Welcome to Psychology 132A

Learning Problems, Schooling Problems: Policy and Practice

Description – Learning and schooling *problems* are explored in broad perspective as a basis for understanding their causes and different ways intervention is approached. The course stresses *issues* related to prevailing policies and practices and *new directions* for research, policy, practice, and training.

Topics include:

- What is a Learning Disability?/Who should be called LD?/Who shouldn’t?
- What’s wrong with the current definition of Learning Disabilities?
- How does it differentiate learning disabilities from other learning problems?
- Why is a reciprocal determinist perspective important in psychology?
- What role does assessment play in understanding and intervening with learning *problems*?
- What are the prevailing orientations to assessment and intervention for learning problems?
- School practice: What’s missing with respect to addressing learning problems?
- What is *intrinsic* motivation and how does it relate to *extrinsic* motivation?
- From the perspective of the full range of learning *problems*, what needs to be done differently in classrooms?
- What needs to be done differently outside the classroom?
- How does school improvement policy need to be expanded to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports?
MATTERS TO CONSIDER IN FINALIZING ENROLLMENT IN THIS CLASS

We want this to be a course that will enrich your learning. The Teaching Assistant and I will do all we can to make this happen.

However, as you will learn, learning is a reciprocally determined process. That is, it depends on positive transactions between teacher and learner and among learners. Thus, we need you to consider the following matters before finalizing your enrollment in the class.

**Note: This is not a course specifically on Learning Disabilities.** It covers the full range of learning problems.

As the textbook stresses, many more people have learning problems that are not Learning Disabilities. This course discusses Learning Disabilities only to clarify where it fits as one type of learning problem.

This is a time when our society is concerned about ensuring equity of opportunity for success at school of all students. In keeping with this, the course emphasizes the imperative for understanding a full range of learning and schooling problems.

*All this means that, if you are only interested in Learning Disabilities, this course probably won’t be a good match for your interests.*

Also note that the focus on school policy and practice means we will be discussing learning problems mostly in relation to K-12 (with a bit on Pre-K and postsecondary education.)

Finally, while this is a big class, small group discussion is a basic facet of enhancing classroom learning. As you will note, each class is dedicated to a major question and the first item on the agenda for each day is a small group discussion. If you take this course, it is imperative that you plan to be at each class, on time, and prepared to join in the small group discussion. This is essential not only for your learning, but for the benefit of others in the class.

*Please don’t enroll unless the content fits your interests and you will attend each class, come on time, and will actively participate in group discussions. We want this to be a good learning experience for you and your classmates.*

Finally, if you do enroll, quickly identify one of more class members with whom you can compare notes and learn.
Schedule

Part I: Learning problems, Schooling Problems: The current state of the art

April 3  What's the course about?

And a few words about the national Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA website: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

Do you understand what this course is and isn’t about?

April 5  What is a Learning Disability?/Who should be called LD?/Who shouldn’t?

• Group discussion of the question for today
• A label with wide appeal
• Name calling, labeling, & the classification of phenomena
• Heterogeneity in the LD population & diagnostic classification
• Causes and correlates: The problem of compelling correlates
• Prevailing paradigms in etiological research on learning problems

April 10  What’s wrong with the current definition of Learning Disabilities?

• Group discussion of the question for today
• Weaknesses of the federal definition
• Where does Learning Disabilities fit with respect to all the learning problems seen in schools? (Toward a broad learning problems’ classification schema: Using reciprocal determinism to place LD in perspective)

>>>Group discussion (e.g., one possible question for the midterm; explore setting up a study group)

April 12  Why is a reciprocal determinist perspective important in psychology?

• Group discussion of the question for today
• What is the etiology of learning problems?
• The concept of barriers to learning and teaching
• Paradigm, policy, and psychological biases influencing views of cause

>>>Group discussion as time allows (e.g., midterm questions; study group???)

April 17  Video on Learning Problems and Schooling

Class discussion of video

April 19 & April 24  What role does assessment play in understanding and intervening with learning problems?

• Group discussion of the question for today
• Demystifying assessment: Understanding the basics
  > Introductory activities
  > Basic concepts and purposes
April 26  What are the prevailing orientations to assessment and intervention for learning problems?
  • Group discussion of the question for today
  • Prevailing orientations & their limitations
  • Concerns about prevailing practices
  • The differential diagnosis problem
  • Assessment, intervention, and ethical concerns: The case of Alec
  >>>>Group discussion as time allows (e.g., midterm questions; study group???)

May 1  Summary of Part I of the course
  >>>>Group discussion of mid-term study questions as time allows

May 3  MIDTERM Test --1 of the questions presented in class for group discussion; AND
  1 previously unseen question

Part II.  New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

  With the limitations of prevailing orientations in mind, the need is to move forward in both policy and practice to transform how schools approach learning and related behavior problems. Part II focuses on understanding some of what’s needed.

May 8  Video on ADHD
  Class discussion of video

May 10 & 15  School practice: What’s missing with respect to addressing learning problems?
  • Group discussion of the question for today
  • What current federal laws shape how learning problems are addressed
  • Three lenses for looking at what’s missing in school improvement policy and practice
  • A fuller understanding of reciprocal determinism as it applies to learning, learning problems, and school intervention
    >Learning and the concept of the match
    >Learning problems as a function of mismatch
    >A few implications for intervention

REMEMBER – RETURN YOUR MID-TERM EXAMS TO THE TA

May 17  What is intrinsic motivation and how does it relate to extrinsic motivation?
  • Group discussion of the question for today
  • A brief look at motivation theory
  • Cognitive-affective theory and learner perceptions
  • Motivation as a primary problem -- control, choice, consent
  >>>>Group discussion as time allows (e.g., questions for the final)

May 22  From the perspective of the full range of learning problems, what needs to be done
differently in classrooms?

- Group discussion of the question for today
- A Sequential and Hierarchical Classroom Model
  >> Personalization then special assistance
  >> Levels of special assistance
- Implications for identifying Type I, II, and III learning problems
- About current policy and practice related to Response to Intervention (RTI)
- About focusing on motivation as a primary problem
  >>> Group discussion as time allows (e.g., questions for the final)

May 24 & 29 What needs to be done differently outside the classroom?

- Group discussion of the question for today
- A component to address barriers to learning and re-engage disconnected students
- Framing a learning supports component as a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports
- Reworking the operational infrastructure at schools to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports

May 31 To be announced

June 5 How does school improvement policy need to be expanded to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports?

- Group discussion of the question for today
- “Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching” to enable all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school
- Moving from a Two to a Three Component Policy and Practice Framework for School Improvement
- Expanding School Accountability (accountability is a policy instrument that drives schooling)
- Socialization and helping interventions – control, choice, consent
  >>> Group discussion as time allows (e.g., questions for the final)

June 7 Summary and Concluding Comments and Activities

- Group focuses on study questions for the final to formulate any remaining questions
- Questions and answers and summary overview
- A few concluding remarks

FINAL EXAM: as per schedule

- One of the questions presented in class for group discussion AND
- Two essay questions not previously seen
Grading

Course grade: will reflect performance on (a) the midterm and (b) the final exam. Grades on the exams will range from A-F. An "A" grade is reserved for those whose responses are extremely well prepared and presented (clearly responsive to the question, comprehensive, and concise). The midterm is weighted as 38% and the final is weighted as 57% of your course grade. The self-evaluation will be weighed in for the other 5%.

Midterm: will consist of an essay response to one of 4-5 questions that will be presented in class on various days for group discussion and a previously unseen essay response. The specific question (of the 4-5 presented in class) to be answered will be chosen by the instructor and the TA and will not be announced prior to the exam. The two questions on the midterm will be weighted equally (each will account for 19% of the course grade).

On the midterm exam only, a grade of D or F can be raised to a C- by writing (at home) a thorough response to one of the other group discussion questions as assigned by the TA. If the response on this take home activity is not satisfactory, no change in grade will be made.

Final: will consist of two parts:
(1) an essay response to one of the 4-5 questions that will be presented in class on various days for group discussion (accounting for 19% of the course grade)
(2) responses to two previously unseen essay questions (Each of which will account for 19% of the course grade.)

Self-Evaluation: You will do your self-evaluation (using the form provided) and turn it in at the last class. This will account for 5% of your grade.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE ACCESS TO COURSE EXAM FILES, PLEASE NOTE THAT BECAUSE OF THE CHANGES IN THE COURSE, THE EXAM QUESTIONS WILL DIFFER FROM PAST QUARTERS.
Assigned Reading – Psychology 132A

By 4/5  What’s wrong with the current definition of Learning Disabilities?

   • Read Chapter 1 and Appendix A –
     http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/revisitinglearning.pdf

>>>Also *browse* online the resources on the website for the Center for Mental Health in Schools
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu (start by clicking on the home page button labeled *First Visit*, then
look at the range of topics in the Online Clearinghouse -- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/websrch.htm)

By 4/12  Why is a reciprocal determinist perspective important in psychology?

>>>Online read:
   >reciprocal determinism – http://www.integratedsociopsychology.net/reciprocal_determinism.html
   > From: *Overview of Social Cognitive Theory and of Self-Efficacy* -- read first section on reciprocal
determinism – http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/eff.html

learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide: New directions for addressing barriers to learning.*
Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
   • Read -- Preface & Introduction to the book and Chapter 1

By 4/19  What role does assessment play in understanding and intervening with
learning problems?

   • Read Chapter 4 and two brief readings – Reading I.2 and Reading II.2 –
     http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/psych132/

>>>Browse online for future reference: *Assessing to address barriers to learning* (intro packet from the
Center for Mental Health in Schools – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriers/barriers.pdf

By 4/26  What are the prevailing orientations to assessment and intervention for
learning problems?

>>>Online: From *On understanding intervention in psychology & education*  (Adelman &
Taylor,1994).
   • Read Part I intro and Chapters 1 and 2
     http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/understandingintervention.pdf

By 5/1  Review all the above readings for Midterm
By 5/10  School practice: What’s missing with respect to addressing learning problems?

   • Read Chapter 2.


By 5/17  What is intrinsic motivation and how does it relate to extrinsic motivation?

   • Chapter 3.

>>>Online: “Reactance” – http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/1434217

>>Do a Google Search on the topic: Motivating Students to Learn and use what you’ve learned in this course to analyze what’s discussed and recommended; see also the Center for Mental Health in School’s Quick Find on Motivation – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm

By 5/24  From the perspective of the full range of learning problems, what needs to be done differently in classrooms?

   • Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

By 5/31  What needs to be done differently outside the classroom?

   • Chapters 7 and 8.


>>>Online: Just browse: Easing the impact of student mobility: Welcoming & social support. (article from “Addressing Barriers to Learning” – the newsletter of the Center for MH in Schools) – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/easimp.htm
By 6/5 How does school improvement policy need to be expanded to ensure development of a comprehensive system of learning supports?

   • Review Chapter 7 and read Chapter 9.


>>>Review resources in Part IV of the course textbook.

Some Other References of Relevance and Interest

Obviously, there is a great deal of relevant and interesting literature. If you want recommendations, see the instructor.

If you are looking for information on a specific topic, see the Quick Find Online Clearinghouse search menu on the website for the Center for Mental Health in Schools –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/websrch.htm
At the end of the quarter, you will be asked to fill out and turn in the following (doing this is 5% of your grade):

Self-Evaluation -- How Well Did You Contribute to Your Own Learning and What Others Learned in this Class?

Name: ________________________________

As this course emphasizes, learning in class is a reciprocally determined process. This is designed to focus you in our your role in the process during the quarter.

Circle Answers –

1. Class Attendance
   How many of the 30 class “hours” (3 per week) did you attend?
   Less than 21    22-24    24-26    29    All

2. Class Participation
   (a) During class, what percentage of the time did you contribute to the academic interchange during group discussions?
       Less than 5%    6-15%    16-25%    26-40%    41-60%    Over 61%
   (b) During class, what percentage of the time did you contribute to the academic interchange during whole class discussions?
       Less than 5%    6-15%    16-25%    26-40%    41-60%    Over 61%

3. Assigned Readings
   What percentage of the assigned readings did you actually read?
   None    1-10%    11-25%    26-40%    41-60%    Over 61%

4. Your Overall Contribution to Your Own Learning and What Others Learned in this Class
   (a) How well did you contribute to maximizing what you learned over the quarter in this class?
       Very well    Well    Not too Well    Not at all Well
   (b) How well did you contribute to the learning of others in the class?
       Very well    Well    Not too Well    Not at all Well