



**EDUC 591: How People Learn
Fall 2021
Wednesdays 9-11:50 am
School of Education Building Room 4212**

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Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing or other basic needs is urged to contact me or the Dean of Students Office (734-764-7420; deanofstudents@umich.edu; 609 Tappan Street) for resources and support. The Maize & Blue Cupboard (inside the Trotter Multicultural Center) is an excellent resource for food and household items <https://mbc.studentlife.umich.edu/>.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

EDUC 591 is a foundational course in learning theories and their educational applications. We examine learning from the perspective of educational justice and equity, always seeking to understand how power, privilege, oppression, and resistance impact learners, learning contexts, and pedagogies.

Each of us carries with us assumptions about how, why, and where people learn and what constitutes adequate learning or understanding in various situations. These assumptions come from our cultural backgrounds and upbringing, from our own “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) as learners who have engaged in different endeavors, from our work as educators of children and adults, and from other pursuits such as being a researcher or an expert in some arena. One major goal of this course will be for each of us to make our own assumptions about the processes and products of learning as explicit as possible. Becoming aware of our own personal theories of learning assists us with the second major goal of this course—gaining a deeper understanding of the major theories of learning and development that have influenced American educational systems. A third goal is to understand how human learning is impacted by and embedded in systems of power (such as race, gender, SES, nationality and citizenship, local politics and community resources, etc.) including how we to disrupt inequities that these systems create.

LEARNING GOALS

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- (1) Identify and articulate your own assumptions about human learning and development.
- (2) Articulate orally and in writing the main components of each of the theories and topics that we discuss throughout the term.
- (3) Identify and articulate assumptions about learning and development inherent in each of the theories and topics that we discuss throughout the term.
- (4) Coordinate the theories with your own assumptions about learning and development.
- (5) Connect these theories and topics to your work (or projected work) in the field.

- (6) Engage in a knowledgeable and productive dialogue about the role of power, privilege, oppression, and resistance with respect to learning theories, contexts for human learning and development, and educational practices.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

This is a seminar-style, survey course with an emphasis on: (a) analysis of texts and other artifacts, (b) thorough and thoughtful in-class discussion, and (c) in- and out-of-class explorations related to course themes. We will count on all class members completing all assignments in advance of class to make the most of our time together.

Course Grading

Historically, letter grading systems are not particularly effective at communicating what students learn. Students complete assignments and projects to accumulating points that translate to a letter. It is unclear what an “A” or a “C” in [name any class here] means in terms of learning. Often students (and other “users” of transcripts) cannot answer these questions: What new and valued knowledge, skills, and practices did students develop? Whose valued knowledge, skills, and practices did students learn? In addition, traditional grading systems create power dynamics that position teachers as the only knowers and students as receivers of knowledge. This fails to recognize that each student comes to coursework with rich personal background and experience from which to teach others in class. It also fails to recognize that teachers are (or should be) the best learners around – always learning new things from their students. In this class, I ask students to surface and build on their important background knowledge and experiences. I recognize that their learning about human learning is not starting in this class. I hope it won’t end here either. I know mine is never-ending. I’m always learning with and from all of my students.

I aim to actively address shortcomings in traditional grading systems in this class. Class “grades” will appear on transcripts as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. The learning goals (noted above) will become important mastery-based outcomes for this course. In addition, as part of the first assignment for class, each student will generate 2-3 additional personalized learning goals as a starting point to guide their learning this term. This will honor the many knowledges and backgrounds that students bring and the different purposes and goals for taking this class. Each student will have an individual spreadsheet (shared with the instructor & grader) with instructor identified and student identified learning goals to use for ongoing self-assessment and instructor/grader feedback. As you move through the course, you may choose to edit, add, or shift your attention with respect to your learning goals based on what you are learning throughout the term. There are 6 instructor identified goals (that you cannot change but you can choose how much you attend to each of them) and you may choose up to 4 personal goals across the term. Evidence from course assignments will be added to the student spreadsheet over time (by the student and instructor) to demonstrate student understanding. This will help students track their learning and use self-reflection and feedback from others to intentionally steer and guide their work so that they achieve their learning goals. It will also help the instructor offer feedback and guidance as students work toward achieving their goals. At the end of the course, students will be in a strong position to understand and clearly communicate what they’ve learned by taking this class. Students will receive an “S” in the class if they complete: (1) the three major project assignments (with rewrites if necessary), (2) the asynchronous assignments, (3) self-reflection on their spreadsheet for each assignment, and (4) mid-term and end-of-term audits/reviews of their individual and instructor generated goals.

Additional Policies and Expectations

1. Academic and Professional Integrity

It is expected that all members of this learning community will conduct themselves with integrity

related to all aspects of our academic and professional lives. This includes making certain that plagiarism never occurs. If you are unsure about how to correctly attribute ideas, words, work, etc. to others, please ask. Please refer to the following website for specific policies and procedures related to academic and professional integrity:

http://www.soe.umich.edu/file/academic_integrity/

2. Accessibility & Access

Every member of this learning community has the right to full participation. If you need extra support for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me so I can fully support your learning. I will, of course, keep our discussions private and confidential. If you need an accommodation(s) for any type of disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. We can work together with Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://ssd.umich.edu/>). I am committed to universal learning and accessibility for all students, regardless of whether or not they have verified disabilities recognized by the University of Michigan.

3. Discrimination/Harassment

No member of this learning community should be subject to discrimination and/or harassment of any kind. Please refer to the following website for University policies related to discrimination and harassment: <http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/help/discrimination>

4. Diversity, Inclusion, Justice, and Equity

The University of Michigan School of Education is guided by twin imperatives: a focus on education practice (writ large) and a commitment to diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity (what we call Dije in the SOE). In this course, we will explore how these twin imperatives currently surface in discussions about how people learn, and what this might mean for our educational practice (e.g., teaching, policy, design) moving forward.

5. Mental Health and Well Being

Students may experience stressors that can impact their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressures and challenges associated with COVID-19, relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers a variety of resources, many which are listed on this webpage

<https://wellbeing.studentlife.umich.edu/resources-list>. You can also search for additional well-being resources here <https://wellbeing.studentlife.umich.edu/well-being-resources>. Please reach out to me if I can assist you in finding resources to support your mental health. I care about you!

6. Classroom Community

We are in this together. As we start yet another academic year, I'm humbled by how much we don't know and understand about COVID-19's emerging variants. I worry about how that could impact our learning community. We will get through this together, but we will only do that if we actively build solidarity and mutual trust. If we needed a reminder, this viral pandemic teaches us that we are deeply interconnected, and our individual well-being is intertwined with the well-being of everyone else. In the US, this has been very hard for many people to embrace. In this class, we are responsible for our own well-being as well as the well-being of everyone else who is in the room. With that said, please wear your mask. Please stay home if you are sick (even with a cold). As your instructor, I promise to follow these guidelines as well. I will offer zoom options to join if you need to be absent from our physical classroom (but are feeling well enough to attend class). I will also use zoom if I get sick and need to be absent from the classroom. We'll co-construct contingency plans on the first day to make sure we take care of our learning community.

As if that wasn't enough, beyond our COVID-19 caring, our work together relies on honest, open, and respectful dialogue so that all participants feel free to express their views and ask questions. We will be asking ourselves to think through the lenses of power, privilege, oppression, and resistance throughout this term. As a result, we will be engaging issues related to race, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality

and socioeconomic status among others as they pertain to learning and education. I encourage all of us to approach each other and the material we discuss with care, respect, humility, and generosity. I encourage you to ask questions, and also to think carefully about the impact of your words. Be mindful that everyone in this class is on a journey. We may know little or nothing about each other's journeys to this point. Disagreement about our course material is expected. Meanness or bullying towards other classmates or the instructor is not. We will discuss this together on the first day of class and we'll plan to check in with one another throughout the quarter to make sure we are creating an intellectually stimulating yet safe classroom community.

7. Attendance, Participation, and Communication

Regular, on-time attendance and thoughtful participation during class is essential not only to your individual learning but also to the success of the course and our community. We all share responsibility for the learning and teaching in this course. That said, we are in the midst of a novel viral pandemic and things may arise that require you to be absent from class. If you are ill, even with what you think is a common cold, please stay at home. You may also need to miss class for religious observance. If you know that you must miss a class session, *please notify me PRIOR to your absence if at all possible*. If you can attend class remotely, we'll offer class members that option every week. If you need to miss a class and cannot attend via zoom, I will work with you to discuss how you can make it up.

8. Technology for Learning

The use of technology to support learning is always encouraged. To be able to successfully participate in this course, you will need a laptop or tablet to take notes, consult canvas, and snap photos or screenshots of any in-class group projects we create. However, please do not use technology for reasons other than your learning during our class time. Please turn cell phones off or to vibrate before each class session out of respect for our community.

9. Expectations for Written Work

All written work is due on the date listed on this syllabus. With the exception of the final project, all projects turned in on the due date will be eligible for a rewrite. Late projects will not be eligible for a rewrite. If an emergency or extenuating circumstance arises, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss options for completing and turning in your project.

All written work should be typewritten, double-spaced with a 12-point typeface, one-inch margins, and APA for styling and references. Clear, concise, and grammatically correct writing is expected. You can access the APA style manual through University of Michigan's libraries or online at <http://www.apastyle.org>. Purdue University also has a very helpful online APA guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: When applicable, more detailed assignment guidelines and evaluation criteria will be posted to Canvas.

1. Participation & Asynchronous Activities

Participation will take many different forms throughout the semester. You are expected to come to class sessions having completed the assigned written and/or multimedia texts. This will prepare you to participate in discussions and other in-class activities. Each week you will have a reading guide that will help you prepare for class. *You will not submit this guide but you should complete it so you are well prepared to engage in productive discussions*. During class, students should share expertise and be open to learning from others. I encourage you to debate various perspectives, question ideas and arguments, and propose practical applications for the ideas we are exploring in the spirit of understanding the range of experiences and expertise we all bring to understanding human learning. After some class sessions, you will be asked to complete an asynchronous activity to further apply or reflect on the issues we discussed in class. There will be activity forms with directions included in the module. Please submit the

activity form to canvas once you have completed the activity. *All asynchronous activity forms must be submitted to Canvas by 5pm on the Friday after our Wednesday class session.*

2. Learning Story & Representation

Due Date: Week 2, September 8, 2021

Think about a time when you felt you learned something. Your moment/experience can be about something you learned in a school context, or something you learned outside of school (e.g., in a museum, as part of a hobby, as part of a job, etc.). In no more than 5 pages (12-point font and double-spaced), you will write about your moment or experience of learning. Make sure to fully describe the event/experience; where you were, what you were learning, why, how, with whom, etc. Why do you think this learning event/experience is so vivid for you? Why do you think you learned whatever you learned so well? When you say you “learned” whatever it is that you learned, what does that mean to you (i.e., how are you defining learning as tied to this experience)? *Additionally, pose up to three goals that can guide your learning this term (in addition to the goals outlined in the syllabus). What do you want to learn this term about human learning? Your learning story may help you decide on some places to begin your learning OR general reflections on your interests may be a good starting point. You can add or modify these goals as the course progresses throughout the term but you will offer up to three goals now as a starting point.* Please do not include citations in this first paper. Linking your ideas and experiences to course literature will come later, as part of your final course project. You will share about your learning experience in class. Some students enjoy making representations of their experience to share with the class. You may want to do this as well. Your representation can be anything - a drawing, a photo, a diagram, etc. This is not required but is offered as an opportunity to extend beyond our typical written and verbal forms of engagement with one another.

3. Learning Analysis

Due Date: Week 8, October 20, 2021

A large part of this course is identifying where and how ideas about learning we explore show up in current practice. We will have these types of discussions each week and analyze example educational artifacts, learning environments, instruction, etc. together in class. In this analysis assignment, you will have a chance to explore how learning theories are at the heart of an area of your own practice. You will analyze an educational artifact - a set of lesson plans, a museum exhibit, a policy document, an educational-related film (no Hollywood films) for this project. What you decide to analyze is your choice. You will analyze your artifact using two different theoretical lenses. We will talk in detail about my expectations for this project in class.

4. Final Course Project

Due Date: Week 14, December 8, 2021

Your final course project will involve three different pieces. **Part 1** will involve interviewing an educational practitioner (e.g., teacher in K-12 or post-secondary institution, curriculum designer, museum educator) to better understand how they think about learning, how that informs the work that they do, and how their ideas link to various perspectives about learning we discuss this semester. **Part 2** will involve returning to your Learning Paper (see assignment #2) and linking elements of the learning experience you describe in that paper with ideas we will read about this semester. **Part 3** will involve reflecting on how you are going to use ideas about learning that we will study in this course in your work moving forward. We will talk in detail about my expectations for this project in class. You may also choose to submit a proposal for an alternative final project. You must meet with me first to discuss your idea and submit your proposal for an alternative project by Week 12, November 17.

Class and Reading Schedule

These details are subject to change.

All updates will appear in Canvas and on the weekly reading guide.

Use of Canvas

You will find our Canvas course website organized using the Modules tab. Each Module corresponds to one week of class. You will find required readings and performance expectations for each week. After class, I will also post any additional documents that we may have referenced during class. There will be a Module for General Course Documents, and then a Module for each week. Do not use Files to find documents, as the current and required documents will always be found on Modules. *I will post assignments under the Module for the week when that assignment is due.* You can also find links to assignments under the assignments tab on our Canvas page.

Each week we will have the same three-part rhythm. There will be some assigned texts, videos, podcasts, etc. to complete before the class session (Before Class in the module). Then we will meet in class for 2 hours (9-11am) to discuss these materials in person at the SOE (In Class). After our class, there will often be an asynchronous activity for you to complete by yourself (or in pairs or small groups if you choose to work with others – Asynchronous Activity in the module). ***On weeks when you have an asynchronous activity, all students must complete and upload the activity form to Canvas by the Friday following class at 5pm.*** Days when we do not have an asynchronous activity will mean you are spending that time on larger course assignments or on creating or reflection on your course learning goals. *If at some point in the term we are told that we can no longer meet in person, we will meet synchronously on zoom for the “In Class” part of class instead of meeting face-to-face in the SOE building and everything else will stay the same.*

PART 1: ARTICULATING STARTING POINTS

Week 1: September 1 Introduction to the Course

Week 2: September 8 Articulating a Theory of Learning: Starting with Your Story While Engaging the Lenses of Power, Privilege, Oppression & Resistance

Finish your learning reflection paper BEFORE moving on to reading the assignments below. Be prepared to share what you wrote about during our synchronous time.

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783> (Chapter 3 pp. 35-68).
2. Esmonde, I., & Booker, A. (2016). Introduction. *Power and privilege in the learning sciences: Critical and sociocultural theories of learning* (Chapter 1, pp. 1-5). New York, NY: Routledge
3. Bulman, R.C. (2002). Teachers in the 'hood: Hollywood's middle-class fantasy. *The Urban Review*, 34(3), 251-276.

*****LEARNING STORY & REPRESENTATION DUE TODAY SUBMIT TO CANVAS*****

PART 2: LEARNING THEORIES

Week 3: September 15 Learning and Development are Incremental, Behavioral Processes

1. Two short videos on behaviorism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvVaTy8mQrg> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTH3ob1IRFo>

2. Skinner, B. F. (1954, Spring). The science of learning and the art of teaching. *Harvard Educational Review*, 86-97.
3. Schwartz, D.L., Tsang, J.M., & Blair, K.P. (2016). R is for reward: Motivating behavior. In *The ABCs of how we learn: 26 scientifically proven approaches, how they work, and when to use them* (pp. 220-233). New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Week 4: September 22 Learning and Development are Constructive Processes

1. Donaldson, M. (1978). Appendix: Piaget's theory of intellectual development. In *Children's minds*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
2. Barnes excerpts that help explain Donaldson (which can be a challenging read)
3. Hein, G. E. (1991). Constructivist learning theory. Retrieved from <https://www.exploratorium.edu/education/ifi/constructivist-learning>
4. Duckworth, E. (1996). Teaching as research. In *"The Having of Wonderful Ideas" and Other Essays on Teaching and Learning* (pp. 150-169). New York: Teachers College Press.

Week 5: September 29 Learning and Development are Cognitive Processes

Distribute learning analysis assignment and discuss any questions.

1. Miller, G.A. (2003). The cognitive revolution: A historical perspective. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7(3), 141-144.
2. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783> (Chapter 4 pp. 69-84)
3. Flavell, J.H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 906-911.

Week 6 : October 6 Learning and Development are Cultural Processes

Present and discuss your learning analysis focal artifact today. Please bring it to class to share in order to receive feedback from others.

1. Wertsch, J.V.(1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 3 pp. 58-76)
2. Nasir, N. S., Rosebery, A., Warren, B., & Lee, C. D. (2014). Learning as a cultural process: Achieving equity through diversity. In K. Sawyer (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences* (Second ed., pp. 686-706). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
3. Moll, L.C., & Greenberg, J.B. (1990). Creating zones of possibilities: Combining social contexts of instruction. In L.C. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 319-348). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Week 7: October 13 Learning and Development are Critical, Cultural, & Constructive Processes

1. Freire, P. (2000/1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (Chapter 2 and part of 3, pp. 71-middle of 96)
2. Herrenkohl, L.R., Jackson, A. Ten Brink, J. Easley, K. Dellavecchia, G. & Palinscar, A.S. (In press). From a Social Constructivist to a Critical Sociocultural Approach: Unsettling Power, Privilege, and Oppression and Imagining the Future of Human Learning. *To appear in the Handbook of Educational Psychology*.

Week 8: October 20 Analyzing Learning Using Learning Theories Be prepared to share your analysis in class.

1. Woolfolk Hoy, A., Davis, H.A., Anderman, E.M. (2013). Theories of learning and teaching in *TIP. Theory into Practice*, 52, 9-21.

2. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783> (Executive Summary pp. 1-10)

*****LEARNING ANALYSIS PAPER DUE TODAY SUBMIT TO CANVAS*****

PART 3: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN RESEARCH ON LEARNING

Week 9 : October 27 Motivation and Learning

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24783> (Chapter 6 pp. 109-134).
2. The limits of grit in *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-limits-of-grit>
3. Claude Steele on stereotype threat <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=failylR0nrY>

Week 10: November 3 Learning and Development Involve Social, Emotional, and Moral Dimensions

1. Winn, M.T. (2019). Justice on both sides: Transforming education through restorative justice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press (Introduction – Chapter 2, pp. 1-49).
2. Abolitionist Teaching Network Guide to Racial and Restorative Justice in Social Emotional Learning. <https://abolitionistteachingnetwork.org/guide>
3. Richard Davidson on “The Heart-Brain Connection: The Neuroscience of Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning” <https://www.edutopia.org/video/heart-brain-connection-neuroscience-social-emotional-and-academic-learning>
4. CASEL website – please review the 5 SEL core competencies <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>

Week 11: November 10 Learning in School Subjects

Choose **one** of the following articles for a jigsaw (we’ll coordinate this in class):

1. Bang, M. & Medin, D. (2010). Cultural processes in science education: Supporting the navigation of multiple epistemologies. *Science Education*, 94(6), 1008-1026.
2. Dutro, E. (2011). Writing wounded: Trauma, testimony, and critical witness in literacy classrooms. *English Education*, 43(2), 193-211.
3. Eisner, E. (2002). What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education? *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 18(1), 4-16.
4. Gholson, M.L. & Robinson, D.D. (2019). Restoring mathematics identities of Black learners: A curricular approach, *Theory into Practice*, 12, DOI: 10.1080/00405841.2019.1626620.
5. Clay, K.L & Rubin, B.C. (2020). “I look deep into this stuff because it’s a part of me”: Toward a critically relevant civics education, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 48:2, 161-181, DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2019.1680466

ALL READ:

1. Wilson, S.M. & Peterson, P.L. (2006). Theories of learning and teaching: What do they mean for educators? (Report). Washington, DC: National Education Association. Retrieved from: <http://www.nea.org/tools/theories-of-learning-and-teaching-what-do-they-mean-for-educators.html>

Week 12: November 17 Measuring Learning in School Contexts

1. Shepard, L.A. (2000). The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational Researcher*, 29(7), 4-14.
2. Sturgis, C. & Casey, K. (2018). Quality principles for competency-based education. Vienna, VA: iNACOL.
3. Fishman, B. (2021). Introduction to the 50th Anniversary Edition. Wad-ja-get?
4. Jesse Hagopian *More than a score: Giving students a solid chance* – TED Talk
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gL64chNiuJQ>

Week 13: December 1 Learning Ecologies: Learning and Development Take Place Across Ecological Contexts

1. Bevan, B. (2016). STEM learning ecologies: Relevant, responsive, connected. *Connected Science Learning, 1*, 1-9.
2. McKinney de Royston, M. & Nasir, N.S. (2017). Racialized learning ecologies: Understanding race as a key feature of learning and developmental processes in schools. In Budwig, N., Turiel, E., Zelazo, P.D. *New Perspectives on Human Development*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (pp. 258-286).

Week 14: December 8 Wrap-up & Final Project Sharing

Be prepared to share ideas from your final paper in class.

1. Lee, C.D. (2016). Examining conceptions of how people learn over the decades through AERA Presidential Addresses: Diversity and equity as persistent conundrums. *Educational Researcher*, 45(2), pp. 73-82.
2. Course evaluations

*****FINAL PROJECT DUE TODAY SUBMIT TO CANVAS*****