

Dead-Theorists Tell No-Tales – A Learning Theories Roleplaying Activity for Postgraduate Students

What is this activity?

This is an online-learning activity that will help you to consolidate your knowledge of learning theories by putting you in the shoes of one of the famous theorists you have learned about. Using a combination of an online journal (i.e. a blog) and a Facebook page you will pretend to be one of the theorists and engage in debate with your classmates, all of whom will also be taking on the role of a particular theorist. The idea is to imagine the type of debate and interaction that would occur if all of these theorists were alive today.

What will I learn?

The overall aim of this activity is to deepen your knowledge of the key learning theories of Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism. Once you have completed this activity you will be able to:

- Describe in detail the central ideas of the main theorists of Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism
- Compare and contrast the different theoretical stances;
- Outline the shortcomings and limitations of these theories;
- Reflect on the implications of these theories for your own teaching practice.

In addition, if you don't know how to use blogs and Facebook, you will also learn how to use this technology as part of the activity.

How will I learn?

This activity takes place online and is a largely self-directed activity which means that the responsibility for learning lies with you. Self-directed learning is a very effective way to learn and retain new information. All learners will sign up to a learning agreement that outlines what is expected of you in this activity. To further enhance your learning this activity uses roleplaying as a focus. There will be five one-hour online lectures that will provide you with a framework for further reading, research and scholarship.

What will I have to do?

You will be assigned the role of a notable theorist (living or dead) by the tutor, who will act as an online moderator (an E-moderator) for this activity. You will create a modern 'web presence' for that theorist centred on a blog and a Facebook page that outlines the key arguments of that theorist, supported with literature and scholarship. You will then engage in online debate with your classmates, with your debating stance informed by the theoretical perspective. The debate will take place according to modern Internet conventions – you will create and update a blog of your own, comment on the blogs of other theorists, post questions about their work, poke holes in their arguments and write reviews of other theorists. As you do this, you will deepen your knowledge of your 'assigned' theory as well as those of the other scholars and come to an understanding of the limitations and merits of the different theoretical positions.

What is roleplaying?

Roleplaying is not the same as acting. Taking part in this activity doesn't mean that you will spend the next few weeks dressed in a funny way, posting in 'an accent' or playing Second Life! The idea is that you should try and get inside their head, and imagine what they would say to promote their own theory, and critique those of the other scholars, if they were alive and working in the Internet age.

How long will this all take?

To complete this activity, you will have to dedicate a minimum of 25 hours online activity as well as about 20 hours of independent study. This is spaced out over three weeks, which means that you will need to commit about two hours a day to this activity during this period. We find that briefly checking posts in the morning and again at around lunchtime is a good strategy to keep up to date with the activity, before engaging in more detailed reflection and substantial posts later on in the evening.

How is this assessed?

This activity will be assessed by monitoring your activities and contributions to the online debate. You are required to 1) create a Facebook page and 2) a blog for your assigned theorist. You will also have to 3) maintain this blog, 4) post comments and questions to other theorist's Facebook pages and on the discussion forum and 5) respond to those posted on your own pages. Lastly, 6) after the activity is finished, you will have to complete and submit a 1000 word reflective piece, comparing the three learning theories.