

EPSY 2020: Learning and Development in Education
Spring, 2004 -General Syllabus

PLEASE NOTE: This is a general syllabus for all sections of EPSY 2020. For contact information and any changes or other instructions specific to your section, please be sure to check the WebCT site for your section or your instructor's handouts.

What you may get from this course:

We are all in this course for a variety of reasons. For example, as your instructors, we are here because it is part of their job to teach courses like this, they are interested in how to make psychological theories useful to teachers and other educational practitioners, and they want to think more about how children's learning, development, and education are interrelated.

This course focuses on ideas about human learning and development, especially during the childhood years from preschool through adolescence, and what these ideas imply about education. This course will not tell you everything you need to know about child development or learning. It will not tell you the best way to teach all children, nor will it lay out an organized sequence of stages through which all "normal" children can be expected to pass at certain known ages. This is in part because nobody, including educational psychologists, yet knows all we need to know about learning and development, and in part because many people believe that different children develop and learn differently, especially in different situations. This course does have four objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with common theories and ideas about child development and learning.
2. Students will develop the ability and disposition to examine such theories critically, in light of their other knowledge and experience.
3. Through examining these ideas, students will begin to formulate their own theories about learning and development.
4. Students will investigate potential implications of their own and others' ideas for their future practice, whether as educators, parents, or other professionals.

Your role:

You will be doing a number of different activities and assignments during this course. In all of them, we want you to *try to understand* what you hear and read, but also to *think about* what you hear and read--to ask questions, to agree or disagree, to connect it with other things you have heard or read in your life and in this class. Finally, we will ask you to *share your thinking* both in class discussion and in writing. Sharing your thinking can feel very risky; we all have felt the fear that we will ask some stupid question (There are no stupid questions!) or put forward some naive interpretation or unpopular idea. But we will expect you to take those risks anyway. It may help to know that we will *not* expect you necessarily to agree with your instructor, your classmates or with any of the writers we read. If you find yourself disagreeing (and we ourselves disagree with some of the theories presented in the course), we ask only that you disagree with respect for others' ideas and do your best to explain *why* you disagree--that is how you will help the rest of us learn. Also, many assignments will have elements of choice, to let you pursue some of your own questions or interests.

More specifically, the course requirements include:

In-class Midterm - (60 points) - More information about this exam will be forthcoming.

Final Exam - (60 points) - More information about this exam will be forthcoming.

Outreach project - (60 points) - This project is intended to help you extend your learning beyond the boundaries of this class. There are many different ways to do this--see the Outreach Project handout.

Exams will be essay questions only. They will focus on applying the ideas we have been discussing in class to various real-life classroom situations. That is, you will not be asked to *remember* a specific "right" answer from your readings or class discussions, but rather to *construct* and *support* reasonable explanations of and solutions for common classroom problems. You will be given all exam questions ahead of time, and all questions will be either open book or take-home format.

Hint: Therefore, as you read, do *not* try to memorize or take traditional notes on what you read; remember, the exams will not ask you to regurgitate facts from memory. Instead, as you read, I want you to do two things. First, try to *understand* what the author is trying to say and why he or she is trying to say it. Second, "talk with" the author in your head: ask questions where the author seems to be unclear; notice the ideas that seem particularly interesting or horrible to you; remember things in your own life, or that you have read or heard elsewhere, that seem to support or contradict what the author is saying. Be open to new ideas or inspirations that come to you, even if they are only indirectly related to what you are reading. *As you read, note down these thoughts briefly in the margins* (or on separate paper, if you really prefer). These notes will be your initial record of the "conversation" you had with this author.

By the way, the same technique applies to note-taking in class. By all means, write down anything someone else says in class that really strikes you, but also be sure to write down the questions you develop, the ideas you have, and the connections you make.

Daily Class Participation (60 points) - People tend to understand things best when they have a chance to talk or write about them, preferably both; so we consider your participation in class discussions and activities to be a very important part of your learning. Therefore, you will be doing some in-class activities each week, often in small groups; each activity will count 3 points toward the class participation portion of your grade.

Journals - (60 points) - You will be writing eight biweekly journals about the readings and/or discussions we have had in class. These journals have two purposes: to give you a specific occasion to think more deeply about particular aspects or issues we have covered in the previous week, and to help your instructor get an idea of what you are thinking about, what interests you, what seems confusing, etc. To these ends, in each journal entry we will ask you to do two things:

1. Address a specific question that will be posed for each journal. Every student in a section will address this one question, which will be posted on the class WEB-CT site.

2. Discuss issues or examples or ideas that really struck you in the previous two week's readings or discussion. In discussing these, talk about why they seemed significant to you and whether and why you agreed/disagreed with the authors/speakers. Many times you will want to draw connections between the idea you are writing about and things we have already read or discussed, things you have read outside of this class, or your own personal experiences. NOTE: Real life experiences are *at least* as important to consider in discussing the ideas we will study as other academic writings or theories.

These journals are partial records of your thoughts on the class; we do *not* want a summary of the readings. Your instructor will read and comment on these journals every two weeks. In this way, we hope to be able to address questions you still have and also to get to know each of you better than we can during class discussions. Each of the eight journals you will write is worth eight (8) points. Every journal entry that *thoughtfully* addresses *all* of the requirements outlined above will earn the full 8 points; we expect most people will earn 8s on most journals. Journals that do not address all the requirements or seem to show only perfunctory thought in addressing them will earn less than the full 8 points. Although there is no official page limit, it would be very hard to write a decent journal entry that was under two pages.

NOTE-NOTE-NOTE! Class announcements, assignments, grades, and all regular Email will be handled through the class WEB-CT site, which you will need to access. To use Web-CT you must have a UGAMyID, which is the first part of your UGA email address. If you do not know how to access or use WEB-CT, you can probably find a classmate who does. You can also check <https://webct.uga.edu/www/student/guide/for> tutorials and help, and get individual help via the OIT help desk, 2-4357, or Rm. 231 Aderhold.

Journals, in-class activities, and exams will NOT be evaluated for grammar or other mechanics of writing. As long as your instructor can tell what you were trying to say, your formal writing ability will not affect these grades. Also, journals and class activities CANNOT be made-up or turned in late. We will not take these late in part because they are most useful for your learning when done as the topics are covered in class, and in part because we simply won't be able to keep up otherwise. If you miss class on a day that we do a class activity, you will simply miss the points for that day. If you know you will be missing class on the day a journal or other assignment is due, you may have someone else bring your journal to class, turn it in to your instructor's mailbox in Room 325 T, or even Email your assignment to your instructor--as long as they receive it by class time on the day it is due. Exams can be taken early by prior arrangement; they can only be made-up in the case of documented emergencies.

Grading:: As you can see, a total of 400 points are possible. Your grades so far and point totals will be listed as they are completed on the class WEB-CT site. Incompletes are rare and are only given with the advice of Student Affairs. Withdrawals will follow the University policy. We anticipate using the following grade distribution for final grades:

A = 270 and over
B = 240-269
C = 210-239
D = 180-209

F = below 180

You will *not* be competing against each other on either assignment grades or final grades. We would be perfectly happy to give out all As; indeed, that would be the ideal outcome, if we were all doing our jobs perfectly. Also, although for our self-preservation, we are going to stick closely with the late paper policies outlined above, obviously if you end up in the hospital with double pneumonia, something will have to be negotiated. **In such emergency case, please contact your instructor as soon as possible!** Also note that the University's policies on academic honesty are followed scrupulously in this course. Please consult "The Student Guide to Academic Honesty" to refresh yourself on these guidelines.