

University of Pittsburgh
School of Education-Health and Human Development
Introduction to Educational Psychology (HHD 1001)
Spring 2025

Instructor: Christina Frasher, Ph.D (she/her/hers)

Meeting Time & Place: Tues and Thurs 11am-12:15pm, 5401 Posvar Hall

Office Hours: by appointment (see our Canvas course for guidance)

Contact: cmf141@pitt.edu (this is the best way to contact me)

*For me, I am driven by two main philosophies: know more today about the world than I
knew yesterday and lessen the suffering of others. You'd be surprised how far that gets
you*

— Neil deGrasse Tyson

*...storytellers not only learned stories from master storytellers but also by being
connected to land, that stories can become a teacher, and that we can live life through
stories*

—Jo-ann Archibald, Q'um Q'um Xiie

*Study hard what interests you the most in the most undisciplined, irreverent and original
manner possible*

— Richard Feynmann

Welcome:

Dear students,

Welcome to our Introduction to Educational Psychology course! I am excited to begin this journey with you all. Below you will find our syllabus, which charts the course for our time together this semester. The plan is to introduce you to a variety of theories around how we learn throughout various developmental stages and environments. I hope to engage you in experiential and reflective activities that will encourage you to connect meaningfully to the ideas and content.

Many of the assignments will encourage you to reflect on your own experiences, values, and understanding of this period in life. I encourage you to have an open mind and an open heart as you engage in these practices, dialogue with the content and connect with each other.

Warmly,

Dr Frasher

Take Care of Yourself (from the HHD department):

It may seem strange to start with this, but I strongly believe we can learn best when we are well enough to do so. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep (not just enough to survive, but thrive!), and taking time to relax. Despite what you might hear, using your time to take care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available at Pitt. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. Ask for support sooner rather than later – this always helps. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

Please reach out to me as soon as possible if you are experiencing distress, struggling in the course, or having difficulty keeping up with the assignments and I will do my best to support you or connect to you with our many services at Pitt. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support.

The University Counseling Center is here for you: call 412-648-7930 and visit their website. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, call someone immediately, day or night:

For emergencies:

Call Re:Solve Crisis Network 24/7: 1.888.796.8226

- Text the ResSolve 24/7 Crisis Text Line: 741741

University Counseling Center (UCC): 412 648-7930

University Counseling Center Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930 x1

Suicide and Crisis Hotline: 988

IN EXTREME EMERGENCIES: Immediately call 911 or the University Police or proceed to the closest hospital emergency room.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Define theoretical concepts in educational psychology specific to learning
- Engage in self-reflection regarding one's own assumptions around learning, including reflecting on our own experiences, background, and preferences specific to learning and learning environments
- Articulate the value of an equity-minded and strengths-based approach to learning and consider culturally responsive teaching strategies
- Evaluate various perspectives and considerations around assessment practices

Course Description:

The course will introduce students to key theories in educational psychology including behavioral, cognitive, cognitive-development, sociocultural, and contextual theories. Application topics will include developmental approaches to teaching, educational applications of learning theory, classroom management, teaching in diversified settings, educational policies, and evaluation/assessment. Students will have opportunities to apply these theories through discussion, presentations, and assignments.

Assignments are structured to challenge students to think critically and dynamically about learning. Students will be introduced to and will be asked to participate in various experiential learning activities. We will engage in explorations of the learning process from a variety of lived experiences and perspectives and reflect on how this connects to (or not) the theories and frameworks offered and to our own personal experiences

Course Topics:

- Historical approaches to Learning
- Behavioral Approaches
- Cognitive Approaches
- Motivation
- Relationships and Learning
- Cultural and Indigenous Learning
- Experiential and Play-based Learning
- Assessing Learning
- Socio-cultural Theory
- Learning Environments and Justice
- Trauma, Mental Health and Learning
- Learning and the Future

Classroom Culture

- Respect: Please respect each other's ideas and give each individual space to speak, we all come from varied environments and it is important to allow each individual their own unique opinion. Many of the topics covered have the potential to stimulate deep and engaging class discussions so please be respectful and keep in mind that this is an academic setting.
- Compassion: Please be considerate of your peers, your instructor (me), and most importantly yourself during this semester. This is a new class experience for everyone and there is space for mistakes when engaging in new experiences. By practicing self-compassion and compassion towards others, we will all help make this a safer space for learning.
- Communication: My primary form of communication, outside of our class meetings, will be direct email and Canvas announcements. You can reach me with questions via cmf141@pitt.edu and I will be available for Office Hours by appointment as well. It is especially important that you take advantage of all opportunities for communication that are available to you.

- **Technology:** Canvas, email, and Microsoft applications are the primary points of engagement for our class and you should expect to log into Canvas a few times a week to check for new content, assignments, and announcements. Please review the resources on Canvas for more information and tutorials.

Course Policies and Considerations

Attendance: Each student is allowed up to 3 absences per semester, no questions asked. If you find that you will have more than 3 please reach out to me as soon as possible. Absences also include leaving early or arriving late to class.

Academic Integrity and AI: Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are essential aspects of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace and also finding your own writing, research and creative style will be one of the strongest assets you can offer professionally. Finding this style usually happens in a zone that Brian Eno terms, “happy accidents.” Utilizing AI to generate your own work prevents you from making those accidental connections and ultimately slows your progress professionally. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

A Note on Content: Please note that some of the material may cause you to reflect on your past experiences or, the material may coincide with what you are experiencing now. The general field of psychology and human development is a study of life and experience so it’s natural that you will connect the material to your own lives. In addition, the stresses of being a college student on top of any other responsibilities you may have can be overwhelming. Please seek me out in person, phone or via email, if you are struggling with anything presented and I will do my best to support you, offer requested accommodations and connect you with resources.

A note on grading and course structure: Please note that throughout the course I participate in alternative grading practices whenever feasible. Meaning that there is an encouragement to focus on the process of creating, etc the assignment and not the outcome (grades). This is done through the use of complete/incomplete assignments and the ability to revise assignments if they do not meet the specifications outlined. Please also note that this is a “living syllabus” and as such will be modified from time to time to

Assessment and Assignments:

- **Course participation (60 pts):** This component includes your attendance (being present in an engaged way, not just physically present- see participation rubric); timely completion of all assignments; quality and consistency of engaged participation in class; use of Canvas for various course activities. Assessment of participation will be based on adhering to our classroom culture listed above (including any additions we make as a class) and the participation rubric listed below as well as our weekly assignments.

- **Learning Journals:** To support your engagement with ideas in the class, each week you will have a 1 page journal entry due connected with the readings, presentations, etc for that week. Please see Canvas for more information.
- **Quizzes:** These will be offered related to recorded lectures in the course, please see Canvas for more information
- **Class Observation (25pts):** You will observe a class of your choice and note the various theories, practices and concepts in their teaching/learning style relevant to the course. More information will be provided in class.
- **Teaching Demonstration (25pts):** To aid you in applying the ideas from Educational Psychology to our course, you will engage in a Teaching Demonstration. For the assignment, you will create and present a lesson plan that incorporates evidence-based teaching methods to engage and educate an audience on a specific topic within educational psychology. More information will be provided after the first week of class.
- **Midterm and Final Assessments (20 pts each):** These are opportunities for you to show me what you know, in which you will both intellectually process the content and also thoughtfully reflect on your understanding of ideas in the class and your overall learning process. More information about this will be shared in class.
- **Learning Environment Analysis and Presentation (50 pts):** This will be a culminating project/presentation due towards the end of the term. This will consist of a presentation, creative component and short analysis paper. For the creative component you will offer a visual representation of the ideal learning environment, based on what you have learned in the course and your own understanding of the needs of learners. The presentation will offer the "what" and "why" behind your creative piece. The written analysis paper should a narrative of why you created the learning environment as you did and include the research literature you reviewed to back up your claims/choices.

University Policies and Support

Academic Integrity: Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands- on practice, complete the [Academic Integrity Modules](#).

Disability Services: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability](#)

[Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Accessible Technology: The Canvas LMS platform was built using the most modern HTML and CSS technologies, and is committed to W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative and [Section 508](#) guidelines. Specific details regarding individual [feature compliance](#) are documented and updated regularly.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the [Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page](#).

I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be [filed online](#). You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX

If you are experiencing sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking, please report it to me and I will connect you to University resources to support you. University faculty and staff members are required to report all instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence to the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. When a report is made, individuals can expect to be contacted by the Title IX Office with information about support resources and options related to safety, accommodations, process, and policy. I encourage you to use the services and resources that may be most helpful to you.

As your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me. You can also report directly to Office of Civil Rights and Title IX: 412-648-7860 (M-F; 8:30am-5:00pm) or via the Pitt Concern Connection at: [Make A Report](#)

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as a relevant part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you wish to make a confidential report, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- The University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)
- Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (community resource): 1-866-363-7273 (24/7)

If you have an immediate safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121. Any form of sexual harassment or violence will not be excused or tolerated at the University of Pittsburgh. For additional information, please visit the [full syllabus statement](#) on the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webpage.

Gender-Inclusive Language Statement: Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Email Communication: Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read emails sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their email via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students who choose to forward their email from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If email is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

Statement on Classroom Recording: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussions, and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Copyright Notice: These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials.

See [Library of Congress Copyright Office](#) and the [University Copyright Policy](#).

Writing Center: *We have an excellent Writing Center here at Pitt that undergraduate, graduate, staff and faculty utilize. Writing is a journey and as you learn more complex ideas your writing will need to accompany that complexity.*

The Writing Center, located at 317B O'Hara Student Center, is an excellent resource for working with an experienced consultant on your writing. You can choose to work with a faculty consultant or a trained undergraduate peer tutor. Although you should not expect consultants or peer tutors to "correct" your paper for you, they can assist you in learning to organize, revise, and edit your work. They can also help you get started! Consultants can work with you on a one-time basis or throughout the term. Their services are free. You can browse the services they offer or make an appointment by visiting www.writingcenter.pitt.edu

Religious Observances: The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructor, I am committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, exams, or other required attendance. If at all possible, please contact me (your course coordinator/s) within the first two weeks of the first class meeting to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks.

GRADING/RUBRIC:

The following is the criteria and assigned points for the total possible points you can earn.

A	93 to 100 %	C+	78 to 79 %
A-	90 to 92 %	C	73 to 77 %
B+	88 to 89 %	C-	70 to 72 %
B	83 to 87 %	D	60 to 69 %
B-	80 to 82 %	F	below 60 %

Participation Rubric:

Throughout our class meetings, I will invite you to engage in discussions, group activities, and other forms of participation. I will be looking for your meaningful participation via discussions in our class or and marking this each class meeting. Note that I conduct this class through a professional lens and encourage professionalism in our interactions. These assessment practices are aimed to support the professional culture in the class and not to "police" you. Please see the participation rubric below for how I will assess your participation.

Excellent— leading discussions, bringing in new and original ideas and thoughts, challenging ideas in a way that is thought and discussion-provoking, and showing an ability to listen to the ideas of others. Using technology to support your learning.

Satisfactory - supportive, follow-up points that are relevant and valuable, bringing ideas but not taking a leadership role in discussions. Using technology to support your learning in a non-disruptive manner.

Minimally Acceptable – present, awake, attentive, but not actively involved, at times using technology that does not support our collective learning environment.

Unsatisfactory –absent, present but not attentive, sleeping, irrelevant contributions that block movement in class discussions, and consistently using technology that distracts or disrupts our collective learning environment.

Selected Learning Materials:

*Course materials are posted on Canvas unless otherwise noted (no books, etc to purchase). Please note that additional selections will be provided on Canvas, not listed here and that there are additional recorded lectures on Canvas with quizzes.

Selections from:

Addy, T. M., Dube, D., Mitchell, K. A., & SoRelle, M. (2023). *What inclusive instructors do: Principles and practices for excellence in college teaching*. Taylor & Francis.

Cavanagh, S. R. (2016). *The spark of learning: Energizing the college classroom with the science of emotion*. West Virginia University Press.

Cozolino, L. (2013). *The social neuroscience of education: Optimizing attachment and learning in the classroom (the norton series on the social neuroscience of education)*. WW Norton & Company.

Emdin, C. (2021). *Ratchetdemic: Reimagining academic success*. Beacon Press.

Gray, T., & Birrell, C. (2015). ‘Touched by the Earth’: a place-based outdoor learning programme incorporating the Arts. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 15(4), 330-349.

Hanh, T. N. (2016). *The Miracle of Mindfulness: Gift Edition*. Beacon Press.

Kirschner, P., & Hendrick, C. (2020). *How Learning Happens: Seminal Works in Educational Psychology and What They Mean in Practice* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi-org.pitt.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/978042906152>

Lawrence, R. L., & Paige, D. S. (2016). What our ancestors knew: Teaching and learning through storytelling. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 149(Spring), 63-72.

Lovett, M. C., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Ambrose, S. A., & Norman, M. K. (2023). *How learning works: Eight research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.

May-Varas, S., Margolis, J., & Mead, T. (2023). *Educational Learning Theories*.

Merculieff, L., & Roderick, L. (2013). *Stop talking: Indigenous ways of teaching and learning and difficult dialogues in higher education*. University of Alaska Anchorage.

Zepeda, C. D., Hlutkowsky, C. O., Partika, A. C., & Nokes-Malach, T. J. (2019). *Identifying teachers' supports of metacognition through classroom talk and its relation to growth in conceptual learning*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(3), 522–541.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000300>

OER: Setting the Stage: A Guidebook for Optimizing Learning Contexts