EDUC 268C CHAT AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Fall 2005

Professor: Gordon Wells
Office: Soc. Sci. 1, 233 email: gwells@ucsc.edu
Homepage: http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells
Office hours: to be determined, and by appointment.

Course Outline

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the work of Vygotsky and other cultural-historical-activity theorists (CHAT) and to explore its utility as a framework for examining issues of educational practice and research. To this end, we shall proceed on three fronts.

We shall engage in the reading and critical discussion of papers that have been selected with the aim of developing an understanding of CHAT as a theoretical framework within which to explore the relationships between Vygotsky's theory of learning and development and a) classroom practices of learning-and-teaching, b) student and program evaluation, and c) teachers' professional development. In these discussions, particular attention will be given to the use by CHAT theorists of such key terms as 'internalization', 'apprenticeship', 'scaffolding', and 'the zone of proximal development' and an attempt will be made to evaluate their relevance to such current emphases in educational practice as 'constructivism', 'cooperative learning', and 'authentic assessment'.

The course will also focus on the potential utility of CHAT as a tool for addressing issues in the conceptualization and conduct of educational research. Course members will be encouraged to identify an issue of educational practice or research that is of particular interest to them and to plan, conduct and evaluate a small-scale inquiry that applies some of the principles encountered in the theory to the selected issue.

Finally, the conduct of the seminar, as itself an example of learning-and-teaching, will be subjected to critical and reflective discussion in the hope that theory and practice will be related in a dialectic through which both are refined and extended.

Evaluation

Student evaluation will be based on the following assignments:

short written contributions during the course (20%)

an oral presentation on one of the issues considered (20%)

term paper: an inquiry into a selected issue of practice or research (60%).
Course members will be expected to use Knowledge Forum as a form of dialogue journal in order to participate in out-of-class discussion of weekly readings and in response to messages from the Internet sociocultural network (XMCA).

Course members will also be expected to take responsibility (with assistance) for leading part of one session on a topic that is of particular interest to them. Time will also be given to a consideration of research issues raised by individual course members' projects.

Set Texts


Other Recommended Texts


Proposed Syllabus

Week 1  An introduction to some of the key concepts:
the genetic approach; the role of tools; the relationship between intermental and
intramental activities; the zone of proximal development.


Stetsenko, A. (2004) Tool and sign in the development of the child. Introduction to
Section VI: Scientific Legacy. In R.W. Rieber & D.K. Robinson (eds.) The Essential

psychology. Developmental Psychology, 28 (4).

Additional Reading


Week 2  The social origin of higher mental functions: from intermental to intramental.


Wertsch, J.V. (1985) The social origin of higher mental functions. In Wertsch, J.V.,

Oxford University Press.

and Activity, 2: 2-10.
Week 3. **Semiotic Mediation**: The role of language and other semiotic tools in sociocultural theory.


Additional Reading


Week 4. **Spontaneous and Scientific Concepts**: What is the relationship?


Additional Reading

*Mind, Culture and Activity, 5 (2).* (not included in reader).

Week 5. The Zone of Proximal Development: How should we understand it?


Additional Reading


Additional Reading

Week 7. Activity Theory: An approach to analysis.


Additional reading


*Mind, Culture and Activity, 12*(1), 2005. (not included in reader).

Week 8. Communities of Practice: Situated learning and teaching


Additional Reading

Week 9. Sociocultural theory and contemporary educational research: learning-and-teaching in the classroom.


Additional Reading


Week 10. Student Selected Topics
BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Journals and Online Resources**

**Mind, Culture and Activity.**
Details at: http://communication.ucsd.edu/MCA/Journal/MCA_journal_index.html

**Email Discussion: XMCA**
Details at: http://communication.ucsd.edu/MCA-Mail/index.html
Archive, arranged by months, at:
http://communication.ucsd.edu/MCA-Mail/xmcmail.9805.dir/index.html

**DICEP Homepage** http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/~ctd/DICEP/

http://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/

http://www.kolar.org/vygotsky/