Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
EDUC 825: Seminar in Experiential Jewish Education
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Course Description
Experiential learning is the cornerstone of constructivist education, but in the Jewish community, the terms “experiential learning” and “informal education” are thrown around to describe everything from immersive summer programs to synagogue mitzvah days. This course will challenge students to develop their own theory of experiential education for application in their own professional settings, exploring both the core concepts and limitations of experiential Jewish education. Additionally, students will grapple with the concept and role of authenticity in experiential Jewish education.

Course Goals
Students will
- Develop a personal theory of experiential Jewish education, including a deep understanding of its applications and limits
- Practice planning / curriculum writing for experiential education
- Investigate innovations in the arena of experiential education

Cross-Curricula Elements Featured in the Course
Students will be able to:
- Apply constructivist education approaches to the Jewish setting (II)
- Relate theory to practice in their own and others’ educational settings (II)
- Apply general educational theories to the Jewish setting (III)
- Know the history of Jewish education in the United States in the 20th/21st Century (II)
- Examine and develop the role of technology for Jewish education (III)
- Understand the organization of Jewish education in the United States and the changes it is undergoing (II)
- Demonstrate independent learning (II)
- Demonstrate reflective thinking about practice in Jewish education (III)
- Become a reflective practitioner about learning and how to learn (III)
- Hone the ability to communicate Judaic content in an educational setting (III)
- Give and receive feedback and constructive critique (II)
- Develop an explicit approach to leadership and mentoring (II)
- Develop a professional and entrepreneurial persona for working in Jewish education (III)
- Develop risk taking and experimentation in Jewish education (II)

Course Notes
This is an online course that uses an asynchronous Schoology format. Course information will be delivered on Schoology. Students can access course material at their leisure, but course units generally will begin on Monday at 12:01 a.m. and end the following week on Sunday at midnight. Students are required to respond to assignments using Schoology. Students may email the instructor at any time through Schoology.

Please note: there will not be an instant response to posts or questions. In general, the instructor will endeavor to respond within 24 hours of viewing correspondence. Occasional opportunities for Skype contact will be built into the course as it
progresses, and online office hours are available by appointment.

Readings will be provided through the Schoology site and, in one or two cases, the link to Google Books will be supplied. **Please note:** the readings listed in the syllabus below are subject to change as the course progresses.

There is no expectation of previous experience with Jewish experiential education for the course. However, personal experience in the field is an important part of what we bring to our conversation, and students will be encouraged to bring this experience to our conversation.

**Student Requirements**
Each student is required to do the following:
- Complete all readings and assignments
- Participate robustly in online discussions and chats

**Assignments**
- Unit assignments and responding to questions posed about texts encountered
- Mid-term curricular plan
- Final immersive itinerary project

**Grading**
Grading will be equally based on:
- Robust participation in class discussion
- Completion of all weekly assignments
- Completion of mid-term curricular plan and final immersive itinerary project

**Topics**
**UNIT 1 – Our Educational Context**
As we establish what it takes to be an excellent learning in this course—i.e., how to make the most of the experience—we will delve into the history and development of experiential Jewish education, the pedagogical assumptions that gave birth to the field, and the prevailing philosophies of experiential Jewish education today.

**Session 1: Defining Experiential Education**
Joe Reimer, Barry Chazan, and developing a definition and philosophy of experiential Jewish education. *Na’aseh v’nishma* as the foundational text of experiential Jewish education.

Readings:

**Session 2: A Brief History of Jewish Experiential Education in America**
How the rise of summer camps and the migration to the suburbs gave birth to experiential Jewish education.

Readings:

**Session 3: Putting Education First**
Constructivist education and creating an experiential curriculum

Readings:
1. Dewey (TBD)
2. Optional: Schwab

**UNIT 2 – Na’aseh / “We will do...”**
Midterm Assignment:
Throughout the next four weeks, each student will develop a curriculum plan for teaching a content unit of his or her choice in an experimental setting of his or her choosing, to a group of learners of he or she determines. For example: plan for teaching concept of *shalom bayit* on a week-long congregational trip to Israel for families. (The instructor is happy to assist with any of these choices.) The reading assignments during this unit will be somewhat lighter to accommodate working on this assignment. It will be due the end of the week of Session 8.
Session 4: Setting
Crafting educational settings, using those thrust upon us, and the new frontiers of online environments

Reading:
  1. TBD

Session 5: Content
Subject matter, informal learning, teachable moments, and the role of role models.

Reading:
  1. TBD

Session 6: Educators
Role models continued: authenticity, integrity, mentorship, and the danger of charismatic leadership.

Reading:
  1. TBD

Session 7: Learners
Empowering learners to become leaders

Reading:

UNIT 3 – V’Nishma / “…And we will comprehend.”

Final Assignment:
Students will each create an itinerary for a 7 – 10 day immersive program. Each student chooses the setting, learners, and content, with themselves as the educator. Course instructor is available for consultation on those choices. Each itinerary should include curriculum plans for at least one major content area as well as two secondary areas. Assignment will be due end of the week of Session 12.

Session 8: Setting 2
Third spaces and the differences between immersive and occasional settings.

Reading:
  1. TBD

Session 9: Content 2
Can everything be taught via experiential Jewish education? Values, skills, and knowledge

Reading:

Session 10: Educators 2
Presence and absence; teacher vs. facilitator

Reading:
  1. TBD

Session 11: Learners 2
Individuals and communities

Reading:
  1. TBD

UNIT 4 – Reflective Practice

Session 12: Workshopping Our Final
This week’s session is devoted to giving students the opportunity to present their finals-in-progress for feedback and constructive criticism from their peers.
Session 13: Reflective Practice
Returning to the points raised in the articles from Session 1, we will consider the role of reflective practice in experiential learning while reflecting on the learning we’ve been doing together.

Session 14: What’s Next?
How is the field of experiential Jewish education changing, and how are we prepared to meet new challenges?

Readings: