

Boise State University
Instructional & Performance Technology (IPT) Department
IPT535 – Principles of Adult Learning (4 credits)

This is a synopsis of the course syllabus intended to provide an overview of the course. Please note that details of the course may change from semester to semester and that the syllabus used during a given semester takes precedence over this summary.

General Course Description

This course is designed to help students discover how principles and theories of adult learning can be applied to instructional design to create effective learning and training outcomes. Students will explore conditions, both internal and external to the learner, which are known to affect learning outcomes. In addition, alternative methods, strategies, and technologies that increase instructional effectiveness in various learning situations and circumstances will be explored.

Textbooks and Readings

Clark, R. C. (2008). *Building expertise: Cognitive methods for training and performance improvement* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Pfeiffer. ISBN: 978-0-7879-8844-9

Mager, R. F., & Pipe, P. (1997). *Analyzing performance problems or you really oughta wanna* (3rd ed.). Atlanta: The Center for Effective Performance, Inc. ISBN: 1-879-618-17-6

Stolovitch, H. D., & Keeps, E. J. (2002). *Telling ain't training*. Alexandria, VA: ASTD. ISBN: 1-56286-328-2

A set of readings from professional books and journals

Course Goals

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Identify and describe basic principles from a variety of adult learning theories (assessed by case study assignments, comparative organizer assignment)
2. Compare and contrast the contributions that these theories have made to the fields of instructional design and performance technology (assessed by class participation, final paper)
3. Select appropriate principles derived from given theories and apply them to a practical learning situation (assessed by case study assignments, final paper)

Course Assignments

Class Participation (Individual Assignment)

The weekly discussions and assignments about different principles and theories of adult learning are central to this course. You are expected to participate in the class by:

- Completing weekly assignments
- Participating in weekly discussions by posting on at least two different days with a minimum of three messages.

- Contribute substantively during discussions by contributing clear, concise, quality messages that move the discussions along.

Article Review (Individual Assignment)

You will be required to use the BSU online library to find and review a scholarly article that pertains to one of the topics discussed in class: behaviorism, cognitive information processing, meaningful reception learning, schema theory/mental models, metacognition, situated cognition, cognitive apprenticeship, communities of practice, andragogy, self-directed learning, or transformational learning.

Case Studies (Team Assignment)

You will work in teams on two assigned case studies during the semester. For the case studies, you will be taking on the role of an instructor and developing a case study designed to illustrate key principles from one or more of the theories discussed. Each case should include:

- Case description
- Reflective questions
- Outline of a potential solution

Comparative Organizer (Individual Assignment)

You will be asked to create a table comparing the main learning theories studied during the semester (listed above under “Article Review”).

By creating short entries in each cell in your own words, you will synthesize what you've learned about each theory and demonstrate an understanding of the key points that differentiate each theory from the others.

Final Paper (Individual Assignment)

The goal of the final paper is to give you an opportunity to reflect, synthesize, explore, and attempt to apply some of the principles and theories discussed in class. You will pick some aspect of adult learning that is of particular interest to you and use that as the basis of your paper. The key to this assignment is to follow your own curiosity and use the paper as an opportunity to explore something related to adult learning theory that you'd like to learn more about. The paper will be relatively short, 10-20 pages, including references.

Time Required

A general rule of thumb is that you should expect to invest approximately 45 hours per credit during a semester. IPT535 is a 4-credit course taught during a 15 week semester. This means that you should expect to invest approximately 180 hours (45 x 4) on this course. This translates to approximately 12 hours per week (180 ÷ 15 weeks). Remember that this is an approximation. You might spend more or less time on this course depending on your relevant work experience and your familiarity with the content.