Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

This course presents a wholistic coverage of several salient aspects pertinent to social and behavioral sciences; including an introduction into the best practices and research methods involved in data collection and reporting in the educational psychology field, an in-depth discussion of the trends and milestones involved in physical, intellectual, and personal development, a coverage of the important behavioral, cognitive, and social approaches related to learning and knowledge acquisition, and an understanding of the influence and impact motivational forces can have based on their contextual influence in dynamic settings. The class examines specific theories in each of the areas above to provide an empirical basis for a greater understanding of both the learner (individual) and the learning environment (society and culture) that they are embedded in.

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Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

This class calls for students to react critically to a series of video segments that highlight and/or feature an application of one of the aspects we discussed in the previous unit. These assignments are known as "R.E.A.C.T."s and encourage students to Respond to, Expand upon, Argue with, Comment on, or Think about the information that was viewed from their own perspective and relate it to what we have discussed in class. With specific regards to evaluation and synthesis of information, students are presented with scenario-based multiple choice questions on their examinations that call for them student to recognize, analyze, and respond to the data using higher-order thinking skills.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

Writing and other communication skills are encouraged and developed in all students across the semester. In tandem with the R.E.A.C.T. assignment described above, that calls for students to compile their own thoughts on a specific educational psychology topic and present them clearly and competently in written form, this class also provides a forum for students to work on a personally meaningful semester ending project and present the information orally to the class with the utilization of visual aids.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

See attached revisions
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Students in this class are taught to be knowledgeable regarding the facts and figures specific to educational psychology and social and behavioral research as a whole. From a discussion of the descriptive statistics used to report information to a highlighting of the various statistical methods used to provide quantitative support of the effectiveness and usefulness of certain educational theories and approaches, students are actively able to critically consider information that is reported instead of being passive consumers of this data.

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Through taking this course, students will be equipped with essential information about the principles of development, the processes of learning, the fundamentals of motivation, and the field of education psychology that these all directly pertain to. This knowledge should carry them successfully into a career in a classroom as an educator, assist with the interpersonal aspects of working with and effectively engaging a diverse collection of people in a corporate or professional setting, or providing background information and knowledge that is useful in understanding and raising their own children. These human principles are global in nature and this knowledge will travel with all students regardless of whether their career path takes them or their family roots are set.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.
EMPIRICAL & QUANTITATIVE SKILLS:
Students in this class are taught to be knowledgeable regarding the facts and figures specific to educational psychology and social and behavioral research as a whole. From a discussion of the descriptive statistics used to report information to a highlighting of the various statistical methods used to provide quantitative support of the effectiveness and usefulness of certain educational theories and approaches, students are actively able to critically consider information that is reported instead of being passive consumers of this data.

EVALUATION: This course is designed to help students in understanding, reporting, and analyzing statistical information as it pertains to the field. Empirical skills will be developed through the cultivation of item analysis skills (data manipulation) and a unit-based test over the empirical methods and quantitative procedures involved in the field of educational psychology (analysis of numerical data or observable facts to reach an informed conclusion).

For the latter, students will be taught and then subsequently tested on the various quantitative techniques and statistical procedures involved in data collection in the field. The questions will call for them to meaningfully interpret correlation coefficients, rank subjects according to the principles of the scales of measurements, compute measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode), and be able to recognize all of these aspects in the context of scenario-based application questions.

With regards to item analysis, students will be taught how to determine both the item difficulty and item discrimination scores of an achievement test so that they can utilize this information in their own classrooms and develop their item construction abilities and refine their test analyses skills.
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
Through taking this course, students will be equipped with essential information about the principles of development, the processes of learning, the fundamentals of motivation, and the field of education psychology that these all directly pertain to. This knowledge should carry them successfully into a career in a classroom as an educator, assist with the interpersonal aspects of working with and effectively engaging a diverse collection of people in a corporate or professional setting, or providing background information and knowledge that is useful in understanding and raising their own children. These human principles are global in nature and this knowledge will travel with all students regardless of whether their career path takes them or their family roots are set.

EVALUATION: Social responsibility will be evaluated through the assignment a final project that will fully incorporate all units of the class into a comprehensive research paper. The roots of this paper lie in the documentary video “Waiting for Superman” that is shown to the class and demonstrates several troubling aspects of our educational system. Using their own experiences, interests, and backgrounds as a basis, they will then be asked to identify a salient challenge, issue, or troubling aspect of our education (bullying, school violence, teacher turnover, standardized testing, achievement gaps, etc.) and suggest proposals for how this can be alleviated (or even eradicated). The paper will be comprised of independent research, where they will have to locate and cite current research findings and journal articles and demonstrate how prevalent this problem truly is. They will then conduct personal interviews with current K-12 teachers and have them comment on how they handle this issue in their own lives and classrooms. Finally, using this information, they will have to develop several proposals as to how they would address this issue using their own intuition and creativity. This project adds a “real world” aspect to the field of educational psychology and allows students to become good consumers of current empirical data, be knowledgeable as they discuss educational issues with professionals in the field, and be empowered as they take social responsibility for addressing issues that are current students, teachers, and administrators are facing.