

DePaul University
SCHOOL FOR NEW LEARNING
COURSE SYLLABUS
Spring 2009

FA 253 CONTRACT LEARNING

Faculty: Betta LoSardo
Oak Forest Campus
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Course Hours/Location: Oak Forest Campus
Saturday, 9 - 12
April 25, May 9, 23

Credit Hours: 2 Credit Hours

Course Description: SNL courses are designed specifically to focus on the competences of the SNL curriculum. Courses are competence based, and revolve around particular content. Students who are interested in a specific content area might not always find these interests addressed through SNL courses. Furthermore, students, particularly those nearing the completion of the SNL BA degree, find that they have some competences which are not addressed by SNL courses in the time frame necessary. Contract Learning is designed to address the needs of these students. In this course, students can address a variety of competences from the SNL competence framework, and can focus their work around content of their choice. By means of detailed and comprehensive contracts, learners will work with faculty to develop materials addressing their chosen competences. Students will work with David Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory first introduced in the Learning Assessment Seminar, to revisit their preferred methods of discovering and absorbing information. In class discussions, learners will also analyze their topics, and their competences to develop ways of expanding their knowledge and meeting the requirements of the competence statements. Contract Learning meets five times in April and May. Some sessions will be conducted via Blackboard. Precise schedules will depend on the number and interests of students registered for this experience.

Competences Offered:

In this section of Contract Learning students will negotiate competence choices with the teacher.

Competence Criteria:

Students will be required to address three major areas in this course. These are: development of learning contracts, reflection on educational learning styles, and research and reflection on issues related to their competence and content areas. Assessment will be based on meeting the demands of the competence statements negotiated between student and faculty. Details of assessment are listed below.

Expected Outcomes:

At the close of this course, students will:

1. be familiar with their own developing learning styles;
2. understand concepts involved in contract learning;
3. be able to analyze the requirements of some competences in the SNL competence framework;
4. be able to demonstrate their mastery of some competences from the SNL competence framework in writing.

Learning Materials:

Materials in this course will be largely researched and chosen by individual students themselves. There are some required readings, which are listed below. While some written materials will be provided, students will be expected to provide further books, journal articles, and interviews which fit closely with the demands of their competence statements.

Readings:

General materials will be provided in class. Students and faculty will choose content materials for individual competences.

Evaluation:

Students will be assessed on the following (described in greater detail below) methods of demonstration of competence:

1. Attendance at **class meetings**;
2. Development of **Competence Analysis Worksheet**;
3. Development of **Learning Contract** and accompanying **Log Sheets**;
4. Production of a **Research Paper** demonstrating mastery of the chosen competence;
5. Production of an **Annotated Bibliography** related to the issues raised in the competence statement.

1. Class meetings

All students must actively engage in discussions of their reading and research. Because assessment is based partly on discussion participation. Students must attend all meetings.

2. Competence Analysis Worksheet

In order to produce evidence of competence mastery, students must first analyze the meaning of the statement, and relate it to the content area of their choice. Students will designate areas of inquiry pertaining to the issues raised by their competence statements. Descriptive facets and an explanatory narrative accompany each statement of the SNL competence framework. Students will use the materials to design a preliminary plan for addressing the competence of their choice. These Worksheets will be constructed at the first meeting.

3. Learning Contract and Log Sheets

This document will provide a detailed plan for the achievement of competence. Building on the Competence Analysis Worksheet above, students will provide information on the questions they will try to answer, the types of research they will conduct, and the time frame for their submissions. Log Sheets will provide a vehicle for students to record their developing knowledge. Students will use these Log Sheets to develop their outlines for their Research Papers and to record details for the Annotated Bibliography.

4. Research paper demonstrating mastery of the chosen competence

Research papers will describe the learning achieved by the student throughout the duration of the experience. By answering the questions outlined in the Learning Contract defined above, students will demonstrate their mastery of the topic and of the competence statement. The paper should number approximately ten double spaced pages, and should demonstrate students' ability to reflect on issues raised in the course readings and discussions, to reach conclusions about those issues, and to relate these to the goals of the competence statements. All papers must conform to a recognized system of citation.

5. Annotated Bibliography

In the Annotated Bibliography students name and explain each of the approximately 5 - 10 sources used in the project. Bibliographic formats will be discussed in class. Entries will include a brief (four or five sentences) description of the source and its value to the research. Students should also include comments on the author, the topic, the timeliness, the methods used, the relevance to the topic, and the relative ease of understanding the material.

Tentative Topic Schedule:

First Meeting

Beginning a Research Project

- Topic One: The purpose of Contract Learning
Identifying a competence statement
Understanding the relationship between competence and
research topic
Competence Analysis Worksheet.
Keeping a Learning Log
- Topic Two: Issues in the Liberal Arts
Aesthetics and philosophy
Science and Technology
Psychology and Community Development

Learning Logs are due weekly after 1st meeting

- Second Meeting Developing an Outline
- Topic Three: Learning Styles and the Value of independent learning
Topic Four: Working from an Outline and Issues in constructing a research
paper
- Third Meeting Drafting, editing, proofreading
- Topic Five: Coming to closure: writing the final draft
Topic Six: Successful editing

**All materials are due via email (blosardo@depaul.edu) or at the Oak
Forest campus no later than Saturday 30 May.
Materials will be reviewed and left at your campus for pickup. If you would
like your materials mailed back to you, please include a stamped, self-
addressed envelope.**