

LEES 604 Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Methods
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University of Tennessee Knoxville
Instructor Information
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*Please note that the instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus during the semester and participants will be notified through this website and BlackBoard Announcements

Meeting Time Monday 5:45PM- 8:35PM Location TBA

Office Hours Monday 3:45PM-4:45PM (Online or Face-to-Face), Other appointments can be arranged upon request

Course Description

This course intended for doctoral students and advanced master's students who are interested in Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Qualitative Research. In this course participants will examine works of Russian psychologists during the 1920s such as Vygotsky and Leontiev, and also works of contemporary CHAT scholars from Russia, Scandinavia, and North America. Participants will gain a theoretical and methodological understanding of how to approach human development and learning as a complex activity intricately tied to the sociocultural context. Participants will engage in qualitative data analysis of complex human activity through Activity Systems Analysis. Finally, participants will prepare a research proposal of a topic of interest from a CHAT perspective.

Course Objectives

By engaging in course activities, participants will:

1. Gain an understanding of fundamental theoretical assumptions in CHAT,
2. Conceptualize CHAT as a qualitative research framework,
3. Complete a qualitative data analysis of complex human activity from a CHAT perspective with Activity Systems Analysis, and
4. Participate in an effective professional communication with peers through oral and written reports.

Required Text

- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Daiute, C. (2013). *Narrative Inquiry: A Dynamic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2010). *Activity Systems Analysis Methods: Understanding Complex Learning Environments*. New York, NY: Springer.

Recommended

- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition* (6th ed.). American Psychological Association (APA).
- For APA style you can also examine the Purdue OWL APA Formatting and Style Guide
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Course Resources

BlackBoard <https://bblearn.utk.edu/>

MyUTK <https://my.utk.edu/>

Graduate Certificate in Qualitative Research <http://epc.utk.edu/graduate-certificates/>

Graduate Catalog: <catalog.utk.edu/index.php?catoid=7/> (Listing of academic programs, courses, and policies)

Hilltopics: <dos.utk.edu/hilltopics> (Campus and academic policies, procedures and standards of conduct)

Student Success Center <studentsuccess.utk.edu> (Academic support resources)

Instructor Generated Resources

[10 Habits of Being a Successful Graduate Student and Beyond](#)

[How do I know when an article is peer Reviewed?](#)

[Peer Reviewed Article Matrix](#)

Resources for Searching Journal Articles

Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com/>

UTK Library <http://www.lib.utk.edu/>

Resources to Monitor and Available Through UT Library

Culture and Psychology <http://cap.sagepub.com/>

Journal of Russian and East European Psychology (available through EBSCOhost from 2001)

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/mrpo20>

Human Development

<http://content.karger.com/ProdukteDB/produkte.asp?Aktion=JournalHome&ProduktNr=224249>

Learning, Culture and Social Interaction <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/learning-culture-and-social-interaction>

Mind, Culture, and Activity http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hmca20/current#.U-y_c0hM7hw

Centers and Organizations Monitor

Oxford Center for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/osat/>

CRADLE: Center for Activity, Development and Learning <http://www.helsinki.fi/cradle/index.htm>

International Society o Cultural and Activity Research <http://www.iscar.org/>

LCSO: Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition <http://lchc.ucsd.edu/>

CHAT: Center for Activity Theory <http://www.chat.kansai-u.ac.jp/english/index.html>

XMCA Discussion Forum <http://lchc.ucsd.edu/mca/>

Course Communications

You will regularly receive course related communications from the instructor through email and through BlackBoard announcements. It is your responsibility to make sure that your university email account is in working condition. If you have technical issues or need help troubleshooting, please contact OIT at <remedy.utk.edu/contact/> or call the helpdesk at 865-974-9900. You should expect your instructor to respond to your message within 24 hours on regular business days during the week and 48 hours on weekends and university holidays. If you do not hear back from the instructor, please send another message or call 865-974-7712.

University Civility Statement

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other's well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

Disability Services

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 2227 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. You can find more information about ODS at <http://ods.utk.edu/>.

Assignments

Class Participation 200 points

Post on Blackboard Discussion

You are expected to come to class and participate every class session. Each class session students will be assigned the following roles:

- Article Summarizer and Discussion Leader
 - responsible for providing summaries of the assigned readings, and
 - responsible for providing questions regarding articles and leading the discussion in class
- Discussion Summarizer
 - responsible for summarizing class discussion and reporting to class

When you are assigned one of the above roles, you must actively participate in class fulfilling your role. This type of role assignment related to class readings will help you become an informed reader of the literature in the field.

CHAT Book Review and Presentation 300 points

Post on Blackboard Discussion

You have to prepare a book review that represents your understanding of CHAT. You must obtain approval from the instructor on which book to review based on your interest. The purpose of this project is for you to engage in an in-depth reading of a theory-based primary source literature and reflect on what you have learned in this class. Additionally, you will lead class discussion related to the book you read and this will provide you with experience facilitating discussions in a doctoral course. Your book review should not exceed 2500 words double-spaced using 1-inch margins 12-point Times New Roman font excluding title page and references following APA style guide 6th edition. If you exceed the required word count your work will not be read past that point. On the title page please include the exact word count of your document excluding the title page and reference.

Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis 300 points

Share on Evernote

We will engage in a qualitative activity systems analysis of a common topic as a class. We will all engage in data collection, analysis, and writing findings. You will share your work to class with Evernote, so you need to open a free account at <https://evernote.com/>.

CHAT Research Proposal and Presentation 200 points

Submit on Blackboard Assignments

You will develop a research proposal that presents a literature review and discuss a topic of your interest related to your field of study within the context of CHAT. You will build a convincing argument for conducting a study on the topic with CHAT. In your discussions you need to articulate the theoretical/practical value of your study, the importance of your topic to your field, your research questions, your methods, and what new knowledge your work will contribute to your field and CHAT. This paper is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding of your topic of interest, your understanding of CHAT, and evaluate how CHAT framework can help you answer research questions that otherwise may be difficult. Your proposal should not exceed 2500 words double-spaced using 1-inch margins 12-point Times New Roman font excluding title page and references following APA style guide 6th edition. If you exceed the required word count your work will not be read past that point. On the title page please include the exact word count of your document excluding the title page and reference.

You have to present your proposal to the class. For the presentation prepare a 2-page summary of your project. You need to be able to express the essence of what you wrote in your paper in full sentences in this summary. You do not need to prepare an electronic presentation unless you choose that it is necessary. Each participant will

provide the 2-page summary to the class prior to the presentation date. The participants will come to class on the day of the presentation having read summaries, and be prepared to provide constructive feedback.

Course Assessment

Assignments and Total Possible Points

Assignments	Possible Points
Class Participation	200
CHAT Book Review and Presentation	300
Qualitative and Activity Systems Analysis	300
CHAT Research Proposal and Presentation	200
Total Possible Points	1000pts

Assignment of Final Grade

Grades are updated regularly in Blackboard. Final grades will be given according to the UT grading scale:

A=900-1000 B+=850-899 B=800-849 C+=750-799 C=700-749 D=600-699 F=599 and below

A Note Regarding Letter Grades

Completing all assignments and meeting the minimum expectations of the course constitutes “B” work; truly outstanding/superior work constitutes “A” work; and failing to meet the minimum expectations will result in a grade of “C” or lower. Spending a lot of time on course requirements (or having a history of being an “A” student) may not, in and of itself, necessarily result in an “A” grade.

Criteria

A= Superior performance, B+= Better than satisfactory performance, B=Satisfactory performance, C+=Less than satisfactory performance, C= Performance well below the standard expected of graduate students., D=Clearly unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements, F=Extremely unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements

Academic Honesty

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all members of the academic community. An honor statement is included on the application for admission and readmission. The applicant’s signature acknowledges that adherence is confirmed. The honor statement declares:

An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.

You are expected to complete your own work. You cannot re-submit work here that was done for previous classes.

Plagiarism

Students shall not plagiarize. Plagiarism is using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit. The undocumented use of someone else’s words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is a serious offense subject to disciplinary action that may include failure in a course and/or dismissal from the university. Some examples of plagiarism are

- Using without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source.
- Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge).
- Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge).

- Submitting work, either in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Extreme caution should be exercised by students involved in collaborative research to avoid questions of plagiarism. If in doubt, students should check with the major professor and the Dean of the Graduate School about the project. Plagiarism will be investigated when suspected and prosecuted if established.

For this class, plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment and a meeting with your academic adviser.

Academic writing conventions and abilities

All assignments must conform to the style and reference notation format outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. The APA manual is an essential tool for graduate school academic writing. Please study it carefully and refer to it often. If you are unsure about particular APA formatting and citation rules, refer to the manual.

The ability to write in an appropriate academic manner is critical to successful graduate study. If you find that you need assistance with your writing, please visit the university's free Writing Center housed in the English department: <http://web.utk.edu/~english/writing/writing.shtml>. They do not proofread or edit your work, but they can help with idea development and organization – key elements of successful academic writing.

Resources and Responsibilities

It is assumed that this course will "cost" you extra resources in time and expense. Any new skill such as computer use or graphics design should be considered time-consuming and most work will be done outside of the regular class period. It is further assumed that those who enter the course have a wide range of experience and expertise in the field. Ownership of a microcomputer is not required; however, access to one is a necessity. We will be using both Macs and PCs in this course.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time, attend all classes, and participate in class discussions, small group activities, exercises, and projects. You may not receive class participation credit for missed classes and are responsible for missed information. However, emergencies can occur at any time and the instructor reserves the right, based on the individual situation, to accommodate a student with any emergency. A student missing class must complete all assignments to the satisfaction of the instructor before credit will be issued. Absences are not considered excused for job interviews, vacations, regular doctor's appointments, or general lack of planning. Students are granted one "free" absence, regardless of the situation. However multiple absences and excessive tardiness are considered unacceptable for success in this course and can be cause for a final grade reduction. Attendance will be taken every class session, and every unexcused absence after the "free" absence will cost you a 10 point deduction from your final grade

Tardiness

Tardiness is disruptive and rude to your instructor and your fellow students and reflects badly on you - it can speak about your attitude and work ethic. Students arriving late to class should wait until the instructor, fellow student, or guest speaker is finished talking and should take a seat close to the door. Excessive tardiness = 20 minutes late more than two times.

Classroom Etiquette

While your instructor, your peer, or guest lecturer is conducting a presentation you are expected to pay complete attention to what they are presenting. It is not only rude, but also distracting to the presenter and other students in class when you are working on the computer, personal portable devices, cell phones, or behaving in any manner that is disruptive to them. If you are engaging in activities such as surfing the web, writing a paper, reading/writing email, working on class assignments, answering your cell phone, Skyping or any other disruptive activities in class you will be asked to leave for the day. If your disrespectful and disruptive behaviors continue, you will lose points from course participation, which will affect negatively on your final grade for this course. Make sure that your cell

phone and/or beeper are turned off or set on manner mode. Please inform the instructor before class session begins if your are experiencing circumstances that warrant your cell phone/beeper to be turned on, such as extreme weather conditions that may put your family members in danger.

Schedule

*Please note that readings must be completed by the date they appear in the schedule.

*All Assignments are due 11:59pm the day it is due, unless they are designated as items to bring to class.

Day	Date	Topic	Assignments/Readings
1	8/24	Course Expectations, Website, Blackboard, and Cultural Historical Activity Theory Introduction	Readings González Rey (2014) van Oers et al. (2008) Ch. 1 Yamagata-Lynch (2010) Ch. 2
2	8/31	Value of CHAT, Mediation, and Activity Systems Analysis	Readings Yamagata-Lynch (2010) Ch. 1 Mahn (2010) Vygotsky (1978) Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 1 Review class research topic for
3	9/14	Qualitative Research as a Semiotic Mediation Process	Readings Charmaz (2014) Ch. 10 Daiute (2014) Ch. 1 Wertsch (2007) Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 2 Collect and share data
4	9/21	Narrative Inquiry Design	Readings Bruner (1991) Daiute (2014) Ch. 2 & 7 Daiute (2008) Charmaz (2014) Ch. 2 Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 3 Collect more data and report on them
5	9/28	Activity Theory and Activity Systems Analysis a Closer Look	Readings Engeström (1993) Leontiev (1981) pp. 37-71 in (Wertsch originally published in 1972 Yamagata-Lynch (2007) Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 4 Share what you understand from the data

6	10/5	Narrative Data Analysis	<p>Readings Charmaz (2014) Ch. 5 & 6 Daiute (2014) Ch. 3, 5, & 6</p> <p>Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 5 Code data and identify themes</p>
7	10/12	Memo writing and Writing your Research Report Time for Finalizing Book Review	<p>Readings Charmaz (2014) Ch. 7 & 11</p> <p>Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 6 Write memos about methodology and thick description</p>
8	10/19	Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis and In-Depth Examples Time for Finalizing Book Review	<p>Readings Yamagata-Lynch (2010) Ch. 5 & 6 pp. 81-128 Engeström (1999) Engeström (2001)</p> <p>Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 7 Engage in Activity Systems Analysis</p>
9	10/26	CHAT Research Criticism and Reflections on Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis	<p>Readings Yamagata-Lynch (2010) Ch. 3</p> <p>Qualitative Activity Systems Analysis Task 8 Write and reflect on findings</p>
10	11/2	Participant Work Day--Book Review Preparations	<p>Readings No Assigned Readings</p> <p>Assignment CHAT Book Review----Share on Blackboard designated location by 11:59pm</p>
11	11/9	Book Review Presentations	<p>Readings Participant Book Review</p>
12	11/16	Book Review Presentations	<p>Readings Participant Book Review</p>
13	11/23	Participant Work Day--CHAT Research Proposal Draft	<p>Readings No Assigned Readings</p> <p>Assignments CHAT Research Proposal Draft</p>

14	11/30	CHAT Research Proposal Presentation	Readings No Assigned Readings Assignments CHAT Research Proposal CHAT Research Presentation
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Readings

Week 1

1. González Rey, F. L. (2014). Advancing further the history of Soviet psychology: Moving forward from dominant representations in Western and Soviet psychology. *History of Psychology*, 17(1),60–78. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0035565
2. van Oers, B. (2010). Learning and learning theory from a cultural-historical point of view. In B. van Oers, W. Wardekker, E. Elbers, & R. Van der Veer (Eds.). *The Transformation of Learning: Advances in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory*. (pp. 3-12). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
3. Text: Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2010)

Week 2

1. Mahn, H. (2010). Vygotsky's methodological approach: A blueprint for the future of psychology. In A. Toomela, & J. Valsiner, J. (Eds.). *Methodological Thinking in Psychology: 60 Years Gone Astray?* (pp. 297-323). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub.
2. Text: Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2010). *Activity Systems Analysis Methods: Understanding Complex Learning Environments*. New York, NY: Springer.
3. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Week 3

1. Text Charmaz (2014)
2. Text Daiute (2014)
3. Wertsch, J. V. (2007). Mediation. In H. Daniels, M. Cole, & J. V. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky* (pp. 178-192). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Week 4

1. Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1–21.
2. Daiute, C. (2008). The rights of children, the rights of nations: Developmental theory and the politics of children's rights. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(4), 701–723. doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00585.x
3. Text Daiute (2014)
4. Text Charmaz (2014)

Week 5

1. Engeström, Y. (1993). Developmental studies of work as a testbench of activity theory: The case of primary care medical practice. In S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.), *Understanding Practice: Perspectives on Activity and Context* (pp. 64–103). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
2. Leontiev, A. N. (1981). The problem of activity in psychology. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology* (pp. 37-71). New York: M. E. Sharpe.
3. Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2007). Confronting analytical dilemmas for understanding complex human interactions in design-based research from a Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 16(4), 451-484. doi:10.1080/10508400701524777.

Week 6

1. Text Charmaz (2014)
2. Text Daiute (2014)

Week 7

1. Text Charmaz (2014)

Week 8

1. Text: Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2010)
2. Engeström, Y. (1999). Expansive visibilization of work: An activity-theoretical perspective. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 8(1-2), 63–93. doi:10.1023/A:1008648532192

3. Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133–156. doi:10.1080/13639080020028747

Week 9

1. Text: Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2010)

Week 10

1. No Assigned Readings

Week 11

1. CHAT Book Review Papers

Week 12

1. CHAT Book Review Papers

Week 13

1. No Assigned Readings

Week 14

1. No Assigned Readings