
Planning, Designing and Evaluating Student Assignments

Eastern Illinois University

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A colleague asks for help...

It's two weeks before the opening of the fall semester. A new faculty member asks you to review her course goals and evaluation scheme for her introductory psychology course and make suggestions for improvement.

What suggestions would you make?

Course Goals:

1. To understand the breadth and scope of psychology
2. To approach problems as a psychologist would
3. To comprehend primary research

Evaluation Scheme:

Midterm 40%

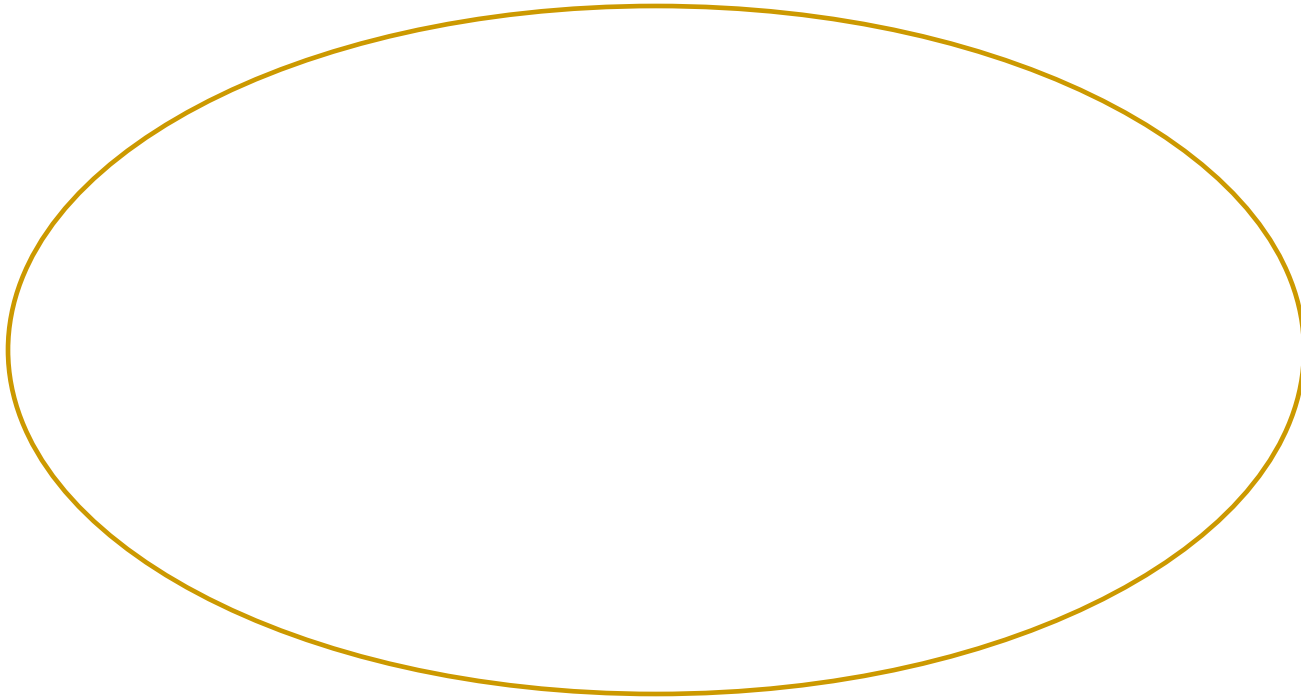
Final 50%

Class participation 10%



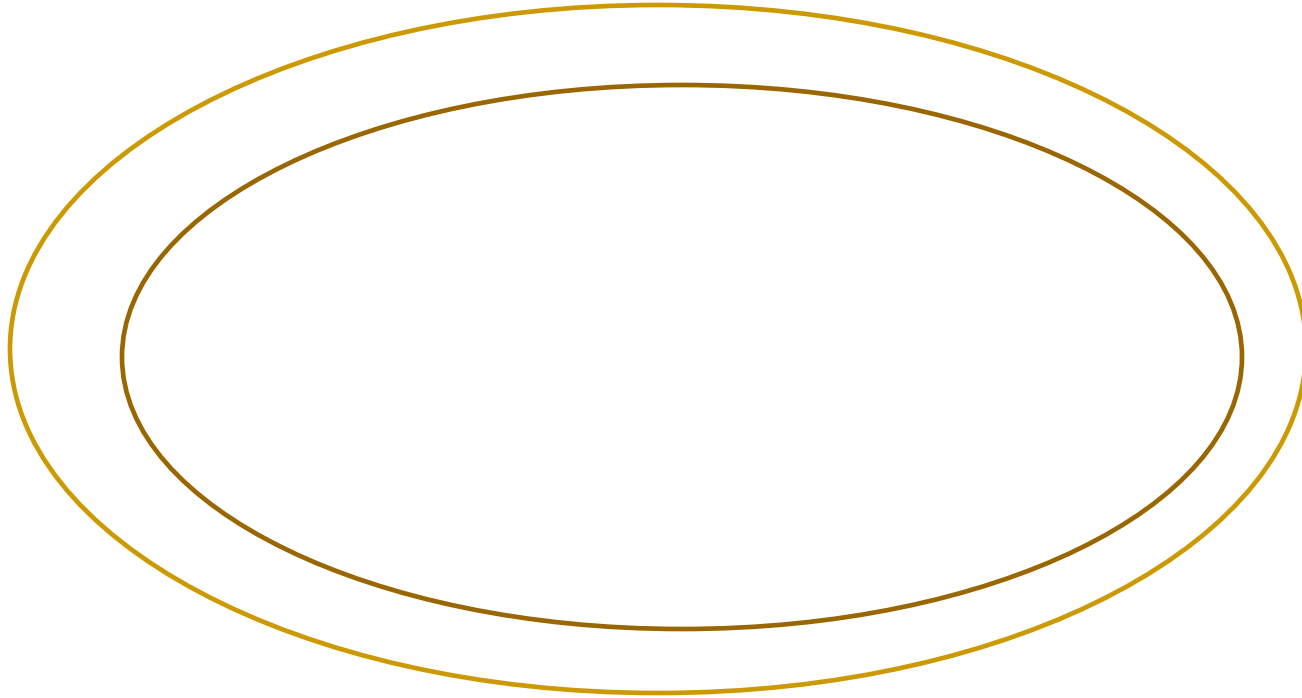
Vision

Identify Hopes for Our Students



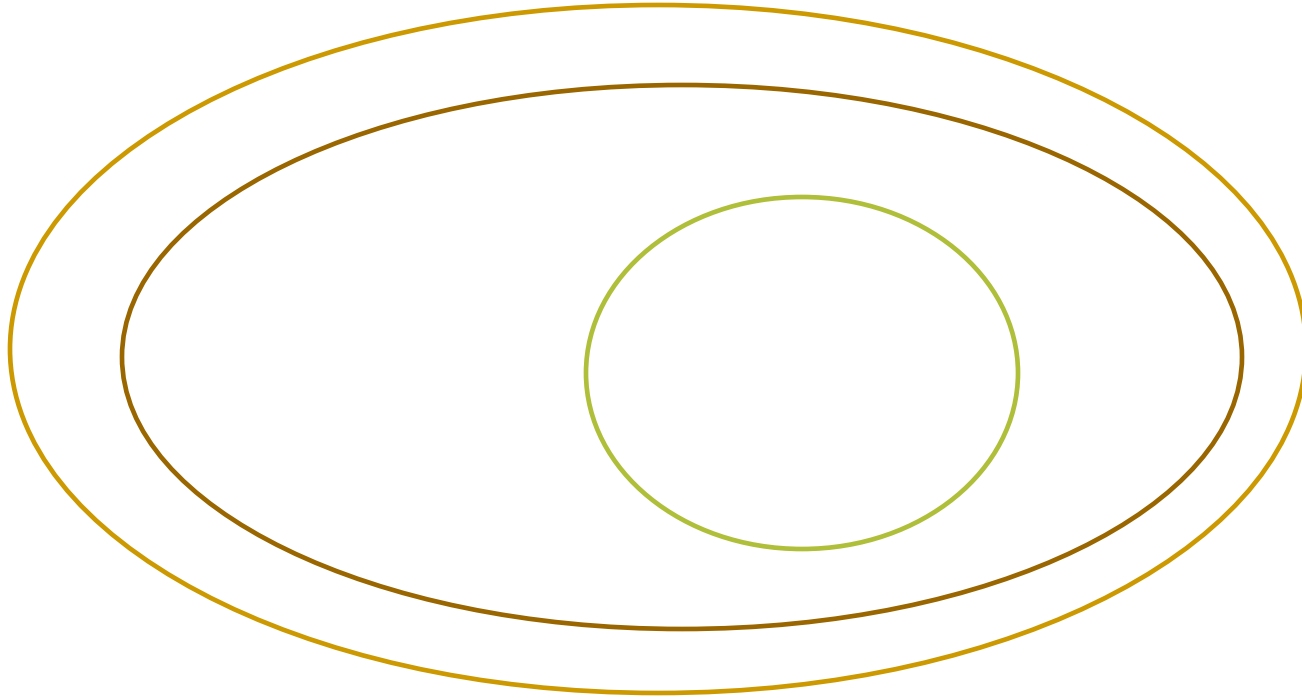
Adapted from Bill Kirkwood, E. Tennessee State University

Express Hopes as Intended Outcomes



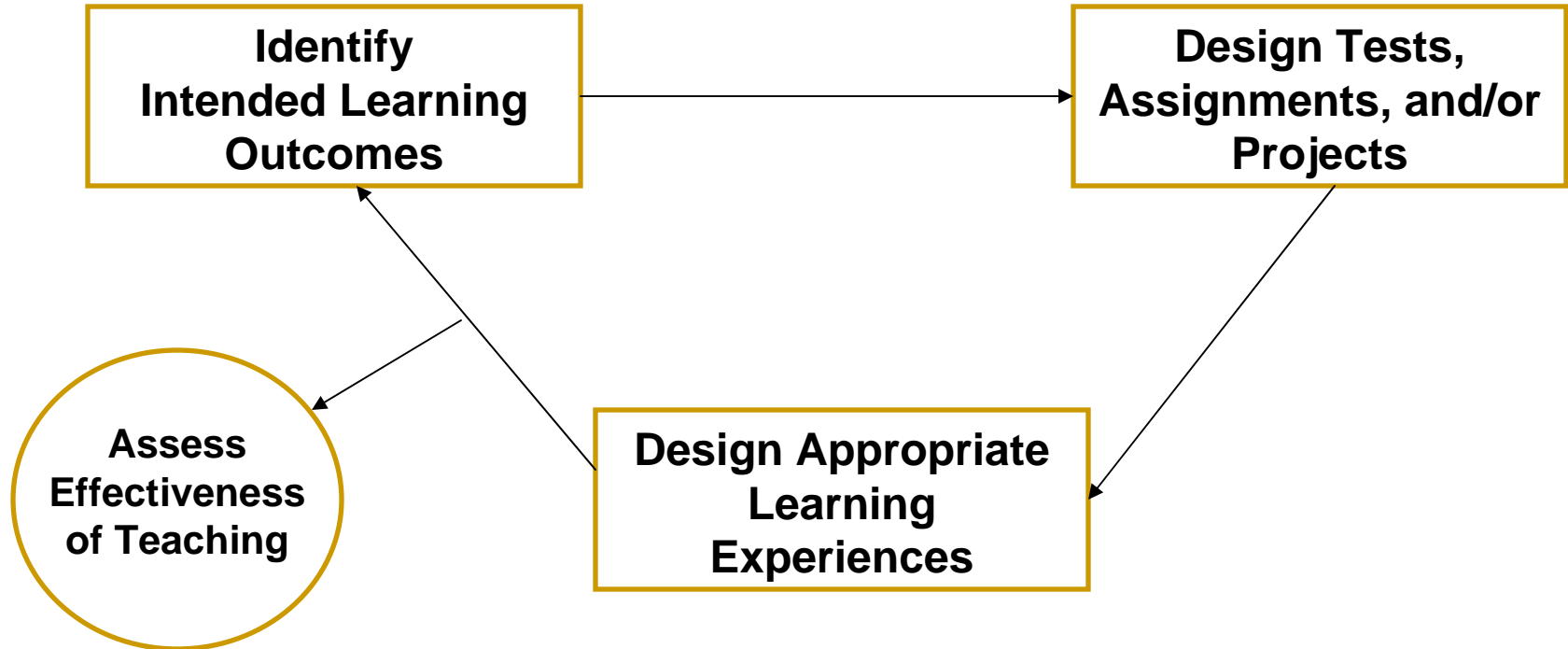
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Assess What We Care About



Adapted from Bill Kirkwood, E. Tennessee State University

A Course Planning Model



Identify intended learning outcomes

Distinguishing between Two Kinds of Outcomes: Goals & Objectives

- Goals state overarching expectations: what we hope students will know and be able to do at the end of the course.
 - Objectives state the **specific** kinds of knowledge, abilities, habits of mind and behaviors that enable the achievement of a goal.
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Some Examples of Course Goals & Objectives: Psychology

Goal: Apply psychological theory to interpret and resolve real world problems

- Explain in your own words three theories of motivation
 - Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of each theory
 - Use one theory to analyze a case study concerning worker productivity and offer specific recommendations based on the theory
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Some Examples of Course Goals & Objectives: Cell Biology

Goal: Think of cells as a dynamic system by evaluating cause and effect relationships given a change in a genetic component

- Describe on a molecular level what is happening during nucleic acid denaturation
 - Given abnormal cellular characteristics from mutant bacteria, predict which enzyme or function involved with DNA synthesis has been affected
 - Predict how the proteins involved in chromatin might alter DNA transcription
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Some Examples of Course Goals & Objectives: Art History

- Goal:** Critically analyze a piece of art
- Describe oil paintings using appropriate terminology
 - Classify examples of oil paintings into appropriate historical categories
 - Compare and contrast two oil paintings from the same historical period
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Characteristics of Well-written Goals & Objectives

- Use clear, action-oriented verbs
 - Observable
 - Measurable
 - Teachable
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Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain

- Knowledge
 - Comprehension
 - Application
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Evaluation
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Take a few moments to write at least one goal and associated objectives for your course

Pause

Design tests, assignments, and/or projects

Goals & Selected Objectives from an Introductory Psychology Course

Explain fundamental concepts in psychology

- Distinguish between sensation & perception
 - Explain how we translate & interpret visual stimuli from the environment
 - Explain what psychologists mean by learning
 - List the three major principles of behaviorism
 - Draw & explain the information processing model
 - Explain the nature-nurture controversy
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Goals & Selected Objectives from an Introductory Psychology Course

Think like a psychologist

- Formulate good research questions & hypotheses
 - Read a journal article & identify the features of the study
 - Write up the results of an in-class experimental study in standard psychological report format
 - Apply a theory of motivation to a real world problem
 - Develop an argument for the proper use of psychological testing
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Goals & Selected Objectives from an Introductory Psychology Course

Understand yourself better as a learner

- Reflect on prior experiences in school and how they may affect your experience in this class
 - Identity your assumptions about the subject matter of this course
 - Identify personal challenges in doing various classroom assignments and develop strategies to address them
 - Reflect on your performance in a group
 - Assess how your view of psychology has changed as a result of taking this class
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Designing an Assessment Scheme

Course Goals/Method of Evaluation	Concept Map	Learning Journal	Vision Exercise	Behavioral Modification Exercise	Exper't Write-up	IQ Test Paper	Final Exercise
Explain fundamental concepts in psychology	X		X	X	X	X	X
Think like a psychologist			X	X	X	X	
Understand yourself better as a learner	X	X	X				X

Take a moment to consider how you could assess the course goal and associated objectives you wrote earlier

How could you evaluate these learning outcomes?

- To present an argument to a specified audience
 - To perform effectively in a real world environment
 - To take the perspective of another
 - To change one's own behavior through reflection
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Pause

Two examples of assessment from the
introductory psychology course

Mark Siegel Case Study Assignment: Evaluation Criteria

- The paper should be clearly written and well-organized with few grammar or spelling errors.
 - The underlying problem should be clearly and succinctly stated. (Do not just summarize the case.)
 - The analysis of the case should address the problem you identified.
 - The analysis of the case should be based on the motivational theory you selected.
 - The analysis should reference specific examples from the case.
 - The analysis should be clearly and logically presented.
 - The plan of action you present should be consistent with the motivational theory you selected.
 - The plan of action should be clearly specified and include the actual steps the teacher must follow.
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Vision Exercise: Actual Student Performance [n=15]

	5	4	3	2	1	Avg
Thesis Statement	2	1	5	5	2	2.7
Specific Evidence	3	2	2	7	1	2.9
All Evidence	10	2	2	1	0	4.4
Organization	7	2	3	2	1	3.8
Grammar & Spelling	3	2	7	3	0	3.3
Professionalism	8	3	2	1	1	4.1

Knowing your students, what difficulties do you think they will have with the assignment you have proposed to assess your course goal?

Pause

Questions? Please feel free to contact me:

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