Foundations of Educational Neuroscience (BEP-600) – Fall 2015
College of Education, The University of Alabama

Instructor: Firat Soylu
Email: fsoylu@ua.edu
Room: Carmichael Hall 109
Meeting Time: Thursdays, 3:30pm – 6:30pm
Office hours: By appointment
Office: Carmichael Hall 307B

Course Description
This is an introductory course on Educational Neuroscience, an emerging area of research grounded in multiple disciplines including (but not limited to) educational psychology, neuroscience, cognitive science, and learning sciences. The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to major issues and topics in these domains and discuss implications for educational research and practice.

Educational Neuroscience started as a conversation between brain sciences and education. However educational neuroscience is now becoming a field in itself. A field is defined by the grand questions that guide investigations, methodologies, a body of literature and a community of scientists. These are yet to be realized for educational neuroscience. Discussions in this class and the work students pursue after taking it will hopefully contribute to the efforts in defining this new area of research.

Course Objectives
- Students will explore major themes and paradigms in cognition and brain research.
- Students will discuss the implications of primary research in brain science for educational research and learning design practice.
- Students will synthesize, criticize and interpret empirical work and theoretical perspectives in a specific domain of their choice that relate to their research interests and future research agenda.
- Students will formulate ideas for future empirical research in their field of study that incorporate perspectives and methodology from brain science.
- Students will compare and contrast various research methodologies in learning sciences, educational psychology and cognitive neuroscience.

Prerequisites
Graduate students from any program can take this course. This course does not require any specific background in neuroscience, cognitive science or education.
Overview of Weekly Themes

1. An introduction to educational neuroscience
2. Research methods in educational neuroscience and educational psychology
3. Memory & learning
4. Executive mechanisms & self regulation
5. Emotion and cognition
6. Reward, motivation & decision making
7. Intelligence
8. Evolution of Cognition
9. Influence of culture on brain and cognition
10. Social development
11. Language development
12. Literacy development & dyslexia
13. Mathematical development and numerical cognition
14. Science learning and scientific reasoning
15. Poster Sessions

Course Activities

Weekly Readings & Reflections
You are expected to read all weekly readings. There are also some optional recommended readings. Most weeks we will have one chapter from the textbook (see below) and one review or primary research article. You will be able to download the articles from the Blackboard site.

You will write a reflection about each week’s readings that will synthesize ideas from at least two of the readings for the week and post these on the forum for that week in Blackboard. You are expected to submit your reflections by 11 pm the day before the class (Wednesday). The title of your reflection should be concise and should summarize the main theme of your reflection (e.g., Language evolution parallels changes in brain structure). At the end of your reflection you will pose one discussion question to be covered in class. The discussion question should be in a separate paragraph and in bold-text, so that viewers of your post can quickly spot your big question for the week.

Discussion Leader
Every week one student will act as a discussion leader. The discussion leader will organize and refine the discussion questions posted on Blackboard and will lead the discussion. It is imperative that the discussion questions are posted by 6pm the day before the class so that the discussion leader has enough time before the class to prepare the discussion questions.

Project
The project is an opportunity to focus on a topic that is of interest to you, and to practice sharing your findings and insights with other people, in a format similar to academic conferences. You will (1) synthesize the literature about a specific cognitive phenomenon, disorder, or area of research of your choice, (2) provide a reflection on the implications of the research covered for educational theory and learning design practice, and (3)
formulate ideas for future educational research. The final paper for the project can be structured as a literature synthesis, opinion paper, theoretical paper, or a research grant proposal.

There are four deliverables for the course project:

(a) **Proposal**: By the forth week of the class you will submit a proposal for your project that explains the topic you will focus on, why this topic is important for you and the format you would like to use (e.g., grant proposal). We will have a one-to-one meeting to discuss your project ideas. The proposal will also have a bibliography showing the body of work you will cover in your paper.

(b) **Proposal presentation**: You will give a 10-min presentation to introduce your project and to get feedback from the class.

(c) **Poster session**: We will have a poster session at the end of the semester where students present their projects.

(d) **Final paper**: You will submit a 5000 to 8000 words paper based on your proposal.

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<th>Grading</th>
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<td>Readings, reflections and class participation</td>
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<td>Proposal</td>
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**Grading scale**: A: 90 - 100, B: 80 - 89, C: 70 – 79, D: 60 – 69, F: 0 - 59

**Textbook (TB)**


**Weekly Readings**

1. **An introduction to educational neuroscience**

   

2. **Research methods in educational neuroscience and educational psychology**

   
3. Memory & learning

4. Executive mechanisms & self regulation

5. Emotion and cognition
Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A. (2007). We Feel, Therefore We Learn: The Relevance of Affective and Social Neuroscience to Education. Mind, Brain, and Education

6. Reward, motivation & decision making

7. Intelligence

8. Evolution of Cognition

9. Influence of culture on brain and cognition

10. Social development

11. Language development
12. Literacy development & dyslexia


13. Mathematical development and numerical cognition


14. Science learning and scientific reasoning


Disability Statement

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary.

If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call (205) 348-4285 (Voice) or (205) 348-3081 (TTY) or visit 133-B Martha Parham Hall East to register for services. Students who may need course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 133-B Martha Parham Hall East, before receiving academic adjustments.

The Code of Academic Conduct

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.