Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is to explore theories of how people learn—particularly, adults—and then apply one or more to (a) your own learning, and (b) to a particular context within which you think you will be working, towards the end goal of improving the quality of educational activities for adults, whether they be teachers we train, staff we supervise, or adult students we teach.

The course will be relevant to those interested in adult learning in all contexts, U.S. and internationally.

Course objectives:

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. articulate how adult learning theory informs your own learning;
2. describe the perspectives and arguments of the main schools in adult learning theory;
3. determine how various theories apply to your own practice as an adult educator;
4. identify how biological, socio-economic, cultural, political, organizational and other contextual factors affect adult learning;
5. analyze the theories and application of those theories to the design of adult learning programs; and
6. state approaches to adult learning, based on theories, that you may use in the future in your own practice with adults.

Topics and Methodology:

The class is organized into four parts:

1. **Part One**: Focus on adult **learning theory and historical trends**, including the similarities and differences between how children and adults learn.

2. **Part Two**: Focus on **research about the neuro-biological aspects of learning** (recent research on the brain and learning) and the implications for helping people learn.
3. **Part Three:** Focus on the **characteristics of the adult learner** (biological, social, economic, gender, cultural, political, spiritual, etc.) and how these characteristics affect learning.

4. **Part Four:** Focus on the **characteristics of the learning event** (the educational intervention or activity), especially within the context where you will be working.

The course is organized to reflect a key concept in learning theory: that learning is enhanced through self-organized learning within a supportive community, facilitated through dialogue, exploration and self-discovery. In other words, as you become familiar with adult learning theory, you will apply it to decide on your own learning activities and assignments. The class sessions will be structured for maximum participation, with a mix of individual, pairs, small group, and whole group learning, AND a mix of experiential, analytical discussion, and application activities.

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**Course Requirements, Evaluation and Grading:**

- This course requires the active participation of all class members: listening as well as talking, helping others develop their ideas, and expressing your own thoughts in class discussions and small-group work.

- Regular, **ON-TIME** attendance and participation is required to receive the full 35% towards your grade. 5 percentage points for participation will be deducted for every unexcused absence to class. 1 percentage point for participation will be deducted for every unexcused late arrival.

- I encourage you to use my office hours as a time for us to discuss your paper, the readings or questions you have about the course. Office hours for the entire semester are listed on my door, Hills House South #264; please sign up for one there, rather than asking me in the hallway.

- All assignments are due when indicated. Proofreading your work and catching mistakes is a sign, to me, of thoroughness and academic rigor.

- You will be graded on a pass-fail basis, **UNLESS** you wish to have a grade. If you want a grade for this course, you must **let me know via Moodle course website (NO E-MAILS)!** Assignment #1 is to indicate, via Moodle, by **Monday, September 15, 2014** whether you want a grade or a pass/fail for the class. If you do not notify me whether you want a grade or pass/fail by September 15, you will AUTOMATICALLY receive a pass/fail. No changes in grading status will be made after this date.

- Students who are unable to complete course requirements within the allotted time because of severe medical or personal problems may request a grade of Incomplete from me **by Monday, November 24, 2014.** Normally, incomplete grades are warranted **only** if a student is passing the course at the time of the request and if the course requirements can be completed by the end of the following semester. If I grant you an incomplete, I will require, by November 24, a one-page write-up from you including
  1. a description of the work that remains to be completed,
  2. a description of how you intend to complete the unfinished work, and
3. the date by which the work is to be completed.

**Accommodation Statement**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

**Academic Honesty Statement**

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair.

Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. ([http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acad honesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)).
The specific course requirements/ assignments, along with the grading calculation for each, are presented on below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Grade Calculation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality and quantity of classroom participation</strong></td>
<td>Be fully prepared to participate in class by coming to all class sessions ON TIME, reading the assignments for each session, and being ready to discuss them critically. Participate fully in the November 26 online class by posting questions and reading comments, and by doing an analysis of on-line or M-learning in your context.</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment #1:</strong> Grade or Pass/Fail?</td>
<td>Use the “Assignments” tab on Moodle to upload a Word file with your name and whether you want a grade or a pass/fail for the class. Uploading file with your grading preference by Monday, September 15.</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #2:</strong> Action Plan: an academic skills you want to build</td>
<td>Draft a goal and an action plan for building one academically related skill during this semester. Upload draft action plan to Moodle by September 24. Upload completed action plan to Moodle by December 3.</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment #3:</strong> Reflection piece: adult learning theory and your own approach to learning</td>
<td>Please prepare a short (3-4 page, SINGLE-SPACED) reflection paper, a video or audiotape, web page, or any other form of media where you discuss or “present” to me how one or more theories, concepts, or perspectives of adult learning are relevant to your own learning and/or to the educational context within which you plan/hope to work. Upload to Moodle. Due October 22.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment #4:</strong> Final piece: applying what you have learned</td>
<td>For your final assignment, you will negotiate with me (the instructor) to do whatever type of paper, project, activity, presentation, or other work that you choose, on any topic related to adult learning that you choose, that fits your context, needs, etc. Each student will communicate with me (meeting, email) individually during the semester to decide what your final assignment will be. Upload to Moodle. Due Monday, December 8.</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</tbody>
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Readings

Specific readings assigned for each class session are listed in the Course Schedule on the next page. There are two books assigned for this course, available for purchase at Food for Thought books in downtown Amherst or on www.amazon.com.


In addition to the textbook, all readings are available on the MOODLE course website. Go to www.umass.edu, click on “Moodle” at the top, and use your OIT login to get to the course website. If you are registered for this course, you automatically have the course website on your list of courses.

PART ONE: FOCUS ON CHILD AND ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND HISTORICAL TRENDS

Session 1, September 3: Course Overview and Expectations: No Readings

Session 2, September 10: Overview of adult learning theories and historical trends

• Rogers: Teaching Adults (on website, pp. 94-115)


• Dewey: Chapter One: What is Thinking? From How We Think (on website, pp. 3-16)

• Korsgaard: The Worlds of the Hand and of the Mind (on website, pp. 262-268)

Session 3, September 17: Andragogy, Self-Directed Learning, and Transformational Learning

• Merriam, et al: Chapter 4, Knowles’s Andragogy, and Models of Adult Learning by McCluskey, Illeris and Jarvis (pp. 83-104)

• Merriam, et al: Chapter 5, Self-Directed Learning (pp. 105-129)

• Merriam, et al: Chapter 6, Transformational Learning (pp. 130-158) in Learning in Adulthood (book)

• Mezirow: Transformation Theory of Adult Learning (on website, pp. 39-70)
Session 4, September 24: Differences in How Children and Adults Learn


- OECD, “How the Brain Learns through Life”, Chapter 2 in Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science [on website], pp. 35-58)

PART TWO: FOCUS ON RESEARCH ABOUT THE NEURO-BIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING

Session 5, October 1: The Brain and Learning


- Abadzi, “Cognitive Research on Basic Skills”, Chapters 1-5 in Efficient Learning for the Poor [on website], pp. 3-49

Session 6, October 8: The Brain and Learning

- Bransford, et al: Chapter 5, Mind and Brain, from How People Learn [on website], pp. 114-127


PART THREE: FOCUS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT LEARNER

Session 7, October 15: Adult Development Theories

- Helsing, Drago-Seversen, Kegan: Applying Constructive–Developmental Theories of Adult Development to ABE and ESOL Practices [on website, pp. 157-197]

- Merriam: The Role of Cognitive Development in Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory [on website, pp. 60-68]


Session 8, October 22: Alternative Learning Theories; Multiple Intelligences; Cross-Cultural Perspectives; Gender Differences in Learning

- Viens & Kallenbach: Chapter 1, MI Basics from Multiple Intelligences and Adult Literacy (on website, pp. 1-21)
- Merriam, et al: Chapter 9, Non-western Perspectives p 217
- Hayes: A New Look at Women’s Learning (on website pp. 35-42)

PART FOUR: FOCUS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEARNING EVENT

Session 9, October 29: Experiential Learning, Situated Cognition

- Kolb: On Experiential Learning (on website, pp. 1-9)
- Rozycki & Goldfarb: The Educational Theory of Vygotsky (on website, 5 pages)
- Brown, Collins and Duguid: Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning (on website, pp. 1-25)

Session 10, November 5: Critical Pedagogy

- Degener: Making Sense of Critical Pedagogy in Adult Literacy Education (on website)

November 12: No class, Tuesday schedule instead

Session 11, November 19:

GUEST LECTURER: Topic and readings to be determined
Session 12, November 26: Adult Learning through Distance, Online and/or M-Learning

**ON-LINE CLASS ONLY**

- Wenger: *Communities of Practice* [on website](#), pp. 20-26
- Huang, *Toward constructivism for adult learners in online learning environments* [on website](#), 27-37
- Cercone, *Characteristics of Adult Learners with Implications for Online Learning Design* [on website](#), 137-159
- Barker, Krull & Mallinson, *A Proposed Theoretical Model for M-Learning Adoption in Developing Countries* [on website](#), 1-10
- Education for a Digital World, *Mobile Learning in Developing Countries* [on website](#), 51-56

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Session 13, December 3: Wrap-up, Evaluation, Sharing

NO READINGS

**FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE BY Monday, December 8**