

Social Constructivist Approaches to Understanding Classroom Motivation
EDEC/EDMS 8120
Fall 2005

Instructor: Dr. Penny Oldfather
Office: 427 Aderhold Hall Phone: 542-4244 poldfath@uga.edu

Overview

This course examines issues of student motivation in classrooms through a social constructivist lens. We will consider how classroom cultures, ways of knowing and particular pedagogies and assessment strategies support or fail to support student motivation. We will examine the relationship between motivation and achievement and the impact of transitions across various educational settings from early childhood to middle school and high school contexts.

The course topics will be considered within a framework of the social and political issues of schooling, with consideration of issues of power, voice, and cultural diversity. You will have an opportunity to access students' perspectives on their learning and motivation through conducting a "Thinking Project". You will be challenged to articulate your own epistemology as you consider these issues through reading, discussion and the project.

Objectives

- To become familiar with key ideas of social constructivism and various other forms of constructivist theory and how these ideas relate to issues of motivation of learning
- To understand some of the major theories of motivation and to consider their implications for classrooms
- To examine and critique common practices in schools aimed at motivating students in light of various theories of motivation
- To conduct a Thinking Project accessing perspectives on learning and motivation
- To "take charge" of your own learning through pursuing projects which meet personal educational needs and interests

Texts

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986). *Women's ways of knowing*. New York: Basic Books.

Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Oldfather, P., West, J., White, J., & Willmarth, J. (1999). *Learning through children's eyes: Social constructivism and the desire to learn*. [Psychology in the Classroom Series]. Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.

Note: If you have read this book previously for another course, please see me about selecting an alternative.

Optional: Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. **Note:** Only Chapter Three will be required – and it will be available in a file in OIT.

Bel Jean Packet of supplemental readings, available for purchase at Bel-Jean Copy Print Center - 163 East Broad in Athens. They are open until 9:00 pm weekdays and 7:00 p.m. on Fridays for your shopping convenience.

Books are available for purchase at the UGA Bookstore.

Course Expectations

- Notify me at your earliest convenience if you cannot attend class.
- Attendance is expected and encouraged.
- Please be punctual for class.
- Complete all readings and other preparations for each class in a timely manner.
- Participate thoughtfully and constructively in class discussions and activities. Active participation is essential to your learning in the course. Please be sensitive to turn-taking issues.
- Be familiar with the UGA Academic Honesty Policy and be consistently fair and honest in representing your work to others.

Items Due

1) Dual entry diary (To be turned in on September 8, October 6, and October 20).
You will keep a dual entry diary, typed on computer. The diary needs to be done daily and brought to each class meeting. It will be useful in your critical reflection, and will serve as a basis for class and/or small group discussions. Your diary will include entries (“juicy” quotes that you will select) from each assigned reading along with your own particular responses to those quotes. Be sure to identify sources and page numbers of the selections. Your diary will be turned in to me periodically. Each submission should include only the entries from that particular time period.

2) Thinking Project: You will each conduct a “thinking project” related to social constructivism and motivation. The Oldfather, West, White and Willmarth book has a great deal of information for you about how to approach the project. Additional guidance will be provided in class. **Please plan to conduct your interviews between September 23 and October 13th**, in order to have enough information to understand the assignment and also to be prepared to complete the project on time for the peer review on November 3.

- Project proposal (September 15)
- Interview guide for project (September 22)
- Subjectivity statement on motivation (October 6)
- Categories and properties from analysis (November 3)
- Preliminary draft of paper for peer review (November 3)

- Project presentations (December 1)

3) A type-written self-evaluation of your own participation, effort, and growth is due on the last day of class (December 8). Use the course objectives as a starting point and feel free to expand it. Bring it to class with you.

4) Final draft of thinking project paper (December 8)

Evaluation

The primary purpose of the evaluation system is to support the quality of your work. Rather than a point system, you will receive check, check plus or check minus, along with specific feedback on your products. You will also receive feedback from your classmates. Your self-evaluation will also be vital for your development in this course.

Honor Code

"Students at The University of Georgia are responsible for maintaining and adhering to the strictest standards of honesty and integrity in every aspect of their lives. Honesty in academic matters is a large part of this obligation. Specific regulations governing student academic conduct are contained in the Student Handbook and these should avoid any misunderstanding." -- Undergraduate Bulletin

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Date	Epistemology	Motivation	Thinking Project
August 18	Overview	Overview	Overview
August 25 <i>Epistemology</i>		Oldfather, West, White & Wilmarth, Goal I	
September 1 <i>Key ideas on motivation</i>	<i>Women's Ways of Knowing, Ch. 1-5</i>		
September 8			Read: Bel Jean: <i>Stalking the Fuzzy Sunshine Seeds</i>

Date	Epistemology	Motivation	Thinking Project
<p>September 15</p> <p>Basics of social constructivism</p> <p>Practice interviewing</p>	<p>From OIT: Fosnot chapter on <i>Constructivism: A psychological theory of learning</i></p>	<p>Finish reading Oldfather, West, White & Wilmarth</p> <p>Bel Jean: Oldfather, Thomas, et al.</p>	<p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written description of proposed mini-research project: Rationale, focus, participants You will each receive a peer review in class of your project proposals. • Dual entry diary
<p>September 22</p>	<p><i>Women's Ways of Knowing</i>, Ch. 6-10</p>		<p>Due: Interview guide for project and Peer review of guide</p>
<p>September 29 25 Wednesday <i>Hidden Cost of Rewards</i></p> <p><i>Subjectivity and research</i></p>		<p>Kohn, Chapters 1-6</p>	<p>Class activity: Examples of strategies for data analysis</p> <p>Considering our assumptions and biases</p>
<p>October 6 Thursday</p>	<p><i>Voices of the Mind</i> – Chapter 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jigsaw with articles from <i>Reading and Writing Quarterly</i> 	<p>Due: Dual entry diary Subjectivity statement on motivation:</p>

Date	Epistemology	Motivation	Thinking Project
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October 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Kohn book 	Be sure you have completed your interview and have finished up interview transcriptions
October 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bel Jean: Bakhtin paper - <i>Language as Silly Putty</i> from OIT 	Data analysis and writing workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due: Dual entry diary
October 27	FALL BREAK	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	.
November 3		List of categories and properties from data analysis
June 2		Due: Complete (but preliminary draft of thinking project paper. You will exchange critique with a classmate.
November 10	To be determined	
November 17 Motivation and Assessment	Bel Jean: Thomas & Oldfather	
November 24	Happy Thanksgiving!	
December 1		Due: Thinking Project Presentations (to be presented in three small groups)

December 8
Last day of
class

Due: Bring your type
written self-
evaluations to class.

Exam day

Due: Final paper is
due. Bring to Holly
Coder in 427
Aderhold before 5:00
pm.

Below are examples of questions that might be useful in accessing students' ideas and/or experiences regarding their own motivation.

Sample Umbrella Question: What are students' reasons/ purposes for being (or not being) involved in learning activities?

1. I noticed that you were very involved in that story [or any activity]? What was it about? Why was it so interesting to you?
2. Can you think of a time when you were really excited about learning something? What was it? Where were you? Were you working with others? Were you by yourself? Can you explain what it was that made a difference for you?
3. How can you tell if you are really, really learning? What is going on for you?
4. How can you tell if you are doing a good job on something in school? [You can specify particular content areas, explore various assessments, etc.]
5. Have you ever been so caught up with something that you forgot where you were, what time it was, and you didn't want to stop doing it? What was that like? Why was it happening? Does it happen at school for you? Does it happen in other situations? (This gets at Dr. C's "flow experience.")
6. Can you think of times when you couldn't wait to get to school because something was going on that you were excited about? What was it? How did you feel? What was it about that?
7. In your opinion, does working in a group help or hinder your learning and motivation? Please explain.
8. Can you think of times when you are supposed to do an assignment or activity in school and you really didn't want to do it? How did you feel? What was the assignment? What did you do? Have there been times when you thought you would not like an activity - but then you got into it and changed your mind? What made the difference?
9. Think about the teachers you have had in your life who helped you really want to learn: What were they like? What did they do?
10. What advice do you have for teachers who want to make school really interesting and exciting for their students? What could we do differently in our class that would help you learn more and be more interested in our activities?

Reviewer Name _____

Reviewer's Summary

What were the main strengths of this paper?

What questions were raised for you as you read the paper?

What specific recommendations do you have for improving the paper? (Please include any items from the checklist, as well as issues regarding specific content ideas, clarity of writing, spelling, grammar, and organization.)

