



Adult Learning Sample Syllabus

Course Description

This course prepares graduate students to examine contemporary adult learning theories and their application to instructional practice across varied educational and professional contexts. Students will analyze and design equitable learning environments by identifying barriers to access and representation and implementing strategies that promote inclusion and shared power among diverse adult learners (e.g., families, undergraduate students, providers, etc.). The course also emphasizes evidence-based instructional design, guiding students to develop authentic assessments and pedagogical approaches that foster motivation, reflective practice, and meaningful learning outcomes for adults.

Course Learning Objectives

As a result of active participation and successful completion of course requirements, students will be able to:

1. Critically analyze and apply adult learning theories.
2. Design inclusive and equitable adult learning environments by identifying barriers to equity and then implementing strategies that promote representation, access, power-sharing and positive outcomes for diverse adult learners.
3. Evaluate and integrate technology in adult learning contexts by assessing technology-mediated learning experiences using theoretical lenses and propose improvements to enhance engagement and accessibility.
4. Develop evidence-based instructional and assessment strategies by creating teaching approaches and authentic assessments that foster motivation, engagement, and reflective practice among adult learners.

Recommended Readings

- Smith, M. K. (2010). 'David A. Kolb on experiential learning', *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*. <https://infed.org/dir/david-a-kolb-on-experiential-learning/>.
- Kolb, D. A., Boyatzis, R. E., & Mainemelis, C. (2001). Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions. In R. J. Sternberg & L.-f. Zhang (Eds.), *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* (pp. 227–247). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2017). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- McLeod, S. (2025) Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory in Psychology.
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2005). *The power of critical theory for adult learning and teaching*. Open University Press.



- Belenky, M.F. & Stanton, A. (2000). *Inequality, development, and connected knowing*. In Mezirow, J and Associates (2000) *Learning as Transformation. Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (p. 35-70). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Means, B., Bakia, M., & Murphy, R. (2014). *Learning online: What research tells us about whether, when, and how*. Routledge.
- Bonk, C. J., & Khoo, E. (2014). *Adding some TEC-VARIETY: 100+ activities for motivating and retaining learners online*. OpenWorldBooks.
- Poole, M. E., Fettig, A., McKee, R. A., & Gauvreau, A. N. (2020). Inside the virtual tele-intervention: Using technology to support early intervention services during COVID-19. *Young Exceptional Children*.
- Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance*. Jossey-Bass.
- Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199–218.
- Boud, D., & Molloy, E. (2013). *Feedback in higher and professional education: Understanding it and doing it well*. Routledge.
- Friesen, A. (2023). Promoting EI/ECSE practitioners’ professional growth through a reflective practice framework. *Young Exceptional Children*, 27(1), 16-28.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10962506231169326>
- Graven, Mellony & Lerman, Stephen. (2003). Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*. 6. 185-194.
- Rush, D., & Shelden, M. (2020). *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook* (2nd ed.). Brookes.

Accommodations

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 require the institution to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking academic adjustments or accommodations must self-identify with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities on the appropriate campus.

Attendance

Since many of the classes involve activities, videotapes, discussion, etc., regular attendance is vital to gain maximum benefit. Because this is an 8 weeks course, each class member needs to make every effort to be in attendance at each class. Anyone who misses more than one class will lose 5 points for each class missed after the first absence. Significant tardiness or early departure



beyond 15 minutes will count as an absence. If you know ahead of time you will not be in class, please contact the instructor the day before the class.

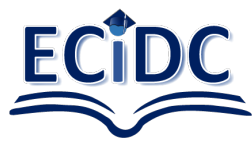
Communicating with the Instructor

All correspondences from the instructor to the students by way of announcements, updates, assignments, and so forth, will be communicated via school email or online learning management system if not verbally in class. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their university e-mail is corrected, provided, and valid. Failure to do so may result in missing important information that could negatively impact your grade. Please be mindful of professionalism.

Course Outline

The following schedule is subject to change. For any course syllabuses posted prior to the beginning of the semester, the course instructor reserves the right to make changes prior to or during the semester. The course instructor will notify students, via e-mail or verbal announcements when changes are made in the requirements and/or grading of this course. ***The course instructor reserves the right to revise the schedule/assignments if needed.***

Week	Topics	Reading	Activities
1	Who are the Adult Learners in EI/ECSE?		In-Class Activity: Students rotate through three scenario stations , each illustrating a realistic interaction with adults in EI/ECSE. At each station, they analyze the scenario, identify potential challenges, and determine strategies for effective, equitable interaction.
2	Theories of Adult Development & Learning	National Research Council (2000); Knowles (1980)	In-Class Activity: Building on the Scenario Stations – provided with multiple scenarios of adult learning opportunities in EI/ECSE consider the following: Which of Knowles' principles are relevant here? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might the adult's needs and motivations



			<p>influence the interaction?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What barriers to adult learning might exist?
3	Equity, Inclusion, and Culturally Responsive Adult Learning	Gay (2018) Ch 2; Brookfield (2005) Ch 3 & 5	Mapping Equity in Practice
4	Motivation & Engagement in Adult Learning	Deci & Ryan (2000); Ryan & Deci (2017), Ch 1; Ambrose et al (2010) Ch 3	In-Class Activity: Think about a recent learning environment you've participated in or facilitated (e.g., university seminar, PD session, or ECI coaching visit). Identify three motivational influences present in that experience.
5	Teaching Strategies & Technology for Adult Learners	Brookfield (2015) Ch 2 & 4; Merriam et al (2007) Ch 4	<p>In-Class Activity: Select a short video of adult instruction, PD, or coaching. While viewing track facilitation moves such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning strategies • Wait time • Reframing or summarizing • Validation of learner experience <p>Document the frequency of each "move" and write down additional details to help you identify each "move".</p> <p>Technology Review</p>

6	Coaching, Mentorship, & Leadership in Adult Learning	Friesen (2023); Rush & Shelden (2020) Ch 1 & 10; Kemp & Turnbull (2014)	Adult Learning Planning Tool
7	Providing Feedback to Adult Learners	Snyder et al. (2015); Rakap & Balikci (2023)	<p>In-Class Activity: Select 2–3 examples of feedback you have provided or received in adult learning contexts. Examples may come from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECI caregiver coaching • ECI supervision or reflective supervision • Pre-service teacher education • Higher education or professional development <p>Feedback may include written comments, observation notes, coaching summaries, or evaluation feedback. Then use the feedback audit table. Share out with the larger group.</p>
8	Putting it all together		Final Presentation

Major Assignments

1. Mapping Equity in Practice

- a. Students will translate equity theory into concrete action within participants’ own educational or professional contexts. Additionally, they will be encouraged to reflection on barriers, opportunities, and actionable strategies that promote equity in adult learning environments.
- b. Identify an Equity Challenge:
 - i. Reflect on your current learning or work environment. Choose one area where inequity appears.
 1. Examples:
 - a. Uneven participation or engagement among learners
 - b. Barriers to language access or cultural representation
 - c. Limited opportunities for shared decision-making
 - d. Outcome disparities across learner groups

- c. Analyze the Challenge
 - i. Use the framework below to explore how each dimension contributes to the issue.

Dimension	Reflective Questions
Representation	Whose voices, stories, or cultural perspectives are visible? Whose are missing?
Access	What barriers prevent equitable participation (time, technology, transportation, language, format)?
Power & Voice	Who makes decisions about goals, methods, or evaluation? How can power be shared?
Outcomes	Who benefits most from current systems? Who might be unintentionally excluded or disadvantaged?

- d. Collaborate and Share
 - i. Present your findings.
 - ii. Identify one practical strategy that others might adapt in their own context.
 1. Higher Education Example: Diversify readings and guest speakers to expand their representation.
 2. ECI Example: Provide interpreter services and flexible scheduling for family meetings.
 3. Professional Learning Example: Co-design PD content with staff from underrepresented backgrounds.
 - iii. Record and present one immediate action and one systemic advocacy goal.
 1. Immediate Action:
 - a. What can I change right now to increase equity?
 2. Systemic Goal:
 - a. What policy, process, or structure could I influence over time?

2. Technology Review

- a. Students will critically analyze a real or familiar technology-mediated adult learning experience through four theoretical lenses commonly used in adult learning and educational technology research. Students develop the ability to evaluate how technology shapes participation, interaction, power dynamics, and equity in higher education and professional learning contexts.
- b. Select a Learning Experience.
 - i. Choose one technology-mediated adult learning experience that you have participated in or closely observed. Examples include:
 1. A Zoom-based professional development session
 2. An asynchronous LMS course or module (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard)
 3. A tele-coaching or virtual mentoring experience
 4. A hybrid professional learning community (online + in-person)
 5. An online preservice teacher preparation course
- c. Analyze the Experience Using Four Critical Lenses



- i. Your analysis should go beyond personal preference and focus on how technology structures learning. Use scholarly concepts from adult learning theory (e.g., andragogy, transformative learning, social constructivism) and educational technology frameworks (e.g., Community of Inquiry, TPACK, Universal Design for Learning) to support your discussion.
 1. Lens 1: Participation
 - a. Who can participate fully?
 - b. Who participates minimally or not at all?
 - c. How does technology invite or limit engagement?
 2. Lens 2: Interaction
 - a. How do learners interact with content, facilitators, and each other?
 - b. Is interaction dialogic, one-way, or optional?
 - c. How is feedback given and received?
 3. Lens 3: Power and Voice
 - a. Who controls the agenda, pacing, and conversation?
 - b. Whose voices are amplified?
 - c. How is learner expertise acknowledged or ignored?
 4. Lens 4: Access and Equity
 - a. Technology access (devices, bandwidth, platforms)
 - b. Time flexibility and cognitive load
 - c. Language, disability, or cultural barriers
 - d. Assumptions about learner availability or comfort with technology
 - d. Students should submit a 4–6 page paper (double-spaced, following APA 7th edition guidelines) that includes a clear description of the selected learning experience, detailing its context, participants, and the technology used. The paper should then provide a critical analysis through the four lenses—Participation, Interaction, Power and Voice, and Access and Equity—supported by scholarly references to adult learning theory and educational technology frameworks. Additionally, include the completed analysis checklist summarizing your observations, and conclude with recommendations for improvement based on your findings and theoretical insights.
- 3. Designing and Implementing Adult Learning in EI/ECSE**
- a. Graduate students will design, deliver, and evaluate an adult learning experience for EI/ECSE professionals or families using the *ECPC Evidence-Based Adult Learning Planning Tool*. Students will apply evidence-based adult learning practices—including introduction, illustration, job-embedded practice, guidance, feedback, reflection, and follow-up—identified in the ECPC tool. The assignment engages students in authentic collaboration with adults who work with or care for young children with disabilities (e.g., early childhood teachers, paraprofessionals, service providers, and family members).
 - b. Topic Selection & Goal Setting



- i. Choose a relevant EI/ECSE practice (examples: family coaching strategies, data collection for progress monitoring, embedding interventions in routines, understanding IFSP goals). Define:
 1. Intended adult learner group (teachers, paraprofessionals, providers, caregivers).
 2. Specific learning goals for adult participants.
 3. Relevance to their daily work or caregiving responsibilities.
- c. Design the Learning Experience Using the ECPC Tool
 - i. Using the six adult learning components from the ECPC planning tool, design the session as follows:
 1. Introduction: Explain the practice or concept clearly. Identify why it matters for EI/ECSE and how it benefits children and families.
 2. Illustration: Show the practice through examples such as:
 - a. video clips
 - b. modeled demonstrations
 - c. sample materials
 - d. visual walkthroughs
 3. Active, Authentic Job-Embedded Practice: Create an opportunity for the adult learners to practice the skill in a context that mirrors their real work:
 - a. role-play a home visit conversation
 - b. analyze a real classroom routine
 - c. practice writing or reviewing an IFSP strategy
 - d. rehearse giving feedback to families
 4. Guidance: Plan how you (as instructor/trainer/coach) will prompt, guide, and scaffold the adult's implementation.
 5. Performance Feedback: Determine how you will provide supportive, specific feedback that reinforces strengths and clarifies adjustments.
 6. Reflection, Understanding, and Self-Monitoring: Develop structured reflection activities—for example:
 - a. brief written reflections
 - b. paired discussions
 - c. self-assessment checklists
 - d. debrief conversations



7. Duration, Intensity, and Follow-Up: Outline how learners will receive ongoing support to transfer skills into practice (e.g., check-ins, resource materials, short follow-up meeting).
- d. Deliver the Learning Experience
 - i. Conduct a 30–60 minute learning session with at least one adult learner (more if appropriate). Collect artifacts such as:
 1. session agenda
 2. materials used
 3. participant work samples
 4. notes on learner responses
 - e. Evaluation & Reflection Paper
 - i. Submit a 4–6 page analysis that includes:
 1. Alignment to ECPC Adult Learning Practices: Describe how each practice was included, referencing specific components of the tool.
 2. Description of Adult Learners & Context: Share relevant demographic/professional information without identifying individuals.
 3. Evidence of Learning: Present data or observations demonstrating whether learning goals were met.
 4. Self-Evaluation: Reflect on:
 - a. communication and coaching strengths
 - b. challenges
 - c. cultural and contextual considerations
 - d. what you would revise next time
 5. Implications for EI/ECSE Practice: Discuss how this assignment informs your future role as a provider, educator, or collaborator in early childhood special education.
- 4. Final Presentation – Adult Learning in Practice**
- a. This culminating assignment requires students to synthesize course concepts and apply them to a real-world or hypothetical adult learning context. Students will demonstrate mastery of adult learning theories, equity principles, technology integration, and assessment strategies through a professional presentation.
 - b. Context Description



- i. Identify and describe an adult learning environment you have experienced or observed (e.g., higher education seminar, professional development session, coaching/mentoring program).
- ii. Include details about:
 1. Learner demographics
 2. Purpose and goals of the learning experience
 3. Delivery format (in-person, online, hybrid)
- c. Theoretical Analysis
 - i. Apply at least two major adult learning theories discussed in the course (e.g., Kolb's Experiential Learning, Mezirow's Transformative Learning, Knowles' Andragogy, Bandura's Social Learning).
 - ii. Explain how these theories are evident—or absent—in the chosen context.
 - iii. Use references to support your analysis.
- d. Equity & Inclusion Audit
 - i. Conduct an equity analysis using the Representation, Access, Power & Voice, Outcomes framework from the syllabus.
 - ii. Identify one immediate action and one systemic advocacy goal to improve equity in the context.
- e. Technology & Engagement
 - i. Evaluate the role of technology in the learning experience using at least one educational technology framework (e.g., Community of Inquiry, TPACK, UDL).
 - ii. Discuss how technology influenced participation, interaction, and learner engagement.
- f. Recommendations & Reflection
 - i. Provide two evidence-based recommendations for improving the learning experience.
 - ii. Reflect on how this analysis informs your future practice as an educator or leader in adult learning.

Course Grading

Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the indicated date. Late assignments without previous written approval of the instructor will incur a 50% penalty for the first time and lost all points beyond. This instructor and learners are required to adhere to the University's Academic Integrity policy. Any plagiarism will not be tolerated and referred to the Academic Integrity Office. And the learners will be given an "F" in the course and be recommended to the Student Conduct Office.

Learners will be evaluated based upon the assignments described below. The plus/minus grading system and scale is as follows:



Letter Grade	Grade Range
A	93 and above
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	59 and below

Course Grading Systems

Component	Weight for final grade
	30%
	30%
	30%
	20%

Resources

Resources to supplement the Syllabus:

- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Assessment & Assignment Alignment](#)
- [Classroom Assessment Techniques](#)
- [Course Delivery](#)
- [Designing Your Course](#)
- [First Day of Class](#)
- [Instructor Materials](#)
- [Online Instruction](#)
- [Rubrics & Assessments](#)

Journals in EI/ECSE

Below are examples of journals that publish topics about EI/ECSE. Faculty may want to explain how to use articles to support practice and to examine current research. Clarify the difference between practitioner-based journals and research-based journals.

- *Child Development*
- *Journal of Early Intervention*
- *Journal of Pediatrics*
- *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*
- *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*
- *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*
- *Pediatric Research*
- *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*



Early Childhood Intervention
Doctoral Consortium

Creating Leaders in Intensive Interventions for Infants, Young Children and Their Families

- *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*
- *Young Exceptional Children*



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