

# IP&T 620 - Principles of Learning

## Spring 2018

Section 001: 168 MCKB on M W from 1:00 pm - 3:50 pm

### Instructor/TA Info

#### Instructor Information

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Or By Appointment

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### Course Information

#### Description

##### What is Learning?

At first, this question may seem odd. Most everyone knows what learning is (at least in an implicit and vague way) and most everyone has benefited from the process of learning. Learning, in this sense, would appear to involve personal and beneficial change of some sort. For example, someone can learn to be a physician, or a school teacher, or a better student, or a better parent, and so on. People can also become more spiritual as they learn about God and draw closer to Him. (Of course, learning can result in deleterious change as well—for example, learning to become skillful at lying. In this sense, it would appear that not all learning is good.) However, as the concept of learning is examined more closely—particularly as it is studied across scholarly fields such as psychology, education, anthropology, and sociology—the concept varies considerably and can take on a variety of contradictory meanings. Depending on the perspective taken, “learning” can be used as a verb or as a noun. It can refer to a mechanistic process governed by natural laws or to a purposeful, agentic, rational power. It can be viewed as an active, creative ability or simply as reactive behavior. It can refer to a process of accumulating or acquiring “things” (e.g., pieces of information or facts) or to increasingly effective forms of social participation. It can be viewed as an ability located within a self-contained organism or as a property of a social group. And so on. Clearly, the way one views learning depends on his or her assumptions about the very idea, not to mention his or her purposes, field of endeavor, and inquiry methods (if working as a researcher).

##### Course Purpose, Framework and Specific Objectives

The purpose of this course is to clarify the concept of “learning” according to various traditions, critically examine each, and help you develop your own position on this important, yet mercurial, phenomenon. To facilitate this study, we will read, discuss, and debate the persuasiveness of some works of central importance to the topic—for example, writings by or about central figures such as Pavlov, Skinner, Bandura, Vygotsky, Bruner, Lave, Wenger, Brown, and various cognitive, constructivist, and narrative theorists. Specific course objectives include: (a) helping you understand these major theories on learning; (b) helping you critically examine these theories; and (c) helping you develop your own sense of identity as a professional in education, including how you think about learning and employ some of these theories or principles in your work.

### **Significance of the Topic**

It seems that irrespective of one’s particular view of learning, there is something fundamentally important about this topic. Learning is difficult to separate from survival itself, and is required for development that permits one to pursue goals, whatever they may be (for example, even an expert physician must investigate a person’s physical and mental situation to learn what the problem is and how it might be resolved). Some have argued that one of the major purposes of life is to learn (e.g., Brigham Young, Hugh Nibley) and that the earth is here to provide us “room and board” while we are here “at school” (see Nibley’s “Educating the Saints: A Brigham Young Mosaic”).

### **Some of My Assumptions**

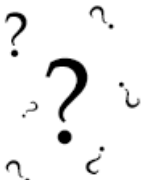
In framing this course, I have made many assumptions about learning and instruction. I would surmise that I’m not aware (or not totally aware) of many; others I’ve explicitly considered. Here are a few I’ve thought about.

- I have assumed that learning refers to personal transformations—that is, minor and major shifts in one’s ways of knowing, doing, and being—achieved through continued practical involvement and lived experience in relational contexts.
- I have assumed that humans are agents who must be purposively engaged in the learning process for most learning to occur.
- I have assumed that learning does not involve the “transmission” of external information into some internal mental “repository” (no inner-outer ontological distinction or “banking” conception), but rather to transformations (large or small) in one’s familiarity and capability.
- To understand various perspectives on learning, we must understand the key ideas by which they are informed. Thus, we will study not only the theories per se, but also their assumptions and implications, in order to discern their advantages and disadvantages, even if only for particular applications. From my perspective, such assumptions are inevitable and enabling (not merely limiting or obstacles to “objectivity”).
- I have assumed that the highest purpose of learning is to consecrate one’s performance and prepare to meet God, which entails deep commitment and self-forgetting.
- Although you don’t have to take a strong, paradigmatic position on learning to succeed in this course, you should be able to justify your assumptions and preferences in terms of how they might be applicable in practice, fit strategically within your broader purposes, and not give way to nihilism or incoherence.
- I have assumed that there are a host of political, social, and power-related factors relevant to the processes of learning that, in an ideal situation, would facilitate rather than hinder the development of learners.
- I have assumed that learning is complex, relational, contextual, multifaceted, even mysterious and ineffable, and thus cannot be fully understood or explicated through scholarly analysis. However, scholarly work can provide some insight into learning in practical contexts and facilitate instruction.

In this sense, learning theories are conceptual tools that may advance the work of educators, rather than objective descriptions of reality or causal relations. *An important outcome of this class, then, is your own development as you think about these theories and how they can help inform your perspective and work.*

- I have assumed that much instruction is implicit and occurs as forms of relational involvement and enculturation. However, some “direct” instruction—as a cultural act—is helpful, in that it can: (1) expedite learning (e.g., for learning about timely issues such as physical safety or spiritual welfare), (2) enrich one’s understanding of a topic by listening to an expert (e.g., sitting at the foot of the “master”), (3) help explain difficult concepts that are not likely to be learned in other ways, and (4) invite learners to explore an area more thoroughly on their own (e.g., “Let me tell you about internal combustion engines and why they are so interesting to me…”).
- I have assumed that students can independently read the seminal writings of major thinkers (or commentaries on them) and be prepared to contribute to an insightful discussion about the ideas found therein. Some of these seminal writings are relatively old, but they are important because they provide the foundation for contemporary work and thought.
- As a result of these and other assumptions, I have attempted to create a transformative learning experience (somewhat ironically and reflexively, about learning itself) that involves you as agents with moral and spiritual purpose. We will attempt to understand theories and principles by understanding their assumptions, implications, and applications. However, I do not presume that what we discuss this semester will exhaust the meaning of this topic and I do not presume that a scientific or scholarly rendering of the meaning of learning should overshadow a spiritual perspective on the matter.

## Materials

	Item	Price (new)	Price (used)
	<u>Situated Learning - Required</u> by Lave, J	39.99	30.00

## Classroom Procedures

In this class we will read, critically examine, and discuss key writings by theorists who have developed influential perspectives on learning. The expectation is that you will read the assignments in advance to prepare for class discussion and exercises (see tentative course schedule). Class time will be devoted to the careful analysis of formative concepts and the open exchange of viewpoints in pursuit of a deeper understanding of these perspectives on learning. I have in mind here something like a “professional learning community,” where we collectively and relationally increase our understanding of, and ability to use, theories of learning in our own life settings—teaching and learning from each other along the way. Most course readings are in the electronic library reserve available through Learning Suite. We’ll also be reading one book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* by Lave and Wenger. It’s available for purchase in the bookstore.

## Guiding Questions for Readings

For each reading, the class conversation can (and probably will) range widely. But as you read, I would like you to consider the general questions I have listed below. They should help you think carefully about the positions advocated.

1. What is the author's basic position about learning and/or instruction?
2. How would you critique this position? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
3. What are some possible applications of this position?

## Change

Given the fluidity that happens in a discussion-based class, you will in large part shape the course outcomes for yourself and everyone else you raise questions or respond to others in a thoughtful way. But the other side of this flexibility is that our schedule must be equally fluid. If you are you someone who wants to know on the first day of class exactly the dates everything will be due, and the precise instructions for every assignment, you may experience some frustration since in a class like this such order and predicability are impossible. I, as the instructor, reserve the right to change any aspect of this course (including but not limited to assignments, readings, due dates, topics of class meetings) at any time for any reason.

To compensate, I can assure you that it is my goal that you have a successful experience. I'm not looking to trap you into a bad grade. If due dates for assignments are adjusted, they will be adjusted back and not forward. If instructions change, they will be communicated clearly and as early as possible. Some assignments may also be combined or eliminated in favor of other work; in these cases instructions will also be communicated at early as possible.

Finally, I hope as you become clearer on what you want to get out of the course that you will discuss assignment instructions with me and negotiate to make sure they meet your long-term needs.

## Grading Policy

Late submission of assignments will result in a 20% loss of points after other grading is complete. No assignments can be accepted after the last day of class, other than the course project that will be due by the last day of Spring Term finals.

## Grading Scale

Grades	Percent
A	93%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	83%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	73%
C-	70%
D+	67%

D	63%
D-	60%
E	0%

## Attendance Policy

My attendance policy is you need to be in class. Much of the value you'll receive in a course like this is the interaction and discussion with fellow students and your instructor. I want to accommodate unavoidable absences. But there really isn't a substitute for the lost benefit of working with other students in a mentored environment on whatever was addressed in your absence. Plus, other students will miss out on your contributions to their learning, which is a loss that cannot be replaced. To help encourage good attendance behavior, there is a small number of points attached to your attendance. Attendance means being no more than 15 minutes late. It also means that you come prepared having read the assignments due that day and participate in the class discussion. You can drop one absence without loss of points. If other circumstances come up where you have additional absences, talk to me as soon as possible about options for making up the points (which, depending on the circumstances, may or may not be possible).

## Assignments

### Assignment Descriptions

#### Brief Statement about Learning

May  
07

Due: Monday, May 07 at 11:59 pm

At the beginning of the term, you will write a 1-page paper on your views of learning, based on your own experience, training, work, and so on. What values do you hold in regard to how learning should proceed? What even is learning? Why learn? (You don't have to answer these questions specifically; these are just to prompt your thinking.) Later, in your course project you will turn in a follow-up statement that discusses how your views have changed over the semester, if at all.

#### Exam 1

May  
30

Due: Wednesday, May 30 at 11:59 pm

To be discussed in class

#### Attendance

Jun  
18

Due: Monday, Jun 18 at 11:59 pm

#### Exam 2

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Jun  
21

Due: Thursday, Jun 21 at 11:59 pm

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## Personal Statement on Learning

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Jun  
21

Due: Thursday, Jun 21 at 11:59 pm

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### Project Overview

When applying for positions in education, it is common to be asked to submit a statement of one's personal views on learning and instruction—for example, a written “teaching philosophy” or something similar. In this project, you are being asked to articulate your own personal view of learning and instruction, as if you were including it in your application materials. Your written statement should offer an idea of what you generally aim to accomplish in learning and teaching situations, how you attempt to do so, your assumptions and values in this regard, and your overall sense of professional identity as an educator of whatever type.

### Specific Directions

Please keep the following considerations in mind as you prepare your statement:

- **Size:** Your statement should be no more than 5-pages, 12 point font, double spaced. It can be less than 5-pages, but not more. Size will vary; some students write more concisely than others, use more references, etc. Your appendix will be 1-2 additional pages.
- **Format:** What you submit should be in prose form rather than an outline, a set of bullet points, etc. You can use section headings if you like. You can use APA style, or if you prefer, some other professionally-accepted style (e.g., Chicago, MLA).
- **Rigor:** You need to show that you can articulate your viewpoint in a persuasive and pithy way. It should be carefully thought out, well-organized, professionally written, grammatically correct, and well-defended. All claims should be supported.
- **What to include:** The statement you submit should express your viewpoint on the following issues (not necessarily in this order):
  - The purpose of learning and the intended goals of instruction.
  - Core theoretical ideas that make up your viewpoint. This includes the meaning (or definition) of key concepts such as agency, learning, teaching, instruction, technology, knowledge, skill, etc.
  - Your position regarding the process of learning and instruction—for example, your assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners, what your approach values and emphasizes, the techniques you'd be inclined to use, the ideal outcomes of learning, etc. (brief examples or narratives may help).
  - Appendix: This is the follow-up to your statement from the beginning of the semester. In this appendix, you should summarize your earlier views and discuss how they have changed, if at all, during the course of the semester.
- **Submission procedure:** Submit a copy by the final exam day (June 21st). I cannot accept anything after this date.
- **Grading considerations:** I'm not looking for a doctrinaire or “party line” statement; you can take whatever stance you wish. In general, I will consider your ability to articulate your stance. More specifically, I will consider how well you include the points I listed (above) under “What to include.”

- **ADVICE:** The best statements usually have the following features:
  - Clearly identified audience/context at the beginning.
  - Modest scope; don't try to take on too much (oftentimes, less is more).
  - Important assertions clarified/supported.
  - Smooth flow, tight organization, often with section headings.
  - Avoid a collection of personal reflections, unsupported claims, hodgepodge organization, etc.

## University Policies

### Preventing Sexual Misconduct

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Brigham Young University prohibits unlawful sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. The university also prohibits sexual harassment-including sexual violence-committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of "Sexual Misconduct" prohibited by the university.

University policy requires all university employees in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report all incidents of Sexual Misconduct that come to their attention in any way, including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Incidents of Sexual Misconduct should be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at [t9coordinator@byu.edu](mailto:t9coordinator@byu.edu) or (801) 422-8692. Reports may also be submitted through EthicsPoint at <https://titleix.byu.edu/report> (<https://titleix.byu.edu/report>) or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours a day).

BYU offers confidential resources for those affected by Sexual Misconduct, including the university's Victim Advocate, as well as a number of non-confidential resources and services that may be helpful. Additional information about Title IX, the university's Sexual Misconduct Policy, reporting requirements, and resources can be found at <http://titleix.byu.edu> (<http://titleix.byu.edu>) or by contacting the university's Title IX Coordinator.

### Student Disability

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

### Academic Honesty

The first injunction of the Honor Code is the call to "be honest." Students come to the university not only to improve their minds, gain knowledge, and develop skills that will assist them in their life's work, but also to build character. "President David O. McKay taught that character is the highest aim of education" (The Aims of a BYU Education, p.6). It is the purpose of the BYU Academic Honesty Policy to assist in fulfilling that aim. BYU students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct.

## Deliberation Guidelines

To facilitate productive and open discussions about sensitive topics about which there are differing opinions, members of the BYU community should: (1) Remember that we are each responsible for enabling a productive, respectful dialogue. (2) To enable time for everyone to speak, strive to be concise with your thoughts. (3) Respect all speakers by listening actively. (4) Treat others with the respect that you would like them to treat you with, regardless of your differences. (5) Do not interrupt others. (6) Always try to understand what is being said before you respond. (7) Ask for clarification instead of making assumptions. (8) When countering an idea, or making one initially, demonstrate that you are listening to what is being said by others. Try to validate other positions as you assert your own, which aids in dialogue, versus attack. (9) Under no circumstances should an argument continue out of the classroom when someone does not want it to. Extending these conversations beyond class can be productive, but we must agree to do so respectfully, ethically, and with attention to individuals' requests for confidentiality and discretion. (10) Remember that exposing yourself to different perspectives helps you to evaluate your own beliefs more clearly and learn new information. (11) Remember that just because you do not agree with a person's statements, it does not mean that you cannot get along with that person. (12) Speak with your professor privately if you feel that the classroom environment has become hostile, biased, or intimidating. Adapted from the Deliberation Guidelines published by The Center for Democratic Deliberation.

(<http://cdd.la.psu.edu/education/The%20CDD%20Deliberation%20Guidelines.pdf/view?searchterm=deliberation%20guidelines>)

## Respectful Environment

"Sadly, from time to time, we do hear reports of those who are at best insensitive and at worst insulting in their comments to and about others... We hear derogatory and sometimes even defamatory comments about those with different political, athletic, or ethnic views or experiences. Such behavior is completely out of place at BYU, and I enlist the aid of all to monitor carefully and, if necessary, correct any such that might occur here, however inadvertent or unintentional. "I worry particularly about demeaning comments made about the career or major choices of women or men either directly or about members of the BYU community generally. We must remember that personal agency is a fundamental principle and that none of us has the right or option to criticize the lawful choices of another." President Cecil O. Samuelson, Annual University Conference, August 24, 2010 "Occasionally, we ... hear reports that our female faculty feel disrespected, especially by students, for choosing to work at BYU, even though each one has been approved by the BYU Board of Trustees. Brothers and sisters, these things ought not to be. Not here. Not at a university that shares a constitution with the School of the Prophets." Vice President John S. Tanner, Annual University Conference, August 24, 2010

## Honor Code



In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and every instructor's expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

## Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings due	Assignments due
Week 1			
W May 02 Wednesday	Introductions  Consecrated learning	Jardine  Nibley	
Week 2			
M May 07 Monday	What is theory?  What is theory's role in education?	Svard  Thomas	<b>Brief Statement about Learning</b>
W May 09 Wednesday	Behaviorism	Skinner  Slavin	
Week 3			
M May 14 Monday	Cognitivism	Bernstein  Hunt & Ellis	
W May 16 Wednesday	Social cognitivism	Omron	
Week 4			
M May 21 Monday	Constructivism	Phillips  Driscoll	
W May 23 Wednesday	Social-cultural theory	Vygotsky	
Week 5			
M May 28 Monday	<b>Memorial Day</b>		

W May 30 Wednesday	Situated cognition part 1	Lave & Wenger sections 1 and 2	<b>Exam 1</b>
Week 6			
M Jun 04 Monday	Situated cognition part 2	Lave & Wenger sections 3, 4, and 5	
W Jun 06 Wednesday	Connectivism	Downes 1 and 2 Siemens	
Week 7			
M Jun 11 Monday	<u>Social justice education</u>	Adams Bell	
W Jun 13 Wednesday	<u>Moral education and caring</u>	Noddings 1 and 2	
Week 8			
M Jun 18 Monday	<u>Embodied social class status</u>	Henry Wrap-up discussion	<b>Attendance</b>
W Jun 20 Wednesday	<b>First Day of Spring Final Exams (06/20/2018 - 06/21/2018)</b>		
Th Jun 21 Thursday			<b>Exam 2 Personal Statement on Learning</b>