

**PSYCHOLOGY 621**  
**Advanced Educational Psychology**  
**July, August and December 2009, Kingston, Jamaica**

**Instructor**

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**Required Texts**

Abbeduto, L. (Ed.). (2008). *Taking sides: Clashing views on controversial issues in educational psychology*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Guilford: CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin. (paper)  
Gardner, H. (1999). *The disciplined mind*. New York: Penguin. (paper)  
Langer, E. J. (1997). *The power of mindful learning*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. (paper)

**WebCat**

Please refer to the material posted on our course WebCat site.

**Course Description and Philosophy**

The university catalog describes this course as follows: Application of theories and principles of development, learning and measurement to classroom practice.

In 1968 David Ausubel gave us a good maxim: "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him [or her] accordingly." The implication of this maxim for this course is that we will attempt to attend to and connect with the knowledge, habits, and attitudes that you bring to the course. This means that what we focus on will not be limited to a prescribed (by us or by a textbook) body of material about educational psychology that is to be "covered" in a semester. We also will address the interests, concerns and questions of the students in the course.

Educational psychology is more than a body of knowledge to be presented to you; it also contains theories about learning that should be exemplified in the way the subject is taught. Accordingly, the teaching methods in this course are based on the proposition that a "mindful" approach to learning requires active involvement by students in the construction of their own knowledge and skills. We must beware of a prevalent view of teaching in higher education that equates teaching with lecturing and content with "covering" the material. This view turns learning into, in John Dewey's words, a "spectator sport."

Ellen Langer, author of one of our texts, uses the term "mindful learning" to refer to learning that has three characteristics: "the continuous creation of new categories; openness to new information; and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective." To promote this "mindful," active involvement in learning, this course provides opportunities to read about, reflect on, discuss, and write about the topics that comprise educational psychology. Implicit in this course is the position that knowledge is not enough! Specifically, formal or declarative knowledge about the psychological explanations of learning and teaching is a necessary but not a

sufficient condition for an expansion of one's competence as an educator. Also required is experiential or procedural knowledge, that part of one's cognitive apparatus that controls perception and action and that is mostly developed and modified through experience.

### Conceptual Framework Statement

The professional education program at Western Carolina University fulfills its mission by creating and nourishing a community of learners guided by knowledge, values, and experiences. The guiding principles of this community include: (1) the belief that the best educational decisions are made after adequate reflection and with careful consideration of the interests, experiences, and welfare of the persons affected by the decisions; (2) appreciation of and respect for diversity; (3) and the fostering of the responsible use of technology.

### Class Meeting Format

We will devote much of our time together to class discussions and other activities that address the topic for the class meeting. This class will have a minimum of lecture. Therefore, please be prepared to discuss the readings and participate actively in class activities. If you simply sit out for the class meeting, you will let your classmates down. During the final week of class meetings in December, you will participate in a small group to present to the class interesting and useful information about the "Core Topic" you have selected (see below).

### Core Topics

The following are the core topics of the field of educational psychology.

1. **Learning:** The cognitive processes of acquiring, knowledge, making it meaningful, and using it.
2. **Effective Teaching:** The elements of effective teaching, based on what we know about the cognitive processes of learning, including specific examples of effective teaching strategies.
3. **Motivation to Learn:** The personal factors that influence a student's achievement motivation and the impact of setting, instruction, and relationships on achievement motivation.
4. **Individual and Group Differences:** The meaning of learning aptitude and approaches to recognizing students' differences and making accommodations for them in teaching.
5. **Assessment of Learning:** The value and limits of large-scale standardized tests and the uses of classroom-based performance, including "authentic assessments," and "traditional" assessments.

### Assignments

#### Reflective Journal \*\*

You are asked to write **five journal entries** about the readings and topics that we address. You are required to have **one journal entry** based on **one** of the reading assignments from *The Disciplined Mind* ready for submission no later than the **third class meeting (July 27)**. Note that a given journal entry addresses **all of the chapters or articles** assigned for a **particular class meeting**. In addition, you are required to submit **two journal entries** based on assigned readings in *Taking Sides*. These two journal entries can be based on the assigned readings **for any two class meetings** for which issues from *Taking Sides* are assigned. Note that in a given journal entry you should refer to both the "Yes" and the "No" positions for every issue in *Taking Sides*. The **last two journal entries** based on *The Power of Mindful Learning* will be due on the **first**

and second class meetings during the December session. Of course, you always are welcome to submit journal entries prior to their due dates. (See "Class Dates & Assignments" below.)

This reflective journal assignment has two purposes:

1. To promote **advance organization** of what you know about the topic to be addressed in each class meeting for the purpose of fostering **lively and informed discussion**.
2. To provide a tool with which you can maintain a **metacognitive record** of what you learn in this course and what you think about what you learn.

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The entries in your Reflective Journal **should not be simple summaries** of the assigned readings. They should reveal careful thinking about one or two of the main topics in each chapter and/or article in the reading. To these ends, in each journal entry you are asked to describe:

1. The **main point of each of the chapters and/or articles** assigned for the class meeting.
2. **Your response to each of the chapters and/or articles**. As you consider your response, consider the following questions: Do the main points **conform to your own experience**? Why or why not? Are they **well supported** in the reading?
3. Your **description** of how the main points of each chapter **affect your practice** as an educator. Be **specific** and **provide concrete examples**.

Please **date your journal entries**, **bring them to the class meeting** associated with the reading, and be prepared to discuss them. I will assign grades for your journal on the basis of the evidence you provide of careful reading of, and reflection about, assigned chapters, and I will look for evidence of your substantive understanding of the material from the reading assignments. In addition, I ask you to pay special attention to the quality and correctness of your writing, including spelling, grammar and syntax.

#### Class Presentation on Core Topic

In this two-part project you have the opportunity to apply and extend your learning in this course to your work setting. In the first part of this project you are asked to explore **one** of the five core topics in educational psychology (listed above) in more depth than is possible in class readings or discussions and to present what you've learned to your fellow students.

- **Part I, Core Topic Paper \*\***: Choose **one** of the core topics in educational psychology (listed above) and write paper (about five pages, typed or word-processed, double spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins) in which you discuss how you could **apply** information about this topic **to your own professional practice**. In addition to the course textbooks, make reference to **at least four** different references sources from the educational psychology literature. Be sure to use **correct APA format** when you cite your references. These sources can include textbooks or other professional books or book chapters, journal articles, and web sites.

Your core topic paper is to be **completed during the weeks between the first two-week session of our course in May and the final one-week session in July**. You will be asked to submit your core topic paper during the first class meeting in July. As you prepare your core topic paper, please follow **current APA style** from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th ed. (Washington: APA, 2001). For information about current APA style, go to the following website, linked to the web page of WCU's Writing Center:  
<http://www.wcu.edu/11743.asp>

As you conduct research for your core topic paper, please refer to the document posted on our course WebCat site: "7 things students taking classes in Jamaica need to know about Hunter Library" in the folder "Things for Jamaican Students."

The following criteria will be used to evaluate your core topic paper:

1. Use of reference materials drawn from the educational psychology literature
2. Correct use of APA style in citations and list of references
3. Coherent organization and presentation of information
4. Logical and persuasive argument
5. Quality of writing in terms of style and mechanics

• **Part 2, Class Presentation:** You are asked to collaborate with other students who have chosen the same core topic to make a small group presentation to the class about your core topic during the final week of class meetings in July. Groups will consist of about five students, and the members of groups must work together during the time between the two sessions of this class in order to prepare for these presentations. Each group presentation will last about one hour. All members of each group must participate in the presentation. As you prepare your presentation, keep in mind the needs and interests of the members of our class, promote active engagement with the members of our class, and address your topic in interesting ways. Your group's presentation should focus on the applied aspects of your core topic for—how the core topic can be applied to teaching and learning that occurs in schools. As you prepare for your presentation, think of it as a workshop presentation designed to help the members of your audience improve their professional practice.

Due from each member of a group on the day of your group's presentation is a "Narrative Evaluation of Group Work." Please write a one-page description of your group's effort to prepare the presentation. This paper should describe how the work is divided, how each member of your group contributed to the completion of the work, and how you evaluate your group's overall effectiveness in preparing the presentation. Each of you will be evaluated on: (1) your individual contribution to the preparation of your group's presentation, and (2) your individual contribution to your group's delivery of your presentation.

Student Interview Project (*Length:* approximately 12 pages typed or word-processed) \*\*

The student interview project provides you an opportunity to apply and extend the learning in this course to your work setting. The purposes of this assignment are to:

1. acquire techniques you can use to learn about how your students experience school
2. practice the art of interviewing
3. collect, analyze, and report on qualitative data
4. gain exposure to action research that is designed to improve your professional practice
5. learn about procedures for ensuring the ethical treatment of human subjects in psychological and educational research
6. use the educational psychology literature that addresses your topic

In this project you will interview your individual students or small groups of your students using questions that you develop in advance, about a circumstance or predicament that you face in your work. When you have completed your interviews, you will analyze the data and design

**an intervention that you could implement** in your professional practice. You are ***not* required to actually implement your intervention**; simply design and describe an intervention that you *could* implement. This is a type of action research project that focuses on your actual work situation while being grounded in the literature that addresses the situation.

Your report about this project will include the following:

1. An **introduction** in which you **describe the topic** you will investigate in your interview and **your reasons for selecting the topic**
2. A **description of the circumstance or predicament** that you face in your work, including the context—grade level, subject area, school setting, etc.
3. Support from the **educational psychology literature**, including references, to: (a) indicate how others have addressed your topic, and (b) provide evidence to support your decisions about the design of the intervention you plan
4. An **analysis of your interview data**, including excerpts from the interview data you collect and a description of the themes or categories that emerge from students' responses to your interview questions
5. A detailed **description of an intervention** in your classroom or school that you could design to respond to the suggestions and recommendations obtained from your analysis

As you conduct research for your Student Interview Project, please refer to the material posted on our course WebCat site in the folder **"Interviewing"**.

#### **Alternatives to the Student Interview Project \*\***

If you are unable to complete the Student Interview Project because you lack access to students, you may choose **one** of the following alternatives:

- **Research Paper** (approximately 12 pages typed or word-processed)

A research paper affords you an opportunity to explore some aspect of this course in more depth than is possible to cover in class readings or discussions. The paper should be a synthesis and assessment of relevant and current educational psychology research on the topic, and effort must be made to show the significance of your topic to educational psychology and to your work or personal interest. Your paper will draw on information from books, journal articles, the Internet, etc. Research papers include an introduction, a literature review (the major component of the paper), and a final section with your assessment, conclusions, and recommendations.

- **Application Project**

An application project is an opportunity to apply and extend your learning in this course to some aspect of your work setting, to a hypothetical setting/circumstance, or to your own research/interest agenda. The application project offers a great deal of latitude for creative expression and inquiry. As with the research paper, the relationship of the application project to educational psychology must be clearly established. Format and length depend on the project itself. Some possible projects: write a grant proposal; design a workshop or conference presentation; develop a curriculum package; conduct an analysis of a collection of related films, novels, or plays; conduct a pilot study of some research interest.

As you conduct research for your Student Interview Project or the alternatives, please refer to the

document posted on our course WebCat site: **“7 things students taking classes in Jamaica need to know about Hunter Library”** in the folder **“Things for Jamaican Students.”**

Please do not **“double dip”** with your assignments. Your assignments should be based on **original** work you have completed for this course alone and not reflect work you’ve done for another course.

#### **Due Date for Student Interview Project and Alternative Projects**

Your instructor will consult with you, the members of the class, in advance to determine a due date for this assignment. This assignment will be due on a mutually agreed upon date sometime **during the week of our last class meetings in December.** Of course, you are welcome to submit your assignment prior to this week.

\*\* All the writing assignments for our course **may be handwritten** if you do not have access to a word-processor.

#### **Participation**

Much of one's learning and thinking originates in and is supported by interactions with other people. Therefore, your **performance on in-class activities and contributions to class discussion** are important. Your contributions as **active participants** in class will be assessed with respect to your participation in in-class activities, whole-class discussions, and attendance. We will ask you to provide your self-evaluation of your participation and consider your self-evaluation when assigning your participation grade.

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#### **Attendance**

We ask you to attend all class meetings, to arrive promptly, and to remain for the entire class meeting. We recognize that occasionally there may be circumstances that require you to miss a class meeting or arrive late or leave early. You may **miss one class meeting without any make-up assignment.** However, if for any reason you **miss a second class meeting, submit an annotation of each of the chapters and/or articles** assigned for the class meeting you miss following the guidelines described below. If you must miss a part of a class meeting, please talk with me about how we can select the chapters you will annotate. These annotations are due **no later than two days after the class meeting** that you missed.

An annotation/abstract of an assigned chapter and/or article should describe the:

- topic
- purpose, thesis, or organizing construct and the scope (comprehensive or selective) of the chapter and/or article
- sources used; e.g., personal experience, published literature
- conclusions and the implications or applications—this is where you should comment on the value of the chapter and/or article

The citations of the chapters and/or articles that you annotate should be in **correct APA style.**

## Plagiarism

The following passage is excerpted from WCU's webpage, "[Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism](http://www.wcu.edu/11733.asp)" (<http://www.wcu.edu/11733.asp>). As you prepare your writing assignments, please review carefully WCU's Academic Honesty Policy and the guidelines about how to avoid plagiarism.

### *What do you Need to Document?*

When you research a topic, you expose yourself to many kinds of sources. Common knowledge sources provide a way for you to gain essential background information on a particular subject, but as your research becomes more specialized, you will find authors making specific points about your topic, and your own thinking will begin to take shape.

Because published writers have learned to speak with authority, their points and the evidence to support those points (statistics, in particular) may appear to be inarguable, but they are not. In fact, why does an author write a journal article or a book in the first place? He or she wants to contribute to a larger discussion—to support or counter another writer's argument, or, more rarely, to point out something entirely new, which, of course, invites other writers to speak back.

As you move from researching to writing the paper, you will need to develop your own point about your topic (your thesis), as the writers of your sources have done. Documenting and incorporating into your paper those sources which have helped shape your point demonstrates to your reader your integrity, convinces your reader that you have researched the larger discussion around your topic, and provides a route for your reader to learn more.

### *The Plagiarism Self Test*

Please complete the short self-help quiz at the following link to help you test your knowledge about plagiarism. Choose either of the versions below and **print out, sign and submit** the **Understanding Plagiarism Certificate** at the end of the test **no later than July 31**.  
<http://www.wcu.edu/11869.asp>

### **Policy re Late Assignments**

Written assignments are expected to be submitted on their due dates. Written assignments that are submitted after the due dates **will lose one letter grade for each weekday** that they are late.

### **Evaluation**

<u>Assignment Category</u>	<u>Points</u>
Reflective Journal: (5 entries @ 30 points/entry)	150
Interview Project (or alternative)	150
Core Topic Paper	100
Participation and in-class assignments (including Plagiarism Certificate)	50
Class Core Topic Presentation	<u>50</u>
	<b>TOTAL POINTS 500</b>

### Grading Scale:

• A = 450–500                      • B = 400–449                      • C = 350–399                      • F = below 350

**Class Dates and Assignments**

Below is a proposed schedule for the course. Any changes in this schedule will be announced in advance. Classes will meet for four hours, including a break, and will begin at either 9 or 10 am each day.

Class 1: Thursday, July 23 Introduction & Chapters 1-3 *The Disciplined Mind*

Class 2: Friday, July 24 Chapters 4-7 *The Disciplined Mind*

Class 3: Monday, July 27 Chapters 8-11 *The Disciplined Mind*

Class 4: Tuesday, July 28 Issues 1, 2 & 4 *Taking Sides*

Class 5: Wednesday, July 29 Issues 6 & 11 *Taking Sides*

Class 6: Thursday, July 30 Issues 8 & 13 *Taking Sides*

Class 7: Friday, July 31 Issues 9, 10 & 12 *Taking Sides*, **Understanding Plagiarism**

**Certificate due,**

Monday, August 3 Emancipation Day Holiday, No class meeting

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Class 8: Tuesday, August 4 Issues 7 & 14 *Taking Sides* and wrap up

December

Class 1: Introduction and Chapters 1-4, *The Power of Mindful Learning*, **Core Topic Paper and first Langer journal entry due**

Class 2: Chapters 5-7, *The Power of Mindful Learning*, **second Langer journal entry due**

Class 3: **Three group presentations: Learning, Effective Teaching and Motivation to Learn**

Class 4: **Two group presentations: Individual and Group Differences and Assessment of**

**Learning & Wrap-up**

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