Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
EDUC 834 Theory & Practice of 21st Century Jewish Education:
Navigating & Constructing the Jewish Educational Landscape
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Skype Office Hours:
Given time zone differences, etc., I am not designating a fixed time for office hours. If you would like to meet virtually via Skype, please email and we can set up a time.

Course Scheduling:
Each week of coursework usually begins on Wednesday at 12:00 pm EST and concludes the following Tuesday at 9 pm EST (w/exceptions for holidays). In order to provide you with more flexibility, sessions may be opened in advance of the date of study, although you will not be required to do the coursework until the listed date.

Course Description:
This course explores the theories of 21st century Jewish education and ways that these theories inform practice. By delving into some foundational theories, including Schwab’s Commonplaces, How People Learn, and Understanding by Design, students will strengthen their skills in analyzing and designing educational landscapes that are learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered. The course will culminate in learners becoming visionaries and designing their own ideal landscape for Jewish education in the 21st century and taking the first concrete steps toward making this vision a reality.

Essential Course Questions (to be explored throughout the semester):
• As Jewish educators, what is your role in shaping the landscape of Jewish education in the 21st century?
• How are changes in the field’s understanding of learning processes and how systems function impacting the ways in which we construct learning environments?
• How is educational theory translated into practice? How does/can this translation process inform the construction of educational landscapes?

Learning Outcomes:
As we explore the above-stated essential questions throughout the course learners will develop the following core competencies and abilities:
• Apply constructivist education approach to the Jewish setting
• Relate theory to practice in their own and others’ educational settings
• Better understand the nature of teaching and learning and application to Jewish educational settings
• Apply general educational theories to the Jewish setting
• Explore the major Jewish educational theories as a means to refine a personal vision of Jewish Education
• Examine and develop the role of technology for Jewish education
• Broaden their reading in education theory, practice, and leadership theory and practice, both general and Jewish
• Demonstrate reflective thinking about practice in Jewish Education
• Become a reflective practitioner about learning and how to learn
• Refine their technology skills and broaden range of capabilities
• Be able to reflect on personal learning style
• Develop a professional and entrepreneurial persona for working in Jewish Education
Required Texts:
- The majority of readings for the course will be available on-line or will be posted on Schoology.
- Although you will not be required to purchase other books from the syllabus, the books included on the syllabus are wonderful resources, and it is recommended that you add them to your personal bookshelf.

Activities & Assessment:
- Activities - On a weekly basis there will be three main components of our learning together:
  - Readings: both required reading and often optional additional readings
  - Materials to scaffold the learning: online lectures, background materials, guiding questions, brief texts or book excerpts to frame our discussion, etc.
  - Core activities: these are activities that will help synthesize the readings, demonstrate understanding of core ideas, engage learners in dialogue, introduce learners to new technologies, link theory to practice, and provide opportunities for reflection.
- Assessment - There will be three types of coursework upon which students will be evaluated:
  - Posts/Ongoing Evidence of Understanding (40% of grade): These will be the primary form of weekly participation. They include exercises, reflections on readings, on-line activities, pair/group work, and general discussions.
  - Performance Tasks (50% of grade): These assignments are designed to present learners with complex challenges through which sophisticated evidence of understanding of the big ideas covered in this course can be demonstrated. There will be three main performance tasks over the course of the semester:
    - Analysis of Commonplaces of Learning (10%)
    - Lesson Plan Informed by Understanding by Design (10%)
    - Classroom Observation Analysis (10%)
    - Redesigning the Landscape of Jewish Education (20%)
  - Overall Participation and Active Contributions (10% of grade): This is a measure of effort and ongoing active participation in the class discussions, asking pertinent questions about readings, sharing reflections, contributing new ideas to the class dialogue, and overall contribution to the learning process beyond the parameters of weekly assigned learning activities.

Course Accommodations for Disabilities:
- Hebrew College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in programs. Accordingly, if a student has a documented disability, and as a result, needs a reasonable accommodation to attend, participate or complete course requirements, then he or she should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. For further information, see the Student Handbook at [http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf](http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf).
- If you require course accommodations because of a documented disability or an emergency medical condition, please email your instructor as soon as possible. We are happy to work with you on any issues you have to ensure that you can participate fully in the class and complete the course requirements. Please do not wait until the assignments are due for a retroactive accommodation, but discuss the situation with your instructor before you experience difficulty.

Course Structure:
UNIT 1: ENCOUNTERING THE LANDSCAPE OF JEWISH EDUCATION
Session 1: Defining the Landscape – 2/3
Enduring Understanding: Jewish education in the 21st century is undergoing dramatic transformations and at this pivotal time educators have a unique opportunity to help shape the emerging landscape of Jewish education.

Key Questions:
- What is the landscape of Jewish education in 2014? How does it compare to the landscape of Jewish education when you were a child?
- What does it mean to look at the educational setting as a landscape? In what ways is an educational landscape connected to and impacted by its surrounding environment?
- What is your role in building the Jewish educational landscape of the 21st century?

Readings:

Optional Readings:
Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to comment on images that reflect interpretations of the current landscape of Jewish education both based on information from readings and personal experience.

Session 2: Commonplaces as Defining Elements of an Educational Landscape – 2/12

Enduring Understanding: The process of learning is highly dynamic and involves multiple elements that interact with one another. The framework of Schwab’s commonplaces is one lens that can help teachers understand and analyze the complex dynamic of education.

Key Questions:

- As a teacher, what tend to be the commonplace(s) which you feel most comfortable addressing? Which are the ones you find to be most challenging?
- What does it mean to seek coordination among the commonplaces when teaching? What practices can support the achievement of coordination among the commonplaces?
- As a learner, how do you personally interact with each of Schwab’s commonplaces? What is the type of learning environment in which you most thrive? In which you are most challenged?

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Learners will collectively participate in a class survey related to the commonplaces of Jewish education and then analyze the survey results in light of the readings and personal experience.

Performance Task #1 (due 2/24) – Analyzing Alignment of Commonplaces in a Discrete Learning Setting

At the end of Unit 1, students will be asked to analyze a discrete learning setting in which they are either teachers or students, either a particular classroom or informal learning setting. In analyzing the setting students will be asked to reflect on each of the commonplaces and identify how the alignment of the commonplaces impacts the educational experience.

UNIT 2: CONSTRUCTING THE 21ST CENTURY LEARNING LANDSCAPE – HOW PEOPLE LEARN
Session 3 – Introduction to How People Learn (HPL) – 2/19

Enduring Understanding: By better understanding the process of learning educators can design more effective and impactful learning experiences for students.

Key Questions:

- How do new advances in the field’s understanding of the brain impact our conception of how we learn?
- How do the following principles influence how educators interact with learners:
  - Engaging learners’ prior understandings
  - The essential role of core knowledge and conceptual frameworks in understanding
  - The importance of self-monitoring?
- How can the framework introduced by the research of How People Learn help provide a lens through which you can analyze your work as an educator?

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to select one of the three core principles of How People Learn and share a brief example of how they have observed either the presence or absence of the practice of this principle manifest in a Jewish educational setting.

Session 4: Learner-Centered Learning Environment – Empowering the Learner – 2/26

Enduring Understanding: By empowering learners educators can deepen student engagement, foster meaning-making,
and nurture the capacity for life-long learning among their students.

**Key Questions:**
- In what ways does empowering the learner impact the dynamics of the learning environment? How does it impact each of the commonplaces within the educational landscape?
- How do your values as an educator influence your stance regarding the empowerment of learners?
- How might the value of empowering the learner be enacted in a Jewish setting?

**Readings:**

**Optional Readings:**

**Evidence of Understanding:** Learners will be asked to reflect upon learner empowerment by drawing upon the text read this week to illustrate learner-centered principles in action.

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**Check-in Conversation #1:** During the week of 3/3, each student will have a scheduled, individual phone or Skype check-in with the instructor to discuss the class to date, address any questions or concerns, review feedback on the Performance Task #1, and further explore the types of learning experiences that would best support optimal growth and learning through the remainder of the course.

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**Session 5: Learner-Centered Learning Environment – Identity Development – 3/5**

**Enduring Understanding:** In order to effectively reach learners it is crucial for educators to directly address learners’ identity development, both in terms of how it relates to their prior understandings and with regard to the impact of identity on the process of meaning-making.

**Key Questions:**
- How does the identity of the learner impact the process of learning?
- What is the role of meaning in both learning and identity development?
- How has the field’s understanding of Jewish identity and the role of the learner in Jewish education evolved in the 21st century?
- How do environment and experiences impact an individual’s understanding of what it means to be a Jew?

**Readings:**

**Optional Reading:**
- Read the scholars you did not read for your group work activity. The specifics of the group project and the required readings will be provided when Week 5 is launched on Schoology.

**Evidence of Understanding:** Learners will work in small groups to analyze the approach to Jewish identity development of one the theorists explored this week and discuss it in relation to nurturing a learner-centered environment.

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**Session 6: Knowledge-Centered Learning Environment – 3/12** (Note: This is a two-week session due to the celebration of Purim and the extensive nature of the readings.)

**Enduring Understanding:** One of the key roles of the teacher is to identify the core conceptual frameworks, define the enduring understandings, and develop the essential questions through which learners can connect with the content of Jewish education.

**Key Questions:**
- What content knowledge do you want learners to be exposed to in Jewish educational settings? Given limited hours, how do you make choices about which content is introduced into the classroom?
- How can you introduce Jewish content knowledge to learners in a way that leads to deeper understanding and meaning?
How does content knowledge fit into broader goals and the overall landscape you are aiming to construct when teaching?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will synthesize their knowledge of enduring understandings and essential questions by developing these key curricular components for their own lesson plan as well as hypothetical ones for a whole school curriculum based on Greenberg’s article.

Session 7: Assessment-Centered Learning Environment – 3/26

Enduring Understanding: Assessment is an ongoing process that can be utilized in any learning environment to provide crucial feedback to both teachers and learners as well as focus attention on the development of meaning and understanding.

Key Questions:
- What are the different ways assessment can be built into the educational landscape? How can assessment enrich the educational landscape, both formal and non-formal?
- What are the differences between formative and summative evaluation?
- How can educators assess for understanding?
- How can assessment be utilized as a tool for strengthening learners’ meta-cognition? How do the six facets of understanding within UbD help strengthen meta-cognition?

Readings:

Optional Reading:

Evidence of Understanding: Informed by this session’s readings, learners are asked to share one positive experience they have had with assessment, either as a teacher or as a learner.

Performance Task #2 (due 4/4) – Developing a Lesson Plan Informed by Understanding by Design

For this assignment students are asked to write a lesson plan focused on the enduring understandings and essential questions developed as part of the activities for session 6. The design of the lesson plan should be informed by Understanding by Design and include the UbD 6 Facets of Understanding as part of the assessment for the lesson plan.

Session 8: Community-Centered Learning Environment – 4/2

Enduring Understanding: Connecting with community and engaging in a process of socialization is a key component of Jewish education and plays out in a variety of ways in diverse Jewish educational settings.

Key Questions:
- What is the role of the community within the landscape of Jewish education?
- How does the connection to community vary in different educational settings, i.e. congregations, camps, Hillel, etc.?
- How does the process of socialization fit into the Jewish educational experience? How does socialization connect learners to community?

Readings:
- Through two related articles in the Journal of Jewish Education, the topic of informal education and the role of socialization in Jewish education is to be discussed:
Choose one of the following chapters to read as part of the assigned core activities for this week:


Optional Readings:

- Reading any of the chapters not selected as part of the analysis of socialization in a Jewish educational setting.

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will reflect on various informal Jewish learning settings by analyzing their role in the process of socialization and nurturing a community-centered learning environment.

**Session 9: Observation as a Tool for Reflection and a Gateway to Understanding How People Learn – 4/9**

**Enduring Understanding:** Observing other teachers has tremendous value in that it helps hone educators’ reflective practice and sharpen their ability to see what goes on in their own teaching environments.

**Key Questions:**

- What lenses could be worn when entering an educational setting for observations? How can different lenses impact what and/or how an observer sees?
- Where did you see evidence of the How People Learn (HPL) centers in the settings you observed? Where was such evidence lacking?
- How can the process of observing others impact your own practice as an educator? What are you taking away from this observation exercise that may impact your teaching practice?
- How do your observations impact your evolving understanding of the landscape of Jewish education in the 21st century?

**Readings:**


Optional Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to briefly describe the Jewish educational setting they observed and one aspect of the current landscape of Jewish education that stood out based on the observation.

**Performance Task #3 (due 4/28): Observing an Educational Setting through the Lens of HPL**

In order to practice the skill of observation, students will be assigned the task of observing a lesson in a Jewish learning setting, classroom or other, and closely recording what you observe. The longer the observation, the more you will be able to learn and glean. At a minimum, the observation should be 30-40 minutes in length. Following the observation, students will be asked to write up a descriptive analysis of where you saw evidence of learner-centered practices, knowledge-centered practices, assessment-centered practices, and community-centered practices in the setting.

**Pesach Break 4/14-4/22**

**UNIT 3: FEATURES OF THE LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Session 10: Integrating Technology into the Landscape of Jewish Education – 4/23**

**Enduring Understanding:** Technology is a tool that has tremendous potential to enrich the educational landscape by empowering learners and extending learning beyond the walls (literal or figurative) of a learning environment.

**Key Questions:**

- How can the integration of technology potentially transform the educational landscape?
- How do/can new technologies interact with and impact each of the commonplaces in a learning environment?
• How can technology be utilized as a tool for learner empowerment?
• What opportunities can the integration of technology present to the field of Jewish education?

Readings:

Optional Readings:
• Adapt or fail to be relevant - http://www.edutopia.org/blog/digital-teens-mobile-is-now-matt-levinson
• Watch Mi Ani project video from JCDS http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9O4Mz1iLDWw

Evidence of Understanding: Students will be asked to evaluate new educational technologies and consider ways in which they foster the traits featured in Bers’ Positive Technological Development framework.

Check-in Conversation #2: Following Pesach, there will be another set of check-in conversations. The focus of this check-in will be to share feedback on the lesson plans submitted as Performance Task #2, generally review individual students’ progress in the course to date, and answer any questions regarding the final performance task. Learners will also be encouraged to share feedback with the instructor about their experience in the course.

Session 11: The Challenge of Changing the Landscape – 4/30

Enduring Understanding: The process of educational change is complex and it involves many stakeholders. In order to be effective facilitators of change, educators need to be aware of the various players in any educational change effort and be prepared to face hurdles that may be encountered.

Key Questions:
• What are the organizational and structural challenges that may be encountered in the process of trying to transform the Jewish educational landscape?
• Who are the stakeholders in an educational change process?
• Who is needed as partners in an educational change process?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to analyze one of the vignettes in the Lippman, Kanfer Institute Working Paper and contemplate the changes that would be necessary to transform the current landscape to reflect the possible reality described in the vignette.

Week 12: Redrawing Our Landscapes – 5/7

Enduring Understanding: One of the central responsibilities of a Jewish educational leader is to help shape the landscape of Jewish education. Theory, vision, experience, and practice all provide building blocks that help shape the landscape in the learning settings in which you work today and will continue to inform your work and the broader landscapes you will impact throughout your career.

Key Questions:
• How do the Jewish educational landscapes you strive to build compare with the current landscape?
  o What features of the current landscape need to be changed in order to shift toward your ideal? Which components are currently missing and need to be planted? Which elements are currently overly emphasized and need pruning?
• What educational theories and frameworks inform the Jewish educational landscape you strive to build?
  o How can these theories fertilize the development of new ideas and educational change?
• What concrete steps do you plan to make to advance your vision of an ideal Jewish educational landscape?
  o What changes in your own practice will they require?
  o What additional areas of learning, theory, and/or observation do you feel you need to explore in order to make these changes?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to revisit the initial Voicethread commented upon during the first week of class and revisit the landscape images in light of the learning that took place over the course of the semester.

**Final Performance Task (Due 5/21): Redesigning the Landscape of Jewish Education in the 21st Century**
For the final performance task of this course students will be asked to explore a particular feature they see in the current landscape of Jewish education and consider how they might choose to redesign it based on the theories and frameworks discussed in this course. The elements of the educational landscape students choose to analyze and redesign for this assignment could include a specific program, a particular curriculum, a cultural element of an educational milieu, aspects of teacher professional development, etc. Once the particular issue or problem of practice to be explored is selected, students will need to analyze the problem, take note of how it is currently misaligned with their own educational vision, and think about how a redesign of that feature, informed by educational research and theoretical frameworks, can make an impact on the educational landscape and all the commonplaces that intersect within it.