



Educational Studies (EDST) 630

Transformative Learning for Social Change (Revision 5)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#) for the current revision

Delivery mode:

Grouped study with eText

Credits:

3

Area of study:

Arts

Prerequisites:

None

Precluded:

None

Faculty:

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Notes:

Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

Since classical times, education has been identified as fulfilling the contradictory roles of both *reproducing* as well as *transforming* the existing social order. In this course, we will specifically examine the theory and practice of transformative education and learning within the field of adult education, particularly attentive to those approaches that are meant to catalyze social and individual transformation.

Transformation and stories of transformation have been a consistent part of the human venture. From the 1970s, theories of transformative education emerged to understand this type of adult learning. Transformative learning has often been considered the cutting edge of adult education theorizing, as its purpose has related to evolving visions of “progressive” social change as well as being a quintessentially adult experience.

As visions for and processes of social and individual change evolve, so has the theorizing of transformative education. It is this story that this course engages. Over the past forty-five years, modernist assumptions have been implicit in the theory; however, ongoing critiques and new theories introduced into the field now go far beyond modernist assumptions, captured in both your textbooks.

Part I of this course first provides an overview of the state of the field. Second, to understand social change, this course presents existing theories about how social change occurs, working from the discipline of sociology, notably the sociology of social change. We will review the three dominant approaches to social change—the *functionalist*, *interactionist*, and *conflict/radical* schools. We will also interrogate the concept that underpins the idea of *transformation*, namely *progress* in all its modernist clothing. While this will just be a brief introduction, it is important to know that the sociology discipline informs the broader context of the course, particularly modern theories of social change.

There have been three waves of theorizing in the transformative education field. **Part II** of the course presents the first wave of theorizing, primarily the work of Jack Mezirow, Paulo Freire, and the Jungian approach. Each theorist engages critical theory and critical pedagogy in some way; thus Part II includes a brief examination of critical pedagogy in adult education. Each unit will examine how transformation is conceived and how transformative learning processes might best be facilitated.

Part III presents the second wave of voices who have been contending and extending existing theory, including feminist, antiracist, and anticlassist voices. This will introduce you to the major critiques and debates about the goals of transformative learning (moral, political, social, and economic) and if transformative learning occurs primarily within the individual or in social life. These new voices also incorporate discussions of the body, emotion, imagination, creativity, and spirituality. This will introduce you to what a process of transformative learning involves as well as pedagogies for facilitating transformative learning. Part III will also provide more context on the social changes that have occurred in the past fifty years, the role of social movements in social change, and the linkage between transformative learning and social movements. The primary task is for you to develop your own critique of transformative education and the underlying social change theories and to examine the implicit goals, social interests, power relations, ideological assumptions, and visions of a good society embedded in each approach.

Part IV presents the third wave of transformative learning theory that focusses on moving beyond modernist assumptions within conventional theories and onto pathways into new theorizing, particularly derived from Indigenous, spiritual, ecological, and non-Western ways of knowing. This section places the role of transformative education squarely within the challenges of the epochal shift we are currently undergoing as a human species.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to

1. describe the state of the field of transformative education and learning;
2. identify and critique the dominant modern theories of social change as they relate to transformative learning;
3. detail the links between critical theory, critical pedagogy, and transformative education;
4. discuss in depth the key concepts and evolving debates around Mezirow's transformative learning theory;
5. discuss in depth Freire's contribution to radical adult education, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning theory;
6. discuss in depth the Jungian contribution to transformative learning

- theory including key concepts and pedagogical approaches;
7. outline the principal tenets of the feminist, antiracist, anticlassist, ecological, Indigenous, and spiritual perspectives on transformation education;
 8. explicate some of the new pathways introduced into the transformative learning field;
 9. outline the importance and impact of a variety of modalities in the pedagogy of transformative learning;
 10. explain the new theories that are emerging in this moment of epochal change, namely posthumanism and relationality;
 11. understand and discuss some competing agendas in adult education over the past fifty years;
 12. demonstrate a high level of critical reflection on your lived experience, your learning process, and the habits of mind/assumptions that you carry as a learner;
 13. demonstrate a high level of analytical reflection about the content of the course; and
 14. carry out an integrative analysis of a topic pertaining to transformative education and your reflective process in the course.

Outline

EDST 630 is divided into four parts and thirteen units:

Part I: Theories of Social Change

Unit 1: Transformative Learning: State of the Field

Unit 2: Modern Theories of Social Change

Part II: First Wave of Transformative Learning Theory

Unit 3: Mezirow's Theory of Perspective Transformation

Unit 4: Transformative Learning and Critical Pedagogy

Unit 5: Freirean Perspectives

Unit 6: Jungian Perspectives

Part III: Second Wave of Transformative Learning Theory

Unit 7: Race, Gender, and Power in Transformative Education

Unit 8: Critique of First Wave Theorizing

Unit 9: Social Change and Social Movements

Part IV: Third Wave of Transformative Learning Theory

Unit 10: Integrative Critique of Modernity

Unit 11: Indigenous and Spiritual Ways of Knowing

Unit 12: Ecological Perspectives

Unit 13: Emerging Future of Transformation and Transformative Learning

Evaluation

Please be prepared to devote the time necessary to complete the various activities in this course:

- reading all the readings actively and critically *before* they are to be discussed;
- engaging at least one reflection question offered each week in your journal;
- researching actively on topics and authors presented in the course;
- reflecting actively on your lived experience and social issues throughout the course;
- participating actively in online discussion by writing succinct, thoughtful answers to discussion questions and student postings; and
- writing/designing reflective, theoretical, and integrative papers/projects.


You are expected to demonstrate a willingness to work and to participate in class activities for the benefit of all. This is one pathway for collective learning and deepening understanding.

To be successful in this course, you are required to

- come prepared for, and participate actively in, the weekly online discussion;
- choose one course reading and write/design an 800- to 1000-word critical reflection, offer two class discussion questions, and moderate your hosted discussion in the forum;

- choose one course reading and write/design at least a 500- to 800-word reflection that is creatively presented, offer two class discussion questions, and moderate your hosted discussion in the forum;
- prepare a final 3000- to 4000-word integrative paper or equivalent creative project that incorporates theory, pedagogy, and your own reflection on the topic; and
- prepare a final 800- to 1000-word reflective epilogue on your journey through the course and on the nature of transformative learning, attached to the integrative paper/project (due in Week 15).

Each assignment will receive detailed, descriptive feedback from your instructor to help you develop your skills during and beyond the course.

To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 percent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts-Interdisciplinary Studies [grading system](#) . Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of F in one course, or a grade of C in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1: Participation in weekly online forum discussion	20%
Assignment 2: Critical review and moderation of online discussion	20%
Assignment 3: Creative review and moderation of online discussion	20%
Assignment 4a: Integrative (theory/pedagogy/reflection) paper/project (25%); Assignment 4b: Reflective epilogue (15%)	40%

Activity	Weight
Total	100%

Materials

O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A., & O'Connor, M. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning: Essays on theory and praxis*.

Palgrave.  (eText)

Nicolaides, A., Eschenbacher, S., Buergelt, P. T., Gilpin-Jackson, Y., Welch, M., & Misawa, M. (eds). (2022). *The Palgrave handbook of learning for transformation*.

Palgrave Macmillan.  (eBook)

eText

Registration in this course includes an electronic textbook. For more information on **electronic textbooks** [↗](#), please refer to our **eText Initiative site** [↗](#).

Other Materials

All other course materials can be found online.

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) [↗](#)
- › [Focus Areas](#) [↗](#)
- › [Courses](#) [↗](#)
- › [Fees and Funding](#) [↗](#)

without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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View **previous revision** 
