

The Life and Works of L. S Vygotsky

Professor:

Vera P. John-Steiner

Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

Course Website: www.unm.edu/~vygotsky/courses.html

Course Description and Rationale:

This course will give participants the opportunity to study the work of Lev S. Vygotsky in depth. While Vygotsky has received increased attention recently, much of his work has remained inaccessible to the English speaking world. In the last few years, six volumes of his collected works have been published. This seminar will give participants the opportunity to read some of these works as well as selections from his seminal pieces that have been available for a longer period of time. A focus for the seminar will be an examination of Vygotsky's seminal concepts and their implications for education.

- ◆ **Course Assignments:**Peer exam (30%) -- Students will be asked to choose a topic of interest to them, do some additional reading on that topic and help lead a class discussion on it.
- ◆ Term project (50%) -- This project will give students the opportunity to explore an aspect of Vygotsky's work that is of particular interest to them. It is hoped that the product in this project will be of use in the classroom or in your research. This project will be open-ended and will allow for considerable creativity on your part. We will discuss the project at greater length in class.
- ◆ Class participation (20%).

Required Texts:

Vygotsky, Mind in Society (Harvard University Press).

Kozulin, Vygotsky's Psychology: A Biography of Ideas (Harvard University Press).

Lee and Smagorinsky, Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research (Cambridge University Press).

The Life and Works of Vygotsky

Course Schedule

* Found in course packet

Vygotsky's Life and Times

"On Vygotsky's Research and Life" Ghita Vygotskaya

"The Historical Context of Vygotsky's Work: A Sociocultural Approach"

Rosa & Montero (especially pages 65-78)*

Methodological Approach

Mind in Society – Introduction, Chapter 5, Afterword

"Vygotsky's Use of History" Scribner*

For the interested student, there are additional readings available in the packet on Marxist theory

Overview of Themes in Vygotsky's Work

Kozulin – Prologue

“Sociocultural Approaches to Learning” John-Steiner & Mahn*

"Consciousness as a Problem for the Psychology of Behavior" Vygotsky*

Lee & Smagorinsky – Wertsch chapter

The State of Psychology in Vygotsky's Time

"Crisis in Psychology" – Sections 1-4 Vygotsky*

Kozulin – Chapter 7

Psychological Analysis of Learning and Development and Implications for Teaching

Mind in Society, Chapters 6 & 7

Functional Systems Approach

Selections from Luria's The Making of Mind & The Working Brain*

"A Functional Systems Approach to Concept Development"

John-Steiner, Meehan & Mahn*

Concept Formation

Thinking and Speech – Chapter 6*

“The Development of Scientific Concepts and Discourse”

Panofsky, John-Steiner & Blackwell

Thought and Language

Thinking and Speech – Chapter 7

Kozulin – Chapter 5

Development of Higher Psychological Processes

Mind in Society – Chapters 1-4

"The Problem of the Development of Higher Mental Functions" Vygotsky*

Play and Creativity

Mind in Society, Chapter on Play

“Imagination and Creativity in the Adolescent” Vygotsky*

Class presentations on:

- ◆ Vygotsky and bilingualism
- ◆ Zone of proximal development

- ◆ Emotional/affective factors in learning and development
- ◆ CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory)
- ◆ Math education
- ◆ Cultural psychology

ASSIGNMENTS

Peer Examination:

A peer examination is designed to give you the opportunity to seek out and reflect upon an issue of particular importance to you. It is an opportunity to explore and develop ideas that are meaningful to you and also of interest to your partner. The process requires that you combine individual research and discussion/negotiation with a partner (chosen in class) over a three-week period. During this time you will generate what you consider to be a major question regarding Vygotsky's cultural-historical framework. You and your partner will both be working on different issues; however, you will be formulating each of your questions collaboratively. The steps are:

- ◆ Select partner
- ◆ Meet outside class with your partner to discuss and negotiation question/topic (each of you has a separate question).
- ◆ Inform professor of two questions/topics.
- ◆ Conduct research and prepare notes illustrating the development of your ideas.
- ◆ Bring notes on peer exam date to use in discussing question/topic with your partner.
- ◆ You and your partner each will be given 15 to 25 minutes to discuss your answers.
- ◆ Write a short summary (3-5 pages) of conclusions from peer exam, which is due a week after peer. All references to materials outside the course syllabus need to be noted.

Suggestions for Term Project:

Your term project should address one of the following areas to which Vygotskian ideas have been applied:

- ◆ literacy
- ◆ math education
- ◆ learning and development
- ◆ cultural psychology
- ◆ creativity

You may do either a literature review, report on empirical studies that have revealed aspects of the area through a Vygotskian lens, or conduct a pilot study using a Vygotskian framework.