Assessment that informs Student Knowledge (ASK):

Assessment in this class refers to a “whole” process of obtaining information that will be used to satisfy multiple purposes:

- to assist student learning
- to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses
- to determine the effectiveness of a particular instructional strategy
- to assess and improve teaching effectiveness
- to assess and improve the effectiveness of the course
- to collect data to assist in making decisions about student progress, understanding, grades, etc.

To achieve multiple purposes, I will use multiple forms of assessment: diagnostic, formative, and summative.

Diagnostic assessment is used prior to instruction to determine students’ strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills. The course begins with a series of diagnostic assessments based on your understanding of Socratic Seminars and the broad educational topic selected for the semester. The online quizzes are informal assessments that provide early indications of your a) knowledge of a given topic and b) skill in constructing a seminar. These quizzes serve as tools in support of a more formal assessment such as the seminar rubric. They become part of the collection of artifacts (evidence of achievement) that together are used to evaluate your performance in this class.

Formative assessment is distinct from diagnostic assessment in that it is used “during instruction” to inform and guide teachers as they make instructional decisions throughout the course. According to the Principles and Standards for School Mathematics published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in 2000, assessment should be more than merely a test at the end of instruction to see how students perform under special conditions. It should not merely be done to students; rather, it should also be done for students, to guide and enhance their learning (The Assessment Principle). Throughout the course, students will be expected to grow in their understanding of an educational topic and in the construction/delivery of a Socratic-style seminar.

Participation and completion of assessments suggested to support those goals are far more significant as evidence of your serious attempt to develop understanding than they are for their “rightness” or “wrongness.” Thus, taking the online quizzes and struggling to find the “right” answer among the choices offered is far more significant to your progress in the course than is the answer itself. The "right" answer, when achieved too easily without the struggle/pain offers little in the way of learning. The function of the ASK data is to collect evidence of your thinking and your progress during the “formation” of skills and concepts.

ASK data is authored by you, the student, as you participate in this course. Sometimes you will select and complete an ASK assignment independently. More often, I hope that you require the assistance of colleagues to complete the task….for the purpose of ASK assignments is to offer opportunity to examine concepts associated with a given topic as they emerge from not only course reading but more importantly from the “instructional conversation” of the course. According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), the "instructional conversation is the medium, the occasion, the instrument for rousing the mind to life….The concept itself contains a paradox: 'Instruction' and 'conversation' appear contrary, the one implying authority and planning, the other equality and responsiveness. The task of teaching is to resolve this paradox. To most truly teach, one must converse; to truly converse is to teach"(p. 109).

ASK will emerge naturally from the flow of the course. It needs to be accomplished in the sequence of the course...not at the end...if you hope to achieve the greatest benefit from it. Each time an ASK is offered, it will have value with respect to your grade. Course expectations related to the participation in and completion of ASK include the following:

1. Students are expected to engage in "instructional conversation" while tackling ASK assignments.

The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then
inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (p. 57)\textsuperscript{iii}.

2. Students are expected to engage in social interaction within the classroom as a fundamental tool in the development of understanding.

Research in education reveals the promise of intertwined active and collaborative learning approaches. “Collaborative learning … emphasizes the virtues of active involvement. It requires students to take the initiative in the classroom, to become active creators rather than passive recipients of knowledge, and to rely on each other as much or more than on the teacher’s authority”(Hansen & Stephens, 2000).\textsuperscript{iv}

3. Students are expected to show evidence that they learn from each other as well as from the teacher.

Education studies show that “the difficult abilities of decision-making and problem-solving are best taught through learning groups” (Michaelson, Fink & Knight, 1997).\textsuperscript{v} “Drawing analogies from everyday learning, researchers argue that knowledge is contextualized; that is, learners construct knowledge by solving complex problems in situations in which they use cognitive tools, multiple sources of information, and other individuals as resources (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989)\textsuperscript{vi} Moreover, because learning occurs in a social context, learners interact with and internalize models of knowing and thinking represented and practiced in a community” (Toulmin, 1972).\textsuperscript{vii}

4. Students are expected to show evidence that they are “constructing” knowledge and solving problems both in class and out of class as they propose, implement, collect, interpret and present a research study that examines significant questions in child growth and development.

Students are expected to take seriously the value of the “social context” of the classroom. Thus, they will be present to contribute to and benefit from the interaction in the classroom and, when appropriate, submit data, which will provide evidence of progress.


\textbf{N.B.} Because the use of technology and computer networks has become commonplace for competitive professional work in education/psychology, this course will utilize the World Wide Web ("WWW" or "the Web") for research, guidance and presentation of selected materials. Students should regard Web exploration as part of the research that supports the course. In addition to reading from the Web, more traditional reading will also be used to frame course work and discussion.