Course Overview and Goals

Given that a primary goal of education is to promote students’ learning, one would think that the theories, methods, and findings of psychology would hold great potential for improving education practice. Unfortunately, this potential has not been fully realized, at least in part because (a) researchers have limited knowledge of educational settings and how they work, and (b) practitioners have limited knowledge of research. In this course we will attempt to break down these barriers and explore how problems of education can be interpreted through the lens of psychology. In the first part of the course we examine the most common educational setting, the classroom. We develop a framework for analyzing classroom lessons, and then identify problems, questions, and hypotheses that emerge in the classroom context. In the following parts of the course we read and discuss research articles that illustrate how psychologists have approached problems of education. There are three main learning goals for this class:

1. Students should learn concepts and skills for analyzing educational settings (such as classrooms) and for identifying problems, questions, and hypotheses that could be investigated using the theories and methods of psychology.

2. Students should learn to read and analyze empirical research articles, to relate research to problems of education, and to generate follow-up hypotheses and research designs.

3. Students should get some experience envisioning solutions to problems of education that incorporate principles of psychology.

Course Requirements and Grading

Readings and Other Materials

- Readings should be completed before the lectures for which they are assigned.
- Photocopies of all readings may be purchased at Course Reader Material, 1080 Broxton Avenue, Westwood (free parking in the public parking structure next door).
- Two copies of each reading will also be placed on reserve at Powell Library.

Assignments and Grading

- There will be 5 to 10 short answer quizzes throughout the quarter. There will be no advance warning of the quizzes, and no make-up quizzes. Quizzes will be at the beginning of class and
will focus on the reading due for that day.

- In addition there will be two short papers (approximately three to five pages in length, double-spaced). The first paper will be due April 22; the second paper, May 27.
- Your final grade will be based on quizzes and class participation (60%), first paper (20%) and second paper (20%).

Cell Phone Response System

- We will be testing out a cell phone response system for some quizzes, for monitoring class participation, and for improving class discussions. You must register your cell phone by going to: http://www.polleverywhere.com/participants/new?presenter=jstigler. Once there, fill out the registration form and click “Register.” Be sure to put in your cell phone number in the “optional” section, and then follow the instructions to certify your cell phone.
- If you don’t have a cell phone, please talk with the instructor.

Class Website

http://www.lsic.ucla.edu/

Schedule of Topics and Readings

I. Introduction

April 1 // Welcome and Course Overview

April 3 // Psychology and Education

*We start by re-thinking the relationship between psychology and education. If theories, methods, and findings of psychology are to improve education they must be grounded in the classroom. And, research in educational settings can also advance basic psychological theory.*


II. The Nature of the Classroom

April 8 // The Nature of Teaching

*Classrooms are cultural activities, consisting of routines evolved over time to govern interactions of teachers, students, and content. We explore the nature of teaching and how to define it.*


April 10 // Studying Classrooms

*We start by discussing the methods that have been used to study classrooms. Then, we launch into our own analysis of a classroom lesson.*

April 15 // Analyzing a Japanese Lesson

Cross-cultural comparisons of teaching are a powerful way to bring cultural routines to awareness. We will analyze a Japanese mathematics lesson.


III. Learning in the Classroom

April 17 // Socialization to School in US and Japan

Different societies use different means of socializing students into school. The result: students come to school with different expectations and different dispositions.


April 22 // Designing Experiences to Promote Learning (lecture: Jeri Little)

[***First Paper Due***]

Students create meaning from classroom experiences. How they represent and learn from these experiences is determined in part by the way teachers design them, in part by the beliefs and dispositions students bring to the task, and in part by the learning goals that guide both teachers and students.


April 24 // Learning in the Classroom I


April 29 // Learning in the Classroom II

- Rowe, M. B. (1986). Wait time: Slowing down may be a way of speeding up! *Journal of teacher
May 1 // Guest Speaker: Jeff Lantos

Jeff Lantos is a fifth-grade teaching in Los Angeles Unified School District. He also writes plays and musicals. He will let us experience “Performing History,” a teaching method he has developed.


May 6 // Motivation in the Classroom

You can bring a horse to water.... No matter what kinds of learning opportunities teachers’ provide, it is up to students to take advantage of them. What motivates students to work hard in school?


IV. The Work of Teaching

May 8 // What Teachers Do and Know

Teaching is not just “presenting information” but planning and implementing learning experiences for students. And teaching is not just what happens in a classroom, but what happens before and after. It takes high levels of “adaptive expertise” to teach well.


May 13 // Creating a Classroom Culture

One of the greatest concerns of new teachers is classroom management. Classroom management is not just about discipline, but about creating a cultural environment in the classroom that will support day-to-day instruction


May 15 // Planning and Analysis

It is important to expand our model of teaching to include planning, assessment, and analysis, i.e., the full cycle of teaching. Planning is a key lever for improving teaching, mainly because it can be done off-line.


May 20 // No Class Today***

May 22 // Assessing Students’ Thinking and Learning (Guest Lecture: Margaret Heritage)
If successful teaching is defined by successful learning, then assessment – both formative and summative – becomes an important part of teaching.


V. Improving Teaching

May 27 // The Legacy of School Reform [***Second Paper Due***]

There have been many attempts to improve education, most of which have not worked. The main problem is penetrating the “black box” of the classroom. Unless teaching is improved, reform will have limited success.


May 29 // Lesson Study: a Japanese Strategy for Improving Teaching

Lesson study is a school-based process for improving teaching. It is based on the concept that teaching can be studied and improved by teachers.


June 3 // Successful School Improvement (guest lecture: Ronald Gallimore)

Professor Gallimore has worked for more than forty years on understanding and improving schools. He will share his wisdom, and his latest research findings.


June 5 // A Knowledge Base for Teaching

What would it take to improve teaching (as opposed to teachers)? It would mean transforming teaching into a knowledge-based profession, continuously improving, guided by evidence.