EDUC 606: Developmental & Psychological Perspectives on Education  
Winter 2015 Syllabus

Course location: 2320 SEB  
Course time: Thursdays, 4-7pm  
dierner@umich.edu [best way to contact me]  
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Course Overview
This course applies developmental theories and psychological research to important educational issues. Several theoretical traditions (e.g., developmental, biological, cognitive science, sociocultural, contextual, motivational) are considered in depth. The focus of this course is the application of these ideas to educational settings, as well as theoretically-informed intervention strategies to improve learning, positive youth development, and achievement.

Required text:  

Course Requirements
- **Class Attendance.** Students should attend every class, except in cases of illness and/or extenuating circumstances.

- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.** If you need an accommodation for a disability, please speak with me at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work together with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; www.ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information that you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

- **Students’ Rights and Responsibilities.** Membership in the academic community that is the University of Michigan affords you a number of important rights, as well as a number of important responsibilities. Please see http://www.oscr.umich.edu/statement/ for information about these rights and responsibilities.

Course Assignments and Grading
For all written course assignments, standard APA formatting applies (double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins on all side, single-sided pages. This excludes title page, references, and brief appendices – although an appendix cannot be used to get around page limits).

Assignments and grading will be as follows, totaling 130 possible course points:

- **Class Attendance and Participation (40 course points):** This is a graduate seminar emphasizing the critical discussion and application of course concepts and readings. Active, relevant, and regular participation in class discussions, small group activities, and other in-class exercises is the most important requirement of the class and a vital way for you to
actively learn this material. Students should come prepared & attend every class, except in cases of illness and/or extenuating circumstances (please contact me in these instances).

- **Reflective Observation (30 points):** You will arrange to observe a learning episode in your current or intended profession (e.g., a classroom interaction, a counseling/therapy session, an advising session, a student using educational software or a game, etc.). After you conduct the observation, you will write a 4-6 page double-spaced paper analyzing the pros/cons of what you observed based on course concepts and topics. Papers should be written in formal academic language, include specific examples and terminology, and reflect an integration of a wide range of material from the course. I will evaluate your work, based on the quality of your writing, the thoughtfulness of your analysis, your use of specific examples from your observation, your use of specific evidence and terminology from the course, and your integration of concepts from multiple lectures and readings. You can conduct the observation at any time; the paper will be due on February 26th (by 5PM EST).

Please be certain to remove all identifying information (e.g., school name, names of students or school staff) from your reflective observation paper – use pseudonyms instead.

- **Layperson Letter (25 points):** You will write a letter to a (real or imagined) friend, parent, or colleague who is concerned that their child’s learning style or development is not being accommodated in his/her classroom. Your letter will address these concerns using principles of learning or positive youth development, directed to an audience unfamiliar with educational/developmental psychology, but without resorting to highly technical jargon. Instead, you will explain these principles by ‘translating’ academic ideas into language any lay person could understand.

The letter should be about two pages long, maximum, and should not include formal citations. The letter will be due on March 19th by 5pm EST. Students are encouraged but not required to submit a draft of the letter for instructor feedback.

- **“Presentation to the Board” (AKA ‘P to the B’, 35 course points)***
  Working collaboratively in groups (3-4 students/group), students will deliver a presentation to persuade a school board (or, funding agency) to approve (or, fund) your intervention program. Each group is required to submit a five page paper before our last class meeting (detailed below). These papers will serve as our required readings for the last week of class; each student is responsible for reading the paper about each group’s project. Groups are not required to do so but may append selected supporting materials with their paper (copy of measures, short outline, etc.).

Each group will also deliver a brief presentation (10-15 minutes/group) during our last class meeting. Following their presentation in class, each group will then respond to inquiries, criticisms, and/or comments regarding their P to the B in class (for about 5-10 minutes). I encourage each group to develop 2-3 questions of their own, in case the rest of the class is reluctant to ask their group any questions or offer comment.

Your presentation must address:
a. “Context of the problem” - An explanation of why issue X is a problem that needs to be addressed by your intervention. You can illustrate the context of the problem via statistics, vignettes/narratives, etc.
b. “What is the theoretical basis of the program?” – Explain the theoretical framework that guides your intervention to a more general audience. You must explain the theoretical framework to a non-academic audience, without using jargon and technical language. Being able to understand complex ideas and explain them simply reflects a clear understanding of course materials and the application of developmental science to meet the needs of children and youth. Try to apply ideas and concepts from the readings in your presentation.
c. “How this problem will be addressed” – An explanation of your intervention curriculum/program in specific terms. What will the components of your intervention be? What sort of things will you do to impact this problem? (You may use small pieces of existing interventions, but cannot simply copy the curriculum & design of an existing intervention program.)
d. “How will this program be evaluated” - Explain the measure(s) that you will use to assess change in participants, as a result of your intervention program. How will students be different as a result of this intervention? Also discuss the strategy and plan you will use to measure change in participants (e.g. pre-/post-testing, use of control groups, etc.) Again, discuss the measure(s) used to assess change and the evaluation plan in language suitable to a non-academic audience. Assessing the impact of our work is where many fall short, and should not be overlooked in your project.

Each group will submit a paper that provides a more in-depth discussion of their presentation, due in advance of our last class meeting (be strategic about the use of this paper – for example use the paper to get into issue(s) that you won’t have enough time to cover in your presentation). This paper should not exceed five pages, double-spaced, with 12 point font and 1 inch margins. Appendices, title pages, etc. (if desired) will not count toward this page limit. Your group will also be required to submit brief yet comprehensive documentation – “who did what” - of each team member’s contribution to the final product, approved by all team members (not counted toward five page limit). For example, groups could assign one member to cover measurement and evaluation, one who is more responsible for the theoretical framework, and so on.

The topic for this project can be something not covered in the required readings, but all students interested in doing so must receive prior approval from the instructor or receive a 0 on this assignment.

The paper is due before our last class meeting, on Monday April 13th at noon [EST] and the presentation will be delivered during our last class meeting, on Thursday April 16th. Each group is required to meet with the instructor to have their topic approved and receive feedback on the design and write-up of their P to the B, prior to the last week of class.
Course Schedule & Topics

Week One: Introduction & Overview  January 8
Week Two: Sociocultural Perspectives  January 15
Week Three: Genes & Brains: Biological Perspectives  January 22
Week Four: Understanding Risk & Protective Factors in Development  January 29
Week Five: The ‘Air Traffic Controller in your Brain’: Executive Function  February 5
Week Six: Motivation & School Engagement  February 12
Week Seven: The Context of Education & Schooling  February 19
Week Eight: ‘The Little Bigots’: Understanding of Race and Social Class  February 26
---Reflective Observation due February 26th---

Week Nine: Spring Break  March 5
Week Ten: ‘A Threat is in the Air’: Stereotype Threat  March 12
Week Eleven: SRCD Conference, class cancelled  March 19
---Layperson Letter due March 19th---

Week Twelve: Social Class & School Success  March 26
Week Thirteen: Recall Tests & ‘Wise Feedback’  April 2
Week Fourteen: Brief Social Psychological Interventions  April 9
---Presentation to the Board paper due April 13th---
Week Fifteen: Presentations to the Board  April 16
Course Schedule & Readings
Listed by suggested order of reading, for each week
All articles provided, many with instructor annotation, in CTools

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Week One: Introduction & Overview [January 8]
- Schaffer (2006). Ch. 1, Conceptions of development, pp. 5-28

Week Two: Sociocultural Perspectives [January 15]

Week Three: Biological Perspectives [January 22]

Week Four: Understanding Risk & Protective Factors in Development [January 29]
- U.S. Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health: Overview of Prevention [posted to CTools]
- Carefully review: Forty Assets list [posted to CTools]

KEY CONCEPTS & CONTEXTS

Week Five: The ‘Air Traffic Controller in your Brain’: Executive Function [February 5]

Week Six: Motivation & School Engagement [February 12]

**Week Seven: The Context of Education & Schooling [February 19]**

**Week Eight: Developing an Understanding of Race and Social Class [February 26]**

**Week Nine: Spring Break [March 5]**

**Week Ten: ‘A Threat is in the Air’: Stereotype Threat [March 12]**

**Week Eleven: SRCD Conference, class cancelled [March 19]**

**Week Twelve: Social Class & School Success [March 26]**

**SELECTED INTERVENTIONS**

**Week Thirteen: Fostering Learning and Engagement: Recall Tests & ‘Wise Feedback’ [April 2]**
**Week Fourteen: Brief Social Psychological Interventions [April 9]**

**Week Fifteen: Presentations to the Board [April 16]**
- Required readings are final P to the B papers, submitted to CTools by 4/13 at noon [EST]