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Course Description

COMM 4203: Adult Learning Theory and Instructional Strategies

Adult learning is very different from the learning processes in children. Adults bring a great deal of experience to the learning situation and are intent on the application of their newfound knowledge and skills. The factors that determine how adults learn, as well as appropriate instructional strategies to best reach these learners, are discussed. Students in this course focus on using adult learning principles to strategically design training materials and facilitate adult learning in various workplace settings.

Course Objectives

This course will provide an overview of some of the main theories and frameworks for teaching adult learners. We will read and discuss theories, both old and new, that help explain how adults differ from other types of learners and practice applying how best to design instruction for adults. In doing so we will explore several conceptual frameworks, or lenses, for understanding adults as learners based in diverse disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education, business, and neuroscience. We will also delve into several different training strategies for adult learning and explore the purposes and best uses of each.

Specifically, this course is designed to help participants develop the ability to:

- Explain how adult learners differ from others types of learners and from each other
- Analyze their own adult learning characteristics and preferences
- Identify and compare some key theoretical frameworks for designing and implementing adult education
- Apply principles of adult learning to teaching and training situations

*The actual course outline may be modified slightly as we go through the course, depending on the needs and interests of the students as perceived by the instructor. Additional course materials may be posted throughout the class term.

Textbooks/Readings

There are 2 required texts and many required supplemental readings for this course:

The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, sixth edition. (2005) by Malcom S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, and Richard A. Swanson Amsterdam: Elsevier Press

Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults, Third Edition. (2008) by Raymond J. Wlodkowski, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Supplemental readings are available through the library e-reserve system.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING E-RESERVES

1) Go to the DU Login for the Ares E-Reserves system: https://ares.cair.du.edu/ares/

2) Login using your DU ID#: and passcode (the same as that which one uses for WebCentral)

3) Click on the course number (link to E-Reserves). Materials should be available starting 1/3/11

Grading Grades will be assigned based on the following breakdown:

	Number	Points Each	Total Points	Percent of course grade
Weekly Discussion Participation	10	6	60	30%
Weekly Journal Assignment	10	2	20	10%
Training Experience Analysis	1	40	40	20%
Strategic Training Plan	1	60	60	30%
Peer Review of 5 other plans	5	4	20	10%
			200	100%

Point and percentages translate into grades as follows:

Course Grade	Minimum Total Points	Percentage
A	188	94-100%
A-	180	90
B+	174	87
B	168	84
B-	160	80
C+	154	77
C	148	74

Weekly Online Discussion Participation This course will rely heavily on online discussions. In an online course, this is where the "class" truly takes place. It is an area to share ideas, ask questions, and deepen our understanding of course concepts. Each week we will have at least 2 discussion topics, some based on gaining a deeper understanding of the readings by reflecting on ourselves and sharing our experiences about adult learning, and others containing applications or mini-case studies where we apply adult learning principles to practice.

Each week, the discussions will start on Monday and last through Sunday night. This allows us all to focus on the same issues at the same time. There will be some

introductory questions to start us off each week, some natural areas during the week to respond to each other, and I will pose further questions during the middle and end of each week to deepen our exploration of each topic. If your most productive time is on the weekend, feel free to get started on the upcoming week's discussion before Monday.

To receive full credit, you need to post a minimum of **FIVE responses each week (including at least one response per topic and posted at least two different times during the week).** Although I hate to attach a number requirement to your comments, it is important that everyone participate at a significant level. You are not graded on what you say, this is an area where you should feel free to explore ideas or play devil's advocate. However, your postings should be meaningful and contribute a new idea or thought to the discussion in some way. Short comments lacking substance are fine and can be supportive but will not count towards your weekly minimum responses.

For the discussion to truly be successful, it is important for all of us to do the readings first, contribute early in the week, and be checking in, reading posts, and **responding throughout the week**. Because we are all online at different times our discussions will occur over a week rather than over one hour or so in class. If you do all your posting on one day or wait until Sunday night to participate, you will have difficulty catching up and will receive little if any feedback on your thoughts and perspectives.

Here are some suggestions regarding posting in the discussion boards:

- Do the readings first (over the weekend if possible) and make initial contributions to the discussion early in the week (you can post before Monday if it fits your schedule better)
- Post as many times as you like, but you must have a minimum of 4 quality posts per week. These posts must include at least one response within each discussion forum and occur throughout the week (not all on one day).
- You are expected to read all threads, but you are not obligated to respond to everyone. I will ask follow up questions throughout the week that I want to you consider, but make your posts where you feel they will add the most value to our discussions.
- Try to keep each posting to a single idea.
- If you want to start a new thread on a different point, please feel free to do so. From my starting question, there are usually many different directions we can go. If your idea is different from an initial response, start a new thread. If it builds on an existing response, reply to that response.
- Brevity, precision and clarity are valued more than lengthy, unclear, wordy posts.

Weekly Reflective Journal/Blog

Who are you as an adult learner? Each week we will be exploring different theories and concepts about adult learners. Because all of us in this class are adult learners ourselves, we will be exploring our own unique adult learning characteristics and preferences as a way to deepen our understanding of these learning principles. Each week you will be asked to write the equivalent of a one-page journal entry (roughly 400 hundred words) exploring how the concepts and theories under discussion or in the readings apply to you as an adult learner. You may do this in one blog post, or a few shorter ones. Just be sure to indicate which posts go with which weeks, most people will title each post with W1, W2, etc. to indicate week 1, week 2.

Most weeks I will give specific questions for you to address, but some weeks are open for you to relate the topics to your own interests, careers, and journey as an adult learner. Or, if there is a particular topic one week you are itching to write about, you may. The journals are a formative, creative assignment. You will not be graded on the content

of what you say, please use this assignment to explore the concepts and be insightful. However, I do expect you to base your entries on the readings and theories. I will be reading each of the entries and grading based on completion.

Your journals will be submitted through an online blog, which you will set up in Week 1. These blogs are public areas, and I hope you will take the time to read through each other's journals throughout the course as a way to see how unique we all are as learners. If there are particular weeks or blog entries that you do not wish to be public, you can submit your journal to the Dropbox area of the course instead. Please see the Assignments section of Week 1 for dropbox submission instructions. If you are uncomfortable creating a public blog for this class, contact me for alternate arrangements.

All journal/blogs need to be completed by midnight on Sunday each week.

Training Scenario Analysis

Your larger task for the first half of this course, due at the end of week 4, is to critique and re-design a learning experience you have participated in as an adult. For this 5-6 page paper, you will choose an organized adult learning experience you have been involved in recently as a learner (NOT as a trainer or teacher--save that experience for the second paper). The experience can be a training course or program you have completed for your job, a course you recently took, a cooking class, a series of online training modules to learn a computer program, etc. It should be something that has occurred in the recent past, but not one that is currently ongoing.

In your paper, after briefly describing the learning experience, you will critique the experience in terms of Knowles adult learning principles and Wlodkowski's motivational framework, In what ways did the experience follow or break from these principles? Did it meet your needs? Did other types of learners participate in this experience and how well did it fit their needs? In what ways was this experience successful, or unsuccessful? Why? Finally, you will offer suggestions and recommendations for re-offering, or re-designing if necessary, the experience to best meet the needs of its learners.

In this course especially where we are discussing theory, you are expected to write a graduate level academic paper. I am a bit of a stickler for formatting, grammar, and proper use of citations as these things distract the reader from really listening to your ideas. All papers should incorporate references from the texts and can include outside sources if appropriate. I expect all written submittals to be accurate, edited, proofread, on time, and conforming to CMS. Please reference The Chicago Manual of Style. or see the latest version of the Capstone Guidelines for guidance on margins, page numbering, fonts, etc.

To achieve the full 40 points for this assignment, your paper should:

(Content - 30 points)

- Provide an brief but adequate description of the training experience
- Critique the learning experience based on Knowles and Wlodkowski's theories
- Contain recommendations or re-design ideas for the future

(Writing - 10 points)

- Include 5-6 pages of quality text
- Contain at least 4 cited references
- Follow the proper use of CMS
- Contain few, if any, grammatical mistakes

Strategic Training Plan

Your main task during the second half of this course is to design a strategic training plan. Unlike the Training Experience Analysis where you analyzed an experience from the point of view of the learner, this time you are viewing the training as the designer and teacher/trainer. You may choose a teaching or training experience from your workplace, ideally one that in is development or is in need of analysis and redesign. If you do not have a workplace experience to use, choose a fictional scenario that you would like to teach or train. If the plan is fictional, you will need to come up with a realistic intended audience and logistical parameters (length, location, cost, etc.).

During week 5, you will be exposed to seven distinct training strategies. You should choose one strategy to focus your plan around. The strategy you choose should, of course, 'strategically' match your main learning objectives. Your plan should provide a brief but thorough background about the training and answers to the following questions. What are the training objectives? How does the strategy used fulfill these objectives? What will learners do? What will the trainers do? How will "learning" will take place and how will you know it occurred? You may need to include supplemental information (training materials, etc.) as appendices.

In designing your plan, you will also by analyzing your audience and the types of learners you expect will participate. Who are your learners? How will you recruit them? How will you motivate, include and engage them throughout the learning experience?

To receive the full 60 points for this assignment, your paper should:

Plan – 30 points

- Provide an adequate background about your training experience and objectives
- Describe how the training strategy fulfills the training objectives
- Describe in some detail what will happen in the training experience
- Include supplemental materials if it will help the reader understand the plan
- Contain references to at least 5 academic sources

Learner Analysis – 20 points

- Discuss the different types of learners that may participate
- Discuss how the plan will motivate, involve, and engage these learners

Use of references/grammar/CMS – 10 points

- Include 8-10 pages of your own writing
- Be written in an academic style (this is a training plan, but in this instance is written for a graduate-level academic program)
- Follow the proper use of CMS including citing sources

- Contain few, if any, grammatical mistakes

Some other tips for this paper:

- Make sure most of the writing is your own. This is your paper. The 8-10 pages should be of your own writing, your summaries and interpretations of the literature rather than a collection of cut and pasted information. You should use direct quotes only when you can't possibly say something better yourself.
- Write in full sentences and paragraphs. Do not use bullet lists unless absolutely necessary.
- All papers should incorporate references from the texts, assigned readings, and/or outside sources. The same guidance about CMS, grammar and formatting from the Training Experience Analysis apply to this paper.

Final Note on the Paper: I grade these papers based on the rubric described above. You should take some time before you turn in the paper to see how you would grade the paper yourself. During the last week of the class you will receive feedback from your peers in this class. I usually do not grade the plans until the peer reviews are completed, so if you want to make changes and re-submit your paper after this feedback, you will have time, but please check with me first.

General assignment policies

Late Assignments -There will be a grade deduction if an assignment is late. This applies to all assignments. In rare cases, I may grant an extension provided there is a compelling reason and the request is sought at least 48 hours prior to the due date.

Plagiarism - Please refer to University College's Academic Integrity Statement in the Course Home area. I abide by these policies.

Incompletes - A grade of Incomplete is rarely granted and only after consultation with the instructor prior to the last week. At least 80% of course work must be completed to be eligible for an "incomplete."

University College Writing Style Requirements

Please note: UCOL has recently switched to the easier Turabian form of CMS. For a quick reference, visit:
http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_ citationguide.html

Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) is the single writing style used in all graduate programs at University College. For your convenience, to follow are a few key points of reference regarding CMS and Capstones. However, you must refer to the latest version of the Capstone Guidelines for complete and up-to-date Capstone and CMS requirements. The Capstone Guidelines can be reached through WebCentral and are located under the University College link, under the Capstone tab. Additional Capstone and CMS resources are also included on this site.

Chicago Manual of Style (CMS):
Citations. Chicago has a simple, easy-to-understand, author-date citation system which we require students to use in capstones. CMS section 16.8-16.18 provides general guidance regarding citations, 16.90-16.120 describes the author date system in detail.

References. CMS sections 16.90-16.120 are key, and section 17 provides specific guidance on virtually every possible type of source. The reference list must be fully compliant with The Chicago Manual of Style author-date format and in full agreement with the text (see 16.107 for more about this). Optionally, the student may include a separate selected

bibliography of works not cited within the text.

Complete guide source: The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers. 15th Edition. 2003. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Capstones:
Margins. Margins must be 1 inch on all sides. Do not justify the right-hand margin.

Fonts. Your primary font must be regular Verdana, 12 point.

Formatting of text. Text must be formatted using Microsoft Word's format and style functions (e.g., hanging indent for references, indented text blocks for quotations, first-line indentation at beginning of each paragraph); do not use embedded spaces, paragraph breaks, and tabs to format your text.

Line Spacing. The entire document must be double spaced, with no extra spaces between paragraphs.

Word and Sentence Spacing. There should be one space between words and after punctuation marks.

University College Academic Integrity Statement

University College enforces the University of Denver's Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty (including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research) is in violation of the Code and can result in a failing grade and/or expulsion from the University.

The University of Denver defines plagiarism as the presentation of another person's idea or product as the student's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

• Copying word-for-word all or part of another's written work
• Using phrases, charts, figures, illustrations, graphics, codes, music, mathematical and scientific solutions without citing the source
• Paraphrasing ideas, conclusions or research without citing the source
• Using all or part of a literary plot, poem, film, musical score, internet website or other artistic product without attributing the work to its creator

As student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures. Please visit www.du.edu/honorcode or refer to the University College Student Handbook for more information.

Suggestions for Success in this Class

This course is designed so that students will learn from their assignments, from the instructor, and from each other. Please read and follow these guidelines for success in this class:

▪ Read the entire syllabus carefully and <u>refer to it often.</u>
▪ Complete the reading assignments early in the week, over the weekend if possible. You will need to complete the readings before participating in the discussions.
▪ Actively participate in online discussions. It will be much easier to keep up and participate if you set aside time during the week (evenings, lunch time) to check in, read comments and respond. By waiting until the weekend you will miss opportunities to share your viewpoint, and will have a heavier reading load.
▪ Keep up with reading, discussion boards and assignments. If you fall behind, it will be very difficult to catch up. The material in this course is relevant and fun, but we cover a lot of ground in ten weeks.
▪ Do all assignments and turn them in on time. All written papers must be in
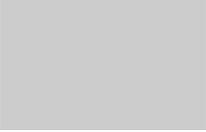
Chicago style. If you are unfamiliar with these styles, this is your chance to become proficient before Capstone time. Refer to the University College Writing Requirements in the Course Home area for assistance.

- Ask questions and clarify assignments. Don't hesitate to email me.