Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
CG-EDUC-802 Human Development & Learning: Understanding & Nurturing Learners’ Wholeness
Nina Price, M.A.J.E., RJE
Fall 14-15 - September 8, 2014 – December 19, 2014

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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 relationship between human development and a lifelong trajectory of Jewish growth and learning. By exploring various developmental theories, including cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development, students will gain a deeper understanding of the developmental needs of, challenges facing, and opportunities for learners from early childhood through adulthood. Over the course of the semester students will both analyze and design Jewish educational programs that address learners’ developmental needs.

Essential Course Questions (to be explored throughout the semester):
• What is Jewish growth?
• In what ways do various courses of human development, particularly cognitive, psychosocial, and moral, intersect with a trajectory of Jewish growth?
• How do our conceptions of human growth and development impact our actions and behaviors as educators?
• How can educational leaders effectively construct programmatic interventions to nurture Jewish growth?

Learning Outcomes:
As we explore the above-stated essential questions throughout the course, learners will develop the following core competencies and abilities:
• To understand the nature of teaching and learning and application to Jewish education settings.
• Be able to apply general educational theories to the Jewish setting.
• Understand and appreciate the differentiation of learning needs and teaching interventions.
• Be knowledgeable about developmental theories of growth as well as differing conceptions of childhood.
• Demonstrate independent learning.
• Demonstrate reflective thinking about practice in Jewish Education.
• Become a reflective practitioner about learning and how to learn.
• Develop presentation and reporting skills.
• Refine ICT skills and broaden range of capabilities.
• Become proficient in reading educational sources and data.
• Be able to reflect on personal learning style.

Required Texts:
• The majority of readings for the course will be available on-line or will be posted on Schoology.
You will be required to purchase two texts: Goodman, R. L. (2008). What We Now Know about Jewish Education. Torah Aura Prod, and Moskowitz, N.S. (2003). The Ultimate Jewish Teacher’s Handbook. ARE Publications. It is recognized that these books are a bit expensive. This is not the only course for which they will be required reading, so please recognize the purchase of these books as an investment in your entire MJED course of instruction. Although you will not be required to purchase other books from the syllabus, the books included on the syllabus are wonderful resources, and you may want to consider adding 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, web quests, 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 (45% 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 Interviews with a Child and an Adult to Explore Developmental Stages (15%)
  - Designing a Family Learning Program Accompanied by Developmental Commentary (10%)
  - Writing an Educational Autobiography (20%)
- Overall Participation and Active Contributions (15%): This is a measure of effort and ongoing active participation in the class discussions, asking pertinent questions about readings, 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.

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: Theories of Growth and Development
Throughout Unit 1 of this course we will explore different theories of human growth and development. Each session will focus on a particular aspect of growth and will explore that particular aspect throughout the trajectory of a person’s life.

Session 1: Defining Growth and Development – 9/8
Enduring Understanding: Across the lifespan the process of growth can be observed as a progression through stages of development in multiple arenas.

Key Questions:
- Within the realm of developmental psychology what is the distinction between growth and development?
- What are the various measures by and arenas in which growth and development can be tracked?
- How can an understanding of the stages of developmental growth help educators better understand and address the narrative of learners’ lives?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

**Evidence of Understanding**: Learners will create a timeline marking key developmental points on their Jewish growth trajectory.

**Session 2: Cognitive Development – 9/17**

**Enduring Understanding**: The cognitive approach to development, with its focus on emerging stages of competency and thought processes, provides insights into how to structure supportive learning experiences and environments.

**Key Questions**:
- How do Piaget’s stages of cognitive development differ from earlier conceptions of human development?
- How did Vygotsky build upon Piaget’s stage theories in his conceptualization of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)? In what ways did Vygotsky’s approach differ from Piaget’s?
- Based on a cognitive approach to development, such as those presented by Piaget and Vygotsky, how can educators most effectively support a process of learning and growth?

**Readings**:

**Optional Reading**:

**Evidence of Understanding**: Each learner will write a reflection on their current knowledge of human development and what types of learning experiences would be appropriately placed in their zone of proximal development for further learning in the arena of human development and growth.

**Check-in Conversation #1**: During the week of 10/5 (between Yom Kippur and Succot), 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, and further explore the types of learning experiences that would best support optimal growth and learning through the remainder of the course.

**Session 3: Psychosocial Development – 10/1**

**Enduring Understanding**: Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development provide educators insights into the identity development of learners and the types of identity challenges that impact learning and growth throughout the lifespan.

**Key Questions**:
- What are Erikson’s “eight stages of man”?
- How does Erikson’s assigning a developmental task with an accompanying struggle or crisis to each stage impact the ways in which development is understood?
- What potential role can educators play in helping learners move through Erikson’s eight psychosocial stages?

**Readings**:

**Optional Readings**:

**Evidence of Understanding**: Each learner will identify an example of one of Erikson’s stages either in a children’s book or a Torah story and explain how the story demonstrates the particular struggle at the core that stage.
Session 4: Moral Development & Moral Education – 10/15

Enduring Understanding: Research in the realms of moral development and moral education can provide Jewish educators with insights regarding how to engage learners with challenging topics such as mitzvot and middot.

Key Questions:
- What are Kohlberg’s stages of moral development? How are Kohlberg’s stages informed by the research of other theorists studied in this course to date?
- How does the development of what Noddings calls an “ethical self” relate to other dimensions of growth and development studied in this course to date?
- How can research in the realm of moral education help inform how mitzvot and middot are taught in Jewish educational settings?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to briefly reflect on how research in the realms of moral development and moral education can inform how to approach instruction of a particular mitzvah or middah to a specified group of learners. (Alternate exercise for PEP.)

Performance Task #1 (due 10/28) – Applying Understandings of Developmental Theories in Interactions with Learners: At the end of Unit 1, students will be asked to interview both a child and an adult about their understanding of the story of Noah’s Ark with a provided interview protocol. Students will then write up a comparative analysis of the two interviews informed by the theories of development studied during the first unit of the course. PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU SHOULD PLAN TO SCHEDULE THE INTERVIEWS WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE DUE DATE.

Unit 2: The Lifecycle of Jewish Learning

Unit 2 of this course will look at lifespan development through the lens of the lifecycle of Jewish learning. Each session will focus on a particular developmental period in the lifespan of learners and explore how Jewish educational programs can effectively address particular developmental and growth needs.

Session 5: Childhood – 10/29

Enduring Understanding: There are numerous Jewish educational options available for pre-b’nai mitzvah aged children, each of which address learners’ development through the structure and content of their program.

Key Questions:
- How do current models of Jewish education for pre-b’nai mitzvah aged learners address students’ developmental needs?
- How are specific stages of cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development nurtured within early childhood and elementary Jewish learning settings?

Readings: (Each student will select one of the listed readings based on his/her particular area of interest.)

Optional Readings: Since students will only be required to read and analyze one of the listed required readings, the optional readings will be to read the articles featuring the other two learning settings of elementary education.

Evidence of Understanding: With a partner, learners will analyze one of the readings regarding an elementary-aged Jewish learning setting and address the particular learning setting through the lenses of cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development.
Session 6: Adolescents and Young Adults – 11/5

Enduring Understanding: Adolescence and early adulthood is a time in the lifespan of Jewish growth when individuals face heightened challenges in terms of identity development, which may accordingly necessitate directed interventions to maintain their connections with the Jewish community.

Key Questions:

- What are the unique developmental and identity challenges faced by Jewish teens and young adults?
- How can the Eriksonian crisis of identity in teen and early adult years impact the process of Jewish identity development?
- What types of interventions have been found to be effective in engaging teens and young adults during this turbulent period in their development and Jewish growth?

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Learners will share an example from personal or professional experience of how Jewish educational programming can address the challenges faced during Erikson’s stage of identity versus role confusion.

Session 7: Adulthood – 11/12

Enduring Understanding: Even though adults may be “grown-ups”, they may not necessarily feel competent or confident in their Jewish knowledge or practice and accordingly require educational interventions that will appropriately and gently nurture their ongoing Jewish growth.

Key Questions:

- What are the dynamics of adult learning that educators need to be aware of when working with this population?
- What are the core developmental tasks of Jewish adulthood?
- How can programming in the Jewish community support adults as they encounter these developmental tasks?

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be divided into small groups, preferably made up of students of diverse ages, in which they will discuss how particular adult Jewish learning experiences helped them address the developmental tasks of Jewish adulthood. The group will be asked to report back what principles of effective adult Jewish learning and family education helped support group members in addressing these developmental tasks. (Alternate exercise for PEP.)

Performance Task #2 (due 11/24): Developing a Family Learning Program: Learners will be asked to develop a family education program that takes into account the developmental theories and lifecycle stages explored in the first two units of the course. The lesson plan write up will be accompanied by a commentary that explains how the lesson is informed by developmental theories and addresses the various periods in the lifecycle of Jewish growth.
Unit 3: Nurturing Wholeness

In this final unit learners will synthesize their deepened understanding of human growth and development by exploring what it means to nurture wholeness within their students and themselves.

Session 8: Nurturing a Sense of Wholeness and Meaning – 11/19

Enduring Understanding: In order to be able to effectively nurture Jewish growth, it is necessary for Jewish educators to clearly conceptualize and articulate the end goals of a process of Jewish growth.

Key Questions:

- What might a balanced, holistic conception of Jewish growth look like?
- How can the developmental theories and stages of the Jewish lifecycle explored this semester help inform the development of end goals for Jewish growth?
- How can Jewish tradition, text, and values help inform our conception of meaningful end goals for Jewish growth?
- Once defined, how might the end goals of a process of Jewish growth impact the role of the Jewish educator?

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Drawing upon Shapiro’s article, select one aspect of Jewish tradition, text, etc. and explain how it can help nurture a sense of wholeness and meaning in the process of learners’ Jewish growth.

Session 9: Addressing Impediments to Growth and Development – 12/3

Enduring Understanding: In any learning setting there are those who face developmental impediments influenced by either internal or external factors. Jewish educators have a responsibility to be aware of signs of developmental impediments and know how to find resources to help them respond appropriately.

Key Questions:

- What are some of the most prevalent problems and risks facing learners in Jewish settings today?
- What are appropriate steps to take when signs of developmental impediments are observed among learners with whom you work?
- What resources are available in your local community to help support you in addressing the needs of learners you encounter who may be at risk and/or facing learning challenges?

Readings:


Optional Readings:

- http://www.nfty.org/living/initiatives/bullying/
- http://chai.urj.org/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=1069&destination=ShowItem

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to compile and share a list of resources available in their local community to address at least 3 of the at-risk categories identified in the Bayar and Hirschman article. (Alternate exercise for PEP.)

Session 10: Teaching from a Place of Personal Wholeness – 12/10

Enduring Understanding: Just like their students, Jewish educators experience a trajectory of growth that molds them into who they are as teachers and links their past and present experiences and learning with their future interactions with students.

Key Questions:

- What is your conception of the “ideal teacher”? What prior interactions with educators have impacted your development of this conception?
- In what ways does your personal trajectory of Jewish growth impact who you are as a Jewish educator?
• How are/can you actively work toward nurturing a sense of wholeness in your self-concept of you who are as a Jew and a Jewish educator?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Revisit the timeline you developed at the beginning of the semester and add in to the timeline a brief description of an encounter with an educator who has impacted your ideal of the type of Jewish educator you want to be. (If you have a hard time selecting just one teacher, feel free to add in more than one.)

Final Performance Task (due 12/17): Writing My Jewish Educator Autobiography – Research in teacher education has shown that the exercise of writing an autobiography is a powerful tool for developing reflective practice skills. For this final assignment you are being asked to write an autobiography in relation to your evolving role as a Jewish educator. In your autobiography you are asked to reflect on your developmental trajectory both as a Jew and a Jewish educator and how it relates to some of the theories explored in this class. As noted in Palmer’s chapter, you should plan to discuss mentors who may have impacted your development. In addition, you should highlight particular elements of your identity that you bring to the forefront and share with learners when you teach. The assignment should also analyze your approach to pedagogy in terms of intertwining the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge as discussed by Rosenak. In particular, take time to reflect on how these two “trees” have impacted who you are as a Jewish educator and, as Palmer discusses, how they ground you in “authoring” your teaching identity.