Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
CG-EDUC-834 Theory & Practice of 21st Century Jewish Education:
Navigating & Constructing the Jewish Educational Landscape
Nina Price, M.A.J.E., RJE
Spring 2015

Contact Information:
Skype: nina.k.price
Email: nina.price@hebrewcollege.edu
Phone: 304-362-0062

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 and How People Learn, 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 by redesigning their own 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
- To develop service learning constructs for Jewish Education
- 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 online or will be posted on Schoology.
- You will be required to purchase one text: **Goodman, R. L. (2008). What We Now Know about Jewish Education. Torah Aura Prod.**
- 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 (35% 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:
    - Commonplaces in a Classroom: Describing a Learning Setting (15%)
    - Identifying HPL in an Educational Setting: Analyzing the Dynamics of Learning (15%)
    - Redesigning the Landscape of Jewish Education (20%)
  - Overall Participation and Active Contributions (15% 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 – 2/2**

**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 2015? 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:**
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 – 2/11

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 are you 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.

Session 3: Observing the Landscape – 2/18

Enduring Understanding: The process of observation is a tool that can enrich educators’ understanding of the landscape of education and also be utilized to improve one’s professional practice.

Key Questions:
- What is the difference between seeing and judging when observing an educational setting?
- How can the process of observing others impact your own practice as an educator?
- How do observations of Jewish educational settings 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 share an anecdote about something they observe in a learning setting with which they are connected (as a learner, teacher, parent, etc.) and reflect upon how what they saw impacts their understanding of the landscape of Jewish education and/or their practice as an educator.

Performance Task #1 (due 3/3) – Commonplaces in a Classroom: Describing a Learning Setting
At the end of Unit 1, students will be asked to observe a lesson, either in a particular classroom or informal learning setting. In analyzing the setting students will be asked to reflect on each of Schwab’s 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 4 – Introduction to How People Learn (HPL) – 3/4

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 one situation in which they have benefitted from experiencing the principle in action as a learner.

**Session 5: Learner-Centered Learning Environment – Empowering the Learner – 3/18**

**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 texts read this session to illustrate learner-centered principles in action.

**Session 6: Knowledge-Centered Learning Environment – 3/25**

**Enduring Understanding:** One of the key roles of the teacher is to identify the core content and conceptual frameworks that will ground Jewish education and lead to the Jewish growth and enrichment of learners.

**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 investigate some preconceived notions (such as the flatness of the world) within Jewish educational contexts and develop strategies for positively addressing these ideas within a knowledge-centered learning environment.

Session 7: Assessment-Centered Learning Environment – 4/1
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, understanding, and even identity.

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 somewhat amorphous learning outcomes, such as Jewish identity growth, effectively be assessed?

Readings:

Optional Reading:

Evidence of Understanding: Based on the various constructs of Jewish identity presented in the readings for this session, students will collaboratively develop criteria for assessing Jewish identity growth and discuss how these criteria could inform an assessment-centered Jewish learning environment.

Session 8: Community-Centered Learning Environment – 4/15
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, JCC’s, 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.
Performance Task #2 (due 4/21) – Identifying HPL in an Educational Setting: Analyzing the Dynamics of Learning

At the end of Unit 2, students will be asked to analyze an educational setting with which they are very familiar. Unlike the first performance task, the analysis will not be of a particular lesson but of the setting as a whole. For this analysis, students will be asked to write up a descriptive analysis of the presence (or absence) of learner-centered practices, knowledge-centered practices, assessment-centered practices, and community-centered practices in the setting. Students will also be asked to reflect upon the experience of utilizing HPL as a lens for understanding the dynamics of learning.

UNIT 3: VISIONS OF THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Session 9: Making a Case for Change - 4/22

Enduring Understanding: The process of transforming the Jewish educational landscape can both be impacted by and have a significant impact on the broader community.

Key Questions:
- What broad changes within the demographics of the American Jewish community are serving as impetus for changing the Jewish educational landscape?
- What are some of the core principles and ideas that are underlying recent innovations in Jewish education?
- How can the recent growth of Jewish service learning been seen as a case demonstrating the possibility for and potential impact of innovation in Jewish education?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to research a local Jewish service learning project and discuss it in relation to making a case for bringing change and innovation to the landscape of Jewish education.

Session 10: The Challenge of Changing the Landscape – 4/29

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.

Session 11: Redrawing Our Landscapes – 5/6

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?
  - 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?
  - 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?
  - What changes in your own practice will they require?
  - 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 5/20): 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.