

ORAL EXPLANATIONS



Purpose: The purposes of this assignment are to (a) to provide students with the opportunity to clarify, communicate and make tangible their understanding of various constructivist ideas, concepts, and procedures, and (b) to apply this understanding to a problem, issue, or situation of choice. Explaining and applying one's understanding of abstract concepts is essential to deep and meaningful learning.



Rationale: The rationale for this assignment, in Piagetian terms (see Piaget, 1973; Wadsworth, 1996), is *disequilibrium*. In most cases, following an exposure to various theories, concepts, and procedures people are generally unsure of their knowledge relative to these theories, concepts, and procedures and how they apply to the world around them. This assignment provides you with the motivation to work with the concepts related to constructivism and to create personal and coherent meanings (Nilson, 2010). Understanding and applying the essential components of constructivism are paramount as these concepts are often misunderstood in education (Phillips, 2000).



Format: The Oral Explanations should result in a clear, concise, and coherently organized 10-minute \pm 1-minute oral presentation. This oral presentation should take the basic form of turning on a video recording device and providing a 10-minute explanation of a particular constructivist concept. This 10-minute explanation should include sufficient examples to make the concept under discussion clear to someone not familiar with constructivism.

In addition, the 10-minute explanation should be recorded in one setting. The only editing allowed is to edit the beginning of the explanation in order to locate the beginning and to edit the end so that the recording ends appropriately. The 10-minute explanation *may not* be a series of shorter segments edited together.

The content of each oral explanation should reflect *your understanding* of the concepts addressed in the constructivism class and readings. In addition, the tone of each explanation should be scholarly in nature; whether first or third person is used will depend on you. However, you should not use phrases such as "I believe" or "In my opinion." Tell me what you *know*.

The oral explanation should be constructed (a) to **explain** the addressed constructivist concepts to an audience that is unfamiliar with the concept, and (b) to **apply** the addressed concepts to a current problem, issue, or situation that is relevant to your life. The application should delineate a specific problem, issue, or situation and explain how the constructivist concepts could be used to address or understand that problem, issue, or situation.

Both explanation and application are essential.



Grading: Each Oral Explanation is worth 100 pts and will be assessed using the following criteria:

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| 1. Organization | 20 pts |
| a. are introductions and conclusions used effectively? | |
| b. do the expressed ideas follow a logical progression? | |
| c. are explanations and applications provided? | |
| 2. Clarity of Thought and Expression | 20 pts |
| a. are the ideas expressed well, well thought out, and integrated? | |
| b. are there clear and logical transitions between ideas? | |
| c. are correct grammar and syntax used? | |
| 3. Essential Content Explanation | 30 pts |
| a. does the content of the explanation accurately reflect the addressed constructivism? | |
| b. does the explanation explain, rather than just list, the main concept components? | |
| c. is the content of the explanation free from personal interjections? | |
| 4. Essential Content Application | 30 pts |
| a. is a problem, issue, or situation explained clearly? | |
| b. are concepts from the texts and class used to address the cited problem? | |
| c. is the application thorough, meaningful, and appropriate? | |



Pragmatics:

1. Be thoughtful - think before you write.
2. Be concise - there is a lot to include in a 10-minute explanation.
3. Be creative - as long as the central tenets of the oral explanation are addressed.



Timeline:

See the Syllabus.



References:

- Bruning, R., Schraw, G., & Norby, M. (2011). *Cognitive psychology and instruction* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Nilson, L. (2010). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Phillips, D. C. (2000). *Constructivism in education: Opinions and second opinions on controversial issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Piaget, J. (1973). *To understand is to invent*. New York: Viking.
- Wadsworth, B. J. (1996). *Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development*. New York: Longman.



Honor Code: The Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced on this assignment. Any suspected violations of the Honor Code will be promptly reported to the Honor System. Students are allowed to discuss with other students the nature of this assignment, their understanding of the articles, and the general concepts he or she will be discussing in the oral explanations. Students should not, however, share their completed explanations with other students in the class. Beyond that, the Honor Code's general principles of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and sabotage are still applicable (see <http://ghs.grads.vt.edu/>).

