EDCI 6340.001 Syllabus
Conceptual Models of Learning and Instruction
Fall 2018

M 5:30-8:20 p.m.  N. Nelson
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Nelson: 940-565-2843, nancy.nelson@unt.edu
Office Hours: M 1-4 or by appointment

Catalog Description: The study of the research base and the learning theory underlying major
current models of teaching.

Instructors’ Objectives

For students

1. To become familiar with major learning theories and consider their development and impact over
time.
2. To gain insights into the relations between compatible theories and the conflict between
competing theories.
3. To learn more about the theorists themselves and the contexts in which they have worked and/or
work today.
4. To reflect upon their own theoretical perspectives, particularly with respect to the research they
will conduct themselves.
5. To note relations among learning theories and particular lines of research and scholarship as well
as particular approaches to teaching.

Expectations

The more you put into this course, the more you’ll get out of it. I hope that you, as a doctoral
student, will go beyond the assigned readings and projects for the course and consider this a
“seminar” to which you will contribute. See what you can find that’s interesting and relevant on the
Internet or in the journals published in your field, and share your findings with us. Talk with others,
including faculty and other doctoral students, about their theories of learning, and try to discern the
theoretical orientations underlying various approaches to teaching and learning. See where there
are conflicting perspectives. We’ll all focus on all of the theorists included in the course, but each of
you will have particular theorists you will come to know quite well.

Give attention to differences in theoretical positions. As John Dewey (1922/1957) claimed, “Conflict
is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us
out of sheeplike passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving. . . . Conflict is a ‘sine qua non’ of
reflection and ingenuity” (p. 300).

You’ll see that I’ve included reading guides in the course materials. Please download a relevant
reading guide and look it over before you begin reading an assigned text, and then, as you read,
take notes on the guide. Please print off your guides (with responses) and bring them to class. I’d
suggest that you create some kind of notebook for this course, where you can keep printed copies
of articles and excerpts, reading guides, and other handouts.

For most weeks, you’ll also have discussion threads in LEARN.
Assignments

“Small” Assignments

**Theorist Reports.** As we consider the various theories, we will also learn something about the theorists who developed them. You will select two theorists to present to the class the evenings when we consider their theories. These reports will be biographical in nature, but I’d like for you to focus mainly on the development and the elements of that person’s **thought**. Your report will thus be an **intellectual biography**. Include mention of major collaborators as well as intellectual opponents. As sources you should try to use published works, including writings of that particular theorist, although a few online webpages or documents might be useful. Be sure that you credit sources appropriately (APA format). Known and “agreed-upon” facts of the individual’s life should not be credited to sources (since they are general knowledge), but interpretations and claims about impact should be credited. Any photographs of the theorist should also be credited. Have some kind of “original” theme for the report, and signal that in the title.

Each report should be no more than four pages long excluding references. For this paper, use single space with double space between paragraphs. Be sure to use Word’s Spell Check and Grammar Check and to number the pages (but don’t put 1 on the first page; start putting numbers with page 2). Since this is a paper for a class, not something that you’re submitting for publication, you won’t need a running head. Also, for these reports, you won’t need a cover page.

You’ll make a 15-minute (rehearsed) oral report too--with PowerPoint if you like. You should have a handout for class members. After your presentation, we should all know why you consider this theorist’s theory to be important and what impact the theoretical work continues to have today.

**Journal Inquiry:** Select a major scholarly journal in your area of interest or specialization. Conduct a small-scaled forum analysis in which you attempt to see how leaning theory informs recent research/scholarship presented there. You might, for instance, focus on a particular theorist or particular theorists (e.g., Vygotsky or Lave & Wenger) and see how his, her, or their theoretical orientation has been presented in the four 2017 issues. Or you might take a broader look and see which learning theorists are cited by authors of the articles. Write up your findings in a brief paper (double-spaced, 5 pages not counting a title page or references), and prepare to share what you’ve learned in a 10-minute (rehearsed) oral report for our class. Provide a title that is relevant to your findings. Please note: This assignment is similar to what students in the Traditions of Inquiry class do. If you have taken that course, do something different this time that is still relevant to your own interests. This may end up being a collaborative project.

**The Major Assignment: A Paper and Presentation**

Your major assignment for this course is to produce a scholarly paper on an issue relevant to learning theory. My hope is that this will be an interesting and engaging piece of writing that can be developed into a conference paper or a journal article and that will be relevant to your emerging identity in the field. It should be a “new” contribution to knowledge. For the paper, you might select a controversial issue that was debated in the past or is currently being debated. Topics might be, for example, theories undergirding different positions in the “math wars,” the issue of “developmentally appropriate practice” in early childhood education, or competing learning theories in ESL.
Instead of a paper focused on a controversial issue, you might examine the impact or the potential of a particular theory on scholarship or teaching of a particular type. For instance, you could examine the notion of distributed cognition as it is used in online instruction. You could even consider the conflicting learning theories supporting, for instance, classroom discussions. You might also look at the influence of “indigenous foreigners” (term from T. Popkewitz) in a particular field of inquiry.

I’ll meet with you as you begin to plan the paper, and later will provide comments and suggestions on a draft. In addition, there will be peer response on the next-to-final draft. The final paper should be no more than 15 pages (double-spaced) plus reference pages. Be sure to have a good title.

You’ll present your paper project orally to the class at the next-to-last class meeting. This presentation will take the form of a conference paper (15 minutes in length), and you will be in a “session” with two or three other presenters. We’ll have chairs and discussants for each session.

The Final

For the last class meeting, you’re asked to bring a statement of your philosophy of teaching and learning (no more than two pages), which will be considered part of the final. The portion conducted in class will be a review of all that we’ve covered in the course. It’s intended to get you to review what you’ve learned so that you can speak authoritatively with others about the major theorists and major theoretical claims that have been considered in the course. It’s important for you to come out of the course with this knowledge—to know these learning theories and the theorists who developed them. The exam will include mainly short-answer items. It shouldn’t take long.

Grading (Rubrics will be provided for theorist report, forum analysis, and major paper.)

- Participation and attendance: 20 points
- Theorist Report: 20 points
- Journal Inquiry: 20 points
- Major Paper: 30 points
- Final: 10 points

Schedule

- Aug. 27 Introduction to Course
- Sept. 10 Pragmatism/Instrumentalism
  - Let’s Begin with Dewey, “Father of American Education”
  - Dewey, Intro, Chs. 1-3, 7
  - Phillips
  - “John Dewey” in D&K
  - Reminder: Participate in online discussion by Sept. 9.
- Sept. 17 Pragmatism v. Connectionism & Behaviorism
  - Did Thordike “Win”? Tomlinson
  - Woodworth
  - Reports: Dewey, Thordike
- Sept. 24 Behaviorism v. Cognitivism
  - Or Did Chomsky Beat Skinner?
  - Gardner (Cog Rev excerpt)
  - Reports: Skinner, Chomsky
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Cognitive Theories</td>
<td>Rumelhart, Rumelhart &amp; McClelland, Flavell</td>
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<td>Information Processing, Schema Theory, Problem-Solving, Metacognition</td>
<td>Reports: Rumelhart, Flavell</td>
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<td><em>How Can We Discern What Goes on In the Mind?</em></td>
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<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td>Cognitive Theories</td>
<td>(Nelson) Spivey; Kelly</td>
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<td>Cognitive Constructivism, Embodied</td>
<td>“Jerome Bruner” in D&amp;K</td>
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<td>Cognition, Cognition and Neuroscience, Distributed Cognition, Self-Regulated Learning</td>
<td>Reports: Bransford, Ann Brown, Brainer, Hutchin</td>
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<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td><em>The Shallows</em></td>
<td>Carr, Prologue, Chs.1 – 7, 9</td>
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<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>Developmental Theories</td>
<td>Gardner &amp; Hatch</td>
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<td><em>How Do We Conceptualize Development?</em></td>
<td>Jean Piaget” in D&amp;K</td>
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<td>optional: “Howard Gardner” in Palmer</td>
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<td>Reports: Piaget, Gardner</td>
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<td>Due: Report on Journal Inquiry</td>
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<td>(Written and Oral)</td>
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<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>Social and Sociocultural Theories</td>
<td>“Lev Vygotsky” in D&amp;K</td>
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<td><em>Can We Integrate the Cognitive and the Social?</em></td>
<td>van der Veer, Chs. 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Social and Sociocultural Theories</td>
<td>van der Veer, Chs. 3, 4, 6, 7</td>
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<td>Report: Vygotsky</td>
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<td>Due: Plan for Final Paper</td>
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<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>Social and Sociocultural Theories</td>
<td>John-Steiner &amp; Mahn</td>
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<td><em>Let’s Consider the Sociocultural Nature of Communities of Practice</em></td>
<td>Lave &amp; Wenger</td>
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<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td>Social and Sociocultural Theories</td>
<td>Lave &amp; Wenger</td>
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<td><em>How is Cognition Situated?</em></td>
<td>Report: Lave &amp; Wenger</td>
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<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>Other &quot; Social Theories</td>
<td>One of the webpages on Activity Theory</td>
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<td>Activity Theory/CHAT, Distributed Cognition, Actor Network Theory, Chaos/Complexity Theory</td>
<td>Report: Engetröm or Leontiev</td>
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<td>Due: Draft of Major Paper</td>
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<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Due: Oral Paper Presentation and Final Written Paper</td>
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<td>Dec. 10</td>
<td>Final Exam and Concluding Activities</td>
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**Books**

*Required*


**Optional**


**Articles and Excerpts (available through LEARN)**


**Webpages**


Class Policies

1. **Assignments**: All papers must be typed, grammar-checked, and spell-checked. Cite references where appropriate, and follow APA (6th ed.) guidelines in doing so. Papers and other assignments should be submitted or presented on the date that they are due. Late assignments will have points subtracted, and, if they are more than a week late, they may not be accepted.

2. **Academic integrity**: Academic integrity is essential to this course, as in other work that you do in your doctoral program. In Policy 18.1.16, UNT has described academic integrity as follows:

   Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship.

   You must be sure to avoid plagiarism, which is defined in the following way in that policy:

   Use of another’s thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student’s intent, including but not limited to:

   1. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation.

   2. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials. [http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm](http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm)

3. **Students’ disabilities**: UNT complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible and bring your verification form from the Office of Disability Accommodations. If you suspect that you may have a disability (e.g., physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability), please contact the ODA.

4. **Civility**: UNT is committed to equity and diversity and to a student-centered environment that is conducive to learning. Students and faculty are expected to behave in a manner that is respectful and courteous to all people regardless of their ethnic/racial origin, their sexual orientation, their religious background, or disability. Actions or words that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated. In accordance with this emphasis on respectful attention to others, you are expected to turn off your cell phone and not to take messages or text during class.

5. **Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness**: The SPOT is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

**Note**: This syllabus is a plan for the course and, as such, is subject to modification as the course progresses.