaluating your essays on clarity, organization, and on the understanding of learning theories that you demonstrate.

More detailed descriptions of the assignments above will appear within the course modules.

Course Calendar

	Module Theme Readings and Resources	Assignments And Tasks	Due Dates 11:59 p.m. EDT
Module 1 May 21 - May 25	**Building a Community** • Phillips & Soltis,	Post narrative of yourself as a learner. Post your answer to question about the	Wednesday May 23

		Chapters 1 and 2	reading on discussion board. (Module 1, Tasks 1 and 2)	
			Read the bios of your fellow classmates. Respond to at least one classmate's comments on the first reading. (Module 1, Task 3) Note special due date.	Friday May 25 11:59 p.m. EDT
Module 2 May 26 - May 31	**Behaviorism** • Phillips & Soltis, Chapter 3 • Ulman, "Applying Behaviorological Principles in the Classroom"		Read assigned material, go to Internet links, and have group discussion. (Module 2, Tasks 1 and 2) Note special due date.	Tuesday May 29, 11:59 p.m. EDT
			Assignment 1: Written Review of Internet Site (Module 2, Task 3)	Thursday May 31
Module 3 June 1 - June 7	**Problem Solving** • Phillips & Soltis, Chapter 4 • Niemi, "Cognitive science, expert-novice research, and performance assessment" • Gladwell, "The Physical Genius"		Read assigned material and have group discussion. (Module 3, Task 1)	Monday June 4
			Assignment 2: Description of your own problem solving experience (Module 3, Task 2)	Thursday June 7
Module 4 June 8 - June 14	**Piagetian Structures** • Phillips & Soltis, Chapter 5 • Papert, "Jean Piaget" • Other articles you		Read assigned material and have group discussion. (Module 4, Task 1)	Monday June 11
			Essay 1: Report based	Thursday

		locate yourself	search using electronic library resources (Module 4, Task 2)	June 14
Mid-Course Survey			Complete survey about work in the course so far. Note special due date.	Friday June 15 11:59 p.m. EDT
Module 5 June 15 - June 21	**Social Constructivism** • Phillips & Soltis, Chapter 6 • Driver, et al. "Constructing Scientific Knowledge in the Classroom • Two Video Clips		Individual response to questions on readings. (Module 5, Task 1)	Monday June 18
			Assignment 3: Group consensus report on collaborative analysis of video clips. (Module 5, Task 2)	Thursday June 21
Module 6 June 22 - June 28	**Learning Out of School** • Resnick, "Learning in school and out" • Semper, "Science Museums as Environments for Learning" Plus at least two from: • Brown, Collins, and Duguid, "Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning" • Crowley and Galco, "Everyday Activity and the Development of Scientific Thinking" • Leinhardt and Gregg,"Burning Buses, Burning Crosses: Student Teachers See Civil Rights" • Boyd, "Museums as Centers of Learning"		Read assigned material and have group discussion. (Module 6, Tasks 1 and 2)	Monday June 25
			Essay 2: Analysis of differences between learning inside and outside school (Module 6, Task 3)	Thursday June 28

Module 7 June 29 - July 5	**Learning to Teach** • Bransford, Brown, Cocking, "Teacher Learning" • Scribner, "Professional development: untangling the influence of work context on teacher learning" • Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann, "Pitfalls of Experience in Teacher Preparation" • Lewis and Tsuchida, "A lesson is like a swiftly flowing river" • Elmore, "Bridging the gap between standards and achievement" • Ball and Mosenthal, "The construction of new forms of teaching" • Lieberman and Grolnick, "Networks and reform in American education"	Readings and group discussion. (Module 7, Task 1)	Monday July 2
		Assignment 4: Examine teachers' account of professional development and discuss in group (Module 7, Task 2)	Thursday July 5
Final Reflective Essay		Submit final essay that reflects on the different learning theories and how they pertain to you as a teacher and a learner.	Monday July 9 11:59 p.m. EDT

Texts and Materials:

• Phillips, D.C. & Soltis, Jonas F. (2003). Perspectives on Learning (4th edition). Teachers College Press. (ISBN: 0807744476)

  This book can be purchased online at amazon.com or Barnes and Noble. Barnes and Noble does not charge shipping if you order a second book.

• Course CD-ROM (Duplicates the videos in module 5. Mailed to you at your request if case you have technical difficulties viewing videos on line.)

Additional Resources and Readings:

Strategies for responding to your classmates in online discussions:

Strategy	Working Definition
Elaborating	Extending a previous comment or question by adding further detail.
Clarifying	Increasing clarity by making distinctions
Reinforcing/Supporting	Making visible a convergence in thinking or agreement with another's thoughts
Challenging	Using a question or statement to suggest an alternative view or position
Conjecturing	Suggesting tentative explanations or possible outcomes, most frequently prefaced with "Maybe..." Trying out a line of reasoning.
Requesting Clarification	Seeking clarity about another's statement or question.
Admitting Difficulty	Acknowledging one's own lack of understanding to the rest of the group.
Initiating	Instituting a new direction in the learning conversation.
Paraphrasing	Expressing another's thought in slightly different language with the intention of clarifying.
Summarizing	Listing main points, general ideas by way of review
Defining	Offering a definition to a word used by another, or supplying a term to fit a definition or description used by another.
Noting Relationship Among Tasks	Making explicit connections between previous conversations, texts and/or learning activities and the ideas of the present conversation.
Activating Background Knowledge	Making explicit connections with prior knowledge and/or experiences outside of the classroom.

Library Resources:

- MSU Libraries Website (http://www.lib.msu.edu)

- Finding Books and Journal Articles
  (http://www.lib.msu.edu/corby/reference/libresources.htm)