EDU 525

Theory and Research in Teaching & Learning
Fall 2009

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Course overview:

Theories designed to inform or describe teaching and learning abound (e.g., direct instruction, teaching for understanding, multicultural approaches, anti-racist pedagogies, etc.). Educators’ translation of theories into classroom practice increases that diversity, as inevitable transformations and modifications are made in response to varying contexts. The goal of this course is to provide opportunities for in-depth exploration and critical analysis of teaching and learning theories, including historical, cultural, social, and political influences on their development and implementation. Through careful reading, dialogue, writing, and presentation, we will develop knowledge and skills in critical analysis of teaching and learning theories, bridging theory and practice, and linking what we learn to our own practice as educators.

Course schedule (tentative, of course):

Sept. 3: Introduction

Sept. 10: Historical beginnings: Progressivism (Dewey), Factory models (Taylor)

Individual psychological theories and practice

Sept. 17: Piagetian
Sept. 24: Social-cognitive theories and practices

Social cultural theories and practice

Oct. 1: Vygotskian

Reflection paper due covering readings from Sep. 17-Sep. 24

Oct. 8: Sociocultural theories and practices

Oct. 15: Situated social practice theories and practices

Feminist and critically focused theories and practice

Oct. 22: Critical theories and pedagogies

Reflection paper due covering readings from Oct. 1-Oct. 15

Oct. 29: Feminist theories and pedagogies
Gore, J. (2003). What we can do for you! What can ‘we’ do for ‘you’?: Struggling over empowerment in critical and feminist pedagogy. In A. Darder, M. Baltadano, & R.D. Torres (Eds.), The critical pedagogy reader (pp. 331-343).
OR

Nov. 5: American Educational Studies Association Conference -- no class

Nov. 12: Critical race theories

Challenging Notions of Culture

Nov. 19: Challenging “Culture” and the Social Practice Turn
OR

Reflection paper due covering readings from Oct. 22-Nov. 12
Nov. 26: THANKSGIVING

Dec. 3: Culturally relevant pedagogies

Dec. 10: Anti-oppressive pedagogies

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

Final paper due

Course requirements:

Reflective writing (50 points; no more than 5-6 pages): two times during the semester you will turn in a paper that presents a synthesis of major themes and concepts covered in a series of readings (e.g., individual psychological theories and practice; social cultural theories and practice; feminist and critically focused theories and practice; challenging notions of culture/social practice turn). Rather than summarize each of the readings, the goal is to combine different ideas and concepts to capture essential features of the family of theories and practices involved. In other words, the goal is to reflect on, apply, extend, synthesize and critically appraise the ideas you are encountering.

Research roundtable and annotated bibliography (100 points): choose a topic from the syllabus you wish to explore in depth. Work together with one or two classmates who have also chosen this topic to develop a research-focused presentation for our class. The presentation should take up no more than an hour and will be scheduled on the night of class that will focus on your topic. Working individually, construct a bibliography of at least 8 articles, 6 of which must be reports of research from peer-reviewed journals. Your individually written bibliography should be structured as follows:
- The first paragraph should define/characterize the topic you are researching. For example, explain what the topic is (i.e., define it). Then explain why you have selected the topic to learn more about.
After you have perused the literature, select the articles (please do not include any readings from our syllabus) that you think are germane to understanding the body of work. Your summary of each article should be structured as follows:

- APA style reference at top of page
- One page summary containing the research hypothesis, methods, results, conclusion, and your critical reaction to the study.

Finally, the last page of your bibliography should be your reaction to the literature - what seems to be the general consensus on the topic, what empirical methods have been used, and most importantly, where does this line of research need to go?

Synthesis paper built on video analysis and course readings (200 points; ~15 pages): I will provide C.D.s with a videotape of a classroom, or you can use a video of your own teaching or of someone else’s classroom (in consultation with me) for your analysis.

1. Identify a 20-minute segment of the video for close analysis.
2. Choose 2 theoretical frameworks from the syllabus as lenses for the video analysis.
3. Use the following prompts to guide your analysis and write-up:
   - For each framework:
     - What key features of the classroom interaction does this theoretical framework help us focus on?
     - What about classrooms does this framework help us understand about this classroom and teaching more generally?
     - What are the strengths and weaknesses of this framework for helping us understand this classroom and teaching more generally?
   - For cross-framework analysis:
     - How does bringing to bear two theoretical lenses help us understand classrooms as complex systems?
     - How do the lenses complement each other?
     - What gaps still emerge in your understanding of the classroom? Which theoretical frameworks we studied may be helpful in filling those gaps?

This is a formal, scholarly paper. Use APA format in writing the paper (e.g., formatting of citations in the text and the bibliography, double-spaced text, 12 point font, appropriate headings, etc.), and include a brief description of the 20-minute segment of classroom activity you choose for analysis. As for any doctoral-level paper, citing literature is necessary to support claims made. In addition, include representative or illuminating excerpts from the data to support your analyses. It is important in this assignment to be clear about the distinction between evaluation and analysis. Many students move to evaluation, using the central tenets of theories to judge whether or not a teacher is teaching in accordance with the kind of pedagogy a theoretical framework would advocate. The goal instead for this assignment is to identify the central features of classrooms that a particular theoretical point of view would have us focus on, and to analyze those features in light of the central tenets of the theory.

Course grading:
Standard criterion-referenced: A = 94% and above; A- = 90-93%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 84-86%; B- = 80-83%; C+ = 77-80%; C = 74-76%; C- = 70-73%