

Journal Assignment to Support Metacognitive Leadership Development

Note: This was incorporated into a Foundations of Leadership Development Course
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As we navigate this course, there are three overarching objectives to which we will continually return. Course activities, discussions, and assessments will all be tailored to help you:

1. Be able to discuss how the scientific study of leadership can contribute to your overall effectiveness/development as a leader.
2. Understand why relationships, respect for human dignity, professionalism, and mutual respect are the foundations on which effective leadership is built and how you can develop those critical relationships.
3. Evaluate your personal leadership strengths/weaknesses and properly apply course concepts to develop an improvement plan. Additionally, be able to correctly apply the concepts discussed throughout the course to both assess and resolve leadership shortcomings/issues across situations, both actual and hypothetical.

5 learning dimensions (from the Learning Record, see below for detailed descriptions):

1. confidence and independence
2. skills and strategies
3. knowledge and understanding
4. use of prior and emerging experience
5. reflection

Course strands:

1. teamwork
2. professionalism (subcomponents)
3. transformational leadership (4is)
4. respect for human dignity

About this Course and Section (Lesson Prep Journal Entries and Personal Development Evaluation Assignments):

- Memorizing leadership theories is not enough to develop as a leader, although understanding theories and research about leadership will help you more effectively choose leader actions and navigate a variety of leadership situations. You also need to become aware of personal and situational factors and how those interact with effective leadership decisions and actions.

- This course will be run as a seminar with an emphasis on metacognitive (awareness of a process) leadership development. In order to facilitate your awareness of your learning and development, we will use journals and during each lesson we will share our understandings, questions, and reflections based on the readings, as well as examples of personal observations of leadership and our reflections on how what we're learning might be effectively applied to real situations.
- In order for the seminar approach to be effective, you are each expected to come to class prepared (complete all readings, review lesson objectives, make thoughtful journal entries). Journal entries will be checked each lesson – 10% of your course grade will be based on your lesson preparation effort. Review details below regarding expectations for journal entries and grading.
- The two personal development evaluation assignments (one due lesson 19 and one due lesson 39) will be evidence-based interpretations of your development in terms of the course strands and the five dimensions of learning. In these summaries you should be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included from the observations you recorded in your journal. More assignment details will be given later.

Personal Journal Entries:

During Lesson 1: Inside the journal cover place your name, contact info (in case you misplace your journal), date, and an inspirational quote, passage, etc. related to leadership.

For lesson 2 (no assigned reading; this entry is not graded):

- List and briefly describe your past and current leadership positions.
- At this point in time, what do you believe are your greatest leadership strengths?
- At this point in time, what do you believe are your leadership weaknesses?

For each lesson with readings: read lesson objectives and all assigned readings

- For each reading, enter a short version of the title and the authors. Then, at minimum answer questions 1,2, and also one from options 3-6.
 1. For you, what was the most useful / impactful message or information from the reading? Why?
 2. What is a question you have regarding the reading with respect to one of the learning objectives? (This question should reflect some effort toward or level of understanding, but present some challenge to complete understanding or provide a prompt to promote deeper analysis of the reading.)
 3. How does something from this reading relate to something from another reading in this class? Explain.

4. How does something from this reading relate to something from another course or training experience you've had at USAFA? Explain.
 5. How does something from this reading relate to something in the news? Explain.
 6. How does something from this reading relate to a movie or a fiction novel or a song? Explain.
- At least twice a week record a personal observation of your own leadership behavior followed by a reflection. These observations should be recorded no later than 48 hours after they occur, or the observation is nearly useless. Human cognitive studies have made this clear.
 1. Personal observations of leadership or leadership development can be positive or indicate room for growth. In the observation include a brief description of context (to better become aware of situational influences) as well as your own actions and the responses of others (and how these actions and responses might have interacted).
 2. Reflections: For the reflections, your goal is to learn from your behavior, linking your learning to course material and to other leadership lessons from beyond this course. You should always explain how this observation indicates some development on your part with respect to the 5 dimensions of learning or the course strands. Some additional questions you might consider are: During the observed event, how aware were you of your options and your reasons for your ultimately chosen actions? In hindsight, what might you do differently and why? Would similar behaviors on your part have led to different results had you been in a different context or with different people? Explain.
 - Anytime (optional): record your thoughts about leadership, record observations and reflections of leader behaviors in others, record notes from other conversations or lessons that might pertain to your leader development at some point, record questions you might have regarding leadership (even "big" questions that you might return to multiple times across the years as you develop as a leader).
 - Journal organization:
 - Number the pages of the journal (front and back separately)
 - For each entry, include the date and a clear label for the type of entry (Reading, Personal Observation, Personal Reflection, Other)
 - Under the Reading entries, clearly number the questions you are answering (there will always be a 1 and 2, and then at least one from 3-6).

- Lesson Prep Grading:
 - At the start of each lesson with a reading you will open your journal to show me your entry for the day.
 - Readings will receive a 0 (if blank), a ✓- if obviously incomplete, or a ✓ if seemingly complete. During the discussion, if it is apparent that your response indicated extra deep or insightful aspects, I may increase the grade to a ✓+ rather than a ✓. Conversely, if your discussion inputs indicate that you only completed a very superficial entry, I reserve the right to shift your reading grade to a ✓- rather than a ✓.
 - Personal observations / reflections will receive a check for each one that is complete. (I will create a table to track how many observations you enter each week.) These observations will be key to your completion of the two IP assignments, so it will be to your benefit to put good effort into them.
 - There are a total of 13 lessons pre-midmester (through lesson 19) that have assigned readings and 9 lessons post-midmester with readings. For each lesson, a ✓- will be worth 1.5 points, a ✓ will be worth 3 points, and a ✓+ will be worth 4 points.
 - There are 8 weeks (through lesson 18) pre-midmester and 8 weeks post-midmester (through lesson 37) for which you should enter 2 personal observations and reflections each week. Pre-midmester, each ✓- will be worth 1 points, and a ✓ will be worth 2 points. Post-mimester, each ✓- will be worth 1.5 points, and a ✓+ will be worth 3 points.
 - You can earn a max of 50 points both pre and post-midmester by totaling your points. Pre-midmester, if you get a ✓ on all reading summaries and observation/reflections you have a possibility of 55 points (thus, you have some flexibility to skip a reading or a couple of observations and still receive max points). Post-midmester if you get a ✓ on all reading summaries and observation/reflections you have a possibility of 51 points.

FIVE DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING *

Learning theorists have argued that learning and development are not like an assembly-line which can be broken down into discrete steps occurring with machine-time precision, but an organic process that unfolds in complex ways according to its own pace and rhythm. Teaching and learning occurs in complex ecosystems, dynamic environments where teachers, students, materials and supplies, texts, technologies, concepts, social structures, and architectures are interdependently related and interactive.

Using the Learning Record, teachers (and students) are actively searching for, and documenting, positive evidence of student development across five dimensions: confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, use of prior and emerging experience, and critical reflection. These five dimensions cannot be "separated out" and treated individually; rather, they are dynamically interwoven. Our goals for a

particular class should describe a trajectory of learning across multiple dimensions, and our measurements should be able to identify the paths taken by students and their progress from their individual starting points along that trajectory.

Individually, learners can expect to make progress across these five dimensions:

Confidence and independence

We see growth and development when learners' confidence and independence become congruent with their actual abilities and skills, content knowledge, use of experience, and reflectiveness about their own learning. It is not a simple case of "more (confidence and independence) is better." In a science class, for example, an overconfident student who has relied on faulty or underdeveloped skills and strategies learns to seek help when facing an obstacle; or a shy student begins to trust her own abilities, and to insist on presenting her own point of view in discussion. In both cases, students are developing along the dimension of confidence and independence.

Skills and strategies

Skills and strategies represent the "know-how" aspect of learning. When we speak of "performance" or "mastery," we generally mean that learners have developed skills and strategies to function successfully in certain situations. Skills and strategies are not only specific to particular disciplines, but often cross disciplinary boundaries. In a writing class, for example, students develop many specific skills and strategies involved in composing and communicating effectively, from research to concept development to organization to polishing grammar and correctness, and often including technological skills for computer communication.

Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and understanding refers to the "content" knowledge gained in particular subject areas. Knowledge and understanding is the most familiar dimension, focusing on the "know-what" aspect of learning. In a psychology class, knowledge and understanding might answer a wide range of questions such as, What is Freud's concept of ego? Who was Carl Jung? What is "behaviorism"? These are typical content questions. Knowledge and understanding in such classes includes what students are learning about the topics; research methods; the theories, concepts, and practices of a discipline; the methods of organizing and presenting our ideas to others, and so on.

Use of prior and emerging experience

The use of prior and emerging experience involves learners' abilities to draw on their own experience and connect it to their work. A crucial but often unrecognized dimension of learning is the capacity to make use of prior experience as well as emerging experience in new situations. It is necessary to observe learners over a period of time while they engage in a variety of activities in order to account for the development of this important capability, which is at the heart of creative thinking and its application. With traditional methods of evaluating learning, we cannot discover just how a learner's prior experience might be brought to bear to help scaffold new understandings, or how ongoing experience shapes the content knowledge or skills and strategies the learner is developing. In a math class, students scaffold new knowledge through applying the principles and procedures they've

already learned: algebra depends on the capacity to apply basic arithmetic procedures, for example.

Reflection

Reflection refers to the developing awareness of the learner's own learning process, as well as more analytical approaches to the subject being studied. When we speak of reflection as a crucial component of learning, we are not using the term in its commonsense meaning of reverie or abstract introspection. We are referring to the development of the learner's ability to step back and consider a situation critically and analytically, with growing insight into his or her own learning processes, a kind of metacognition. It provides the "big picture" for the specific details. For example, students in a history class examining fragmentary documents and researching an era or event use reflection to discover patterns in the evidence and construct a historical narrative. Learners need to develop this capability in order to use what they are learning in other contexts, to recognize the limitations or obstacles confronting them in a given situation, to take advantage of their prior knowledge and experience, and to strengthen their own performance.

* This information about the 5 Learning Dimensions and more about the Learning Record can be found at <http://www.learningrecord.org/>