I. **Why Teach with Transformative Education Theory?**

- Transformative learning gives adult learners the ability to think **autonomously**, that is, to think as individuals. It allows learners to develop their own sense of meaning in the world free from the accepted purposes, beliefs, judgments, values, and feelings that we received from our cultures, religions, family beliefs, personalities, and life experiences.

- Autonomous thinking is vital for full participation in a democratic society as well as for **moral decision making** (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7); thus, it is the **goal of higher education** to produce autonomous thinkers (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

- Transformative learning allows students and educators to develop **genuine relationships** in which the educator makes a difference in the students’ lives and feels a difference in his or her own life as well (Cranton, 2006, p. 8).

- Transformative learning allows adult learners to use the contexts of their formal learning experiences to construct and reconstruct **personal meaning** (Dirkx, 2006, p. 24).

- Adult learners will inevitably join the workforce after they complete their college education, or more likely, while they are completing their college education. The identified learning needs of the **workforce** implicitly recognize the importance of autonomous learning (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7).

- For adults to truly take ownership of social and personal roles, being able to develop this self-authorship goes a long way towards **helping our society and world to become a better place** (TLT Website).
• Transformative Education Theory supports the IU Southeast Strategic Objective 3.2, which states that “IU Southeast will prepare students to function effectively in a culturally diverse and global community by infusing principles of diversity and equity throughout the curriculum.”

• Transformative Education Theory supports the IU Southeast Mission Statement, which states that IU Southeast strives to “provide high-quality educational programs and services that promote student learning and prepare students for productive citizenship in a diverse society, and to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of the region” (IUS Strategic Plan).

II. How Can I as a Faculty Member Foster Transformative Thinking?

• Establish authentic, meaningful, and genuine relationships with students (Cranton, 2006)
• Create learning environments that promote self-directed learning, in which learners work in problem-solving groups and learn from one another by becoming aware and critical of their own and others’ assumptions (Mezirow, 1997).
• Help students engage emotions in the learning process (Dirkx, 2006).
• Create classroom norms that accept order, justice, and civility as well as respect and responsibility for helping each other learn (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11)
• Engage learners in classroom practices that assist in the development of critical reflection (Taylor, 2008, p. 11)

III. Strategies and Resources to Use in the Classroom

There are several teaching strategies recommended by those that study the effectiveness of transformative learning. Several recommendations are listed below. We hope you find them to be useful in your classroom.

• Oral/Verbal
  o Deliberation: collaborative process of discussing contested issues by considering various perspectives in order to form opinions and guide judgment
    ▪ International Debate Education Association
    ▪ University of Pittsburg – Argument & Debate
  o Discussion: help students to gain interest in the material, correct misconceptions, and analyze information critically
    ▪ University of Pittsburg – The Importance of Class Discussions
    ▪ Fostering Effective Classroom Discussions
Speech: can be a powerful tool to use for purposes such as motivation, influence, persuasion, informing, translation, or simply ethos

- University of Pittsburg – Speech Resources and Databases
- Speech Topics Help, Advice, & Ideas

Case Studies: presents authentic, concrete teaching problems for students to analyze

- National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science
- Vanderbilt University – Center for Teaching
- Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education
- Writing Case Studies – A Manual
- Using Case Studies Teacher’s Guide

Life Histories/Narratives/Storytelling/Critical Incidents: gives learners the opportunity to understand and reflect on their own experiences as well as the experiences of others

- Narrative as a Teaching Strategy
- Instructional Strategies Online

Role Play/Simulations: instructor creates a “world” in which the learners interact with one another based on specific parameters set by the instructor; students experience the reality of the “world” and gather meaning from it

- Role-Playing as a Teaching Strategy
- Interactive Drama
- Role Playing in Online Education

Group Process

- Group Projects/Presentations: gives learners the opportunity to challenge assumptions and develop their own perspectives in relation to others
  - Carnegie Mellon: Using Group Projects Effectively
  - Planning Group Projects

- Action Learning: learners are placed on teams and asked to solve a problem or issue; involves extensive reflection and dialogue as they work at a solution
  - International Foundation for Action Learning

- Collaborative Inquiry (CI): learners voluntarily participate in solving a problem or issue that is framed by the group with no outside interference (Yorks and Marsick, 2000, p. 266 as cited in Baumgartner, 2001, p. 19)
  - NYU Wagner: Collaborative Inquiry Process

- Service Learning: gives learners the opportunity to participate in social action and help others
  - Carnegie Mellon: Service Learning
  - Iowa State University
• **Individual**
  
  - **Reading**: has the potential to bring about emotional experiences that foster deeper engagement of the self with the learning process
  - **Personal Journaling**: allows students to make observations and reflect on their learning
  - **Writing**: gives learners the opportunity to make connects and respond which allows them to see themselves as thinkers and knowledge seekers
    - [Carnegie Mellon: Incorporating Writing into Your Course](#)
    - [Harvard Writing Project](#)
    - [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center](#)
  - **Concept Mapping**: creating a form of a web diagram that is useful in exploring knowledge as well as gathering and sharing information
    - [Instructional Strategies Online – Concept Map](#)
    - [Brigham Young University](#)
  - **Discovery/Inquire Based Learning**: specific observations, case studies, or problems are examined and theories are developed based on the solutions
    - [Inquiry Based Learning – Penn State](#)
    - [Focus on Inquiry](#)
  - **Learning Contracts**: gives learners individualized learning goals and permits individual pacing; allows instructor to relinquish some power and develop authentic relationships with learners
    - [Using Learning Contracts in the College Classroom](#)

  *Lecturing is often an appropriate method of teaching in higher education classrooms. After all, university professors were hired as subject matter experts, so why would students not want the opportunity to learn directly from an expert in the field? Although lecturing is necessary in many instances, it is not always utilized in a way that is conducive to foster transformative learning. Here are [50 Alternatives to Lecturing](#). Try using a few in your classroom this semester.*

IV. **Stances of Transformative Learning**

Below appear a number of stances within Transformational Learning Theory evident in the literature, each with its own focus, approach, and purpose. They illustrate the richness and adaptability as a more specific entry into strategies for instructional use.

• **Cultural-Spiritual**
  
  - **Focus of the Theory**
    - Focuses on how learners construct knowledge (*narratives*) as part of the transformative learning experience (Taylor, 2008, p. 8)
    - Concerned with the connections between individuals and social structures (Tisdell, 2005 as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 8)
Approach
- Engaging storytelling on a personal and social level through group inquiry (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)
- Teacher takes on the role of collaborator with an emphasis on group inquiry and narrative reasoning (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)

Purpose
- Helps learners develop cross-cultural relationships as well as spiritual awareness (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)

Neurobiological
- **Focus of the Theory**
  - Based on the discovery that the brain structure actually changes during the learning process (Taylor, 2008, p. 8)
  - Learning is seen as volitional, curiosity-based, discovery-driven, and mentor-assisted (Janik, 2005 as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 8)

- **Approach**
  - Learners must feel discomfort prior to discovery (Janik, 2005 as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 8)
  - Learning is rooted in the individuals experiences, needs, and interests (Janik, 2005 as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 8)
  - Strengthened by emotive, sensory, and kinesthetic experiences (Janik, 2005 as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 8)

- **Purpose**
  - Helps individual learners restructure the ways that they make meaning in the world

Phenomenological (Wyandotte and Huh, 2012)
- **Focus of the Theory**
  - Intellectual, psychological, and moral dimensions of learning foster personal and social change (Wyandotte and Huh, 2012)

- **Approach**
  - Learners prepare themselves as knowers, doers, and beings to live meaningfully in the world with others (Wyandotte and Huh, 2012)

- **Purpose**
  - Develop learners’ consciousness of their own and others’ thoughts, language, and reasoning, allowing them to direct their thinking more strategically to specific intentions (Wyandotte and Huh, 2012, p. 8)

Planetary
- **Focus of the Theory**
  - Address fundamental issues in the field of education as a whole (O’Sullivan, 1999 as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 9)
  - Recognizes the interconnectedness among universe, planet, natural environment, human community, and personal world (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)
• **Approach**
  - Reorganization of the political, social, and educational systems in which learners belong (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)

• **Purpose**
  - Helps the learner identify how they view human counterparts as well as how they relate with the physical world (Taylor, 2008, p. 10)

• **Psychoanalytic**
  - **Focus of the Theory**
    - A process of *individuation*, a lifelong journey of coming to understand oneself (Taylor, 2008, p. 7)
    - Psychoanalytic theories originated with the work of Sigmund Freud
  - **Approach**
    - Individuals come to understand their *identity* through reflection on psychic structures (Taylor, 2008, p. 7)
  - **Purpose**
    - Helps individuals discover new talents
    - Gives individuals a sense of *empowerment and confidence*, a deeper understanding of one’s inner self, and a greater sense of self-responsibility (Taylor, 2008, p. 7)

• **Psychocritical or Cognitive-Rational** (Mezirow, 1997)
  - **Focus of the Theory**
    - Aims at effecting change in a *frame of reference* which develops *autonomous* thinking in adult learners (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5)
    - Focus is on the *individual* learner
    - *Cognitive* and *rational* process
  - **Approach**
    - Learners must first become *critically reflective* of their own assumptions underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6).
    - Learners must then engage in *discourse* with one another, which is an opportunity for them to critically examine evidence, arguments, and alternate points of view in support of competing interpretations (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6)
  - **Purpose**
    - Develops *autonomous* thinking in adults, the ability for adults to think independently

• **Psychodevelopmental**
  - **Focus of the Theory**
    - Results in *epistemological change*, change in how we make meaning (Taylor, 2008, p. 7)
Examines how education can help students make sense of their lives 
(Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17)

- **Approach**
  - Intuitive, *holistic*, and contextually based (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17)
  - Mentor guides students in a learning journey affected by the student’s 
    social environment (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17)

- **Purpose**
  - Students are able to move through developmental transitions and are 
    changed in the process (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17)

- **Race-Centric**
  - **Focus of the Theory**
    - People of African descent, most often black women, are the subjects of 
      the transformative experience (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)
    - Emphasizes the *social-political dimensions* of learning (Taylor, 2008, p. 9)
  - **Approach**
    - Engages *polyrhythmic realities*, the students’ lived experience within a 
      sociocultural, political, and historical context (Sheared, 1994 as cited in 
      Taylor, 2008, p. 9)
  - **Purpose**
    - Promotes *inclusion and empowerment*
    - Gives the learner the ability to negotiate effectively between and across 
      cultures

- **Social-Emancipatory or Consciousness-Raising**
  - **Focus of the Theory**
    - Aims at fostering *Critical Consciousness* – a process in which learners 
      develop the ability to analyze, pose questions, and take action on the 
      social, political, cultural, and economic contexts that influence and shape 
      their lives (Dirkx, 1998, p. 3)
    - Focuses on political liberation and freedom from oppression of 
      *individuals and groups*
  - **Approach**
    - Learners engage in *praxis* with one another, which included dialog and 
      problem-posing, which is intended to help learners develop awareness of 
      structures within their society that may be contributing to inequality and 
      oppression (Dirkx, 1998, p. 3)
  - **Purpose**
    - Fosters freedom among learners by enabling them to reflect on their 
      world and change it (Dirkx, 1998, p. 3)
V. Annotated Bibliography of Resources

Many of the resources listed below were used in the creation of this web document. Each article offers valuable information for faculty members wishing to engage in transformative education pedagogy. The articles were chosen in an effort to include the various stances of transformative education theory as well as offer suggestions for further research.

  - Written by Dr. Lisa Baumgartner, Associate Professor of Adult and Higher Education at Northern Illinois University, this article provides a brief history of transformational learning through 4 lenses: consciousness-raising, cognitive-rational, developmental, and spiritual. Baumgartner describes how a traditional view of transformational learning, that which was developed by Jack Mezirow, has been expanded and includes practical suggestions for fostering transformational learning for groups. Dr. Baumgartner’s article is an easy read and may be useful to any faculty member wishing to incorporate group strategies to foster transformative learning in their classroom.

  - Dr. Patricia A. Cranton, Visiting Professor of Adult Education at Penn State University - Harrisburg, provides an overview of transformative learning theory and offers suggestions for faculty members to set up a classroom that is conducive to transformation. Cranton describes how transformative learning theory has evolved from a linear process to a more spiral-like process and outlines 7 facets with associated teaching strategies that can be used to set up a learning environment that promotes transformation. Cranton describes each teaching strategy in simple terms and offers examples of how each has the potential to be transformative but cautions that no teaching method guarantees transformation. An expert on authenticity in teaching, Cranton’s article is succinct and informative, offering practical suggestions and teaching strategies for faculty members in any discipline.

  - Coauthored by Dr. Patricia A. Cranton and Dr. Merv Roy, this article aims to review the various perspectives of transformative learning and integrate them with individuation and authenticity, arriving at a holistic perspective of transformative education. Cranton and Roy describe how transformative education is rooted in the cognitive-rational approach of Jack Mezirow but has
been expanded to include approaches such as affective (emotional), extrarational (imaginative), and experiential (response to life experience). Cranton and Roy’s article is worthwhile for faculty members wishing to engage more fully in the varying perspectives of transformative learning; however, the article is theoretical in nature, offering limited suggestions of practical teaching strategies.

  - Written by Dr. Patricia A. Cranton, Visiting Professor of Adult Education at Penn State University – Harrisburg, this article is based on research that suggests that establishing authentic relationships with students is an effective way to foster transformative learning in the classroom. Cranton’s perspective on transformation is based on the cognitive-rational approach of Jack Mezirow but has been expanded to include alternative perspectives to create a holistic view of transformative learning. Dr. Cranton offers practical strategies, including various exercises and activities, for fostering authentic and transformative relationships in the classroom. Cranton’s article is useful for faculty members in any discipline but may be particularly useful for faculty members that teach in discussion-based courses.

  - Written by Dr. John M. Dirkx, Associate Professor of Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education at Michigan State University, this article aims to discuss the implications of transformative learning theory in higher education. Dirkx succinctly summarizes 4 major strands of transformative education articulated by these notable scholars: Paulo Freire (consciousness-raising), Jack Mezirow (critical reflection), Larry Daloz (developmental), and Robert Boyd (individuation). The summaries provide the reader with the main points of each strand, compare and contrast the strands with one another, and describe how and where each strand has been successfully used in practice. Dirkx indicates that transformative education is a stance that educators take toward relationships with learners rather than a strategy used on them; consequently, he offers minimal suggestions for implementing strategies that foster transformative learning.
  o Dr. John M. Dirkx, Associate Professor of Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education at Michigan State University, writes on the emotional and spiritual dimensions of transformative learning theory. Dirkx briefly describes Robert Boyd’s view of transformative education, which is grounded in the field of depth psychology, and offers examples of numerous scholars that have added to the research in this area of transformative education. Dirkx describes a perspective of transformative learning, known as the “mytho-poetic” view, which works with unconscious images to deepen a learner’s sense of wholeness. In addition to theoretical content, Dirkx offers a 4-step process that educators can use to work with images in educational contexts.
  o [http://www.calpro-online.org/eric/docs/dig223.pdf](http://www.calpro-online.org/eric/docs/dig223.pdf)

  o Authored by Dr. John M. Dirkx, Associate Professor of Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education at Michigan State University, this article explores how educators can use the idea of emotion-laden images to foster transformation in adult learners. Dirkx’ theory of transformative learning is grounded in depth psychology and Jungian theory and involves the process of individuation, whereby individuals come to a deeper understanding, realization, and appreciation of who they are. The emotional aspects of Dirkx’ transformative learning theory are connected to parts of Mezirow’s cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning, demonstrating that the two can and should co-exist. Dirkx offers suggestions and strategies for educators that wish to foster transformative learning through work with images; therefore, this article may be particularly useful for those that wish to incorporate affect into their classroom learning environment.

  o Dr. Kelly McGonigal is a health psychologist and lecturer at Stanford University and a leading expert on the mind-body relationship. Dr. McGonigal describes transformative learning, from the view of Jack Mezirow, and outlines the purpose of transformative learning in many different disciplines. McGonigal offers examples of the importance of transformative learning in the areas of science, mathematics, humanities, and social sciences, explaining in each area how educators may be expected to change students’ perspectives. In addition, McGonigal outlines several strategies, currently being utilized by Stanford faculty members, to enhance transformative learning in the classroom. This article is a useful resource for faculty members in any discipline that wish develop transformative thinking in their courses; however, content specific examples in
science related courses may make this article more appealing to faculty members in the hard sciences.

  - Authored by Dr. Jack Mezirow, Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, this article provides a detailed description of the cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning, which involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection and discourse. Mezirow, thought by many to be the father of transformative learning, identifies what he considers to be the goal of adult education, which is to develop autonomous thinking. Mezirow offers practical and useful classroom methods associated with different aspects of his cognitive-rational approach, making his article a valuable resource for educators interested in improving the potential for transformation in their classroom.

  - Dr. Jack Mezirow, Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, offers a detailed explanation of critical-dialectical discourse, a critical aspect of his cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning. Mezirow defines discourse as a dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values. Consequently, it involves perspective taking in an attempt to assess and choose among beliefs. Dr. Mezirow succinctly describes discourse as it applies to adult education; however, the article is lacking in its ability to connect discourse to his theory of transformative education. Educators interested in Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning should read Mezirow’s 1997 article, *Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice*, for an overview of his cognitive-rational theory prior to reading *Transformative Learning as Discourse*.

  - Written by Dr. Jack Mezirow, Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, this article provides the reader with a brief examination of the main points in the cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning. Mezirow provides a listing of common characteristics of how adults learn and provides connections to his theory of
transformative learning. Dr. Mezirow’s article is an easy read and is recommended for educators that wish to learn more about his cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning.


  - Dr. Edward W. Taylor, professor of Adult Education at Penn State University – Harrisburg, outlines the relationship between emotions and reason and the role that implicit memory plays in transformative learning theory. Dr. Taylor identifies that Mezirow’s cognitive-rational theory of transformative learning is much too dependent on rationality and argues that one cannot reason without emotions or feelings. His approach is grounded in research in the fields of neurobiology and psychology which provide an explanation of how transformation could occur outside the focal awareness of the individual (implicit memory). Dr. Taylor intends to expand on the cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning by offering approaches for educators to manage the emotional nature of learning in the classroom (p. 232). An overview of emotional literacy and multiple intelligences is offered to this end. Dr. Taylor offers little in the sense of practical, useful classroom strategies. This article is worthwhile for educators that wish to learn more about recent research that supports the role of emotions in the process of meaning making.

  - Dr. Edward W. Taylor, professor of Adult Education at Penn State University – Harrisburg, does a wonderful job of providing the reader with an update on the various perspectives of transformative learning theory. Taylor outlines transformative education from the perspective of Jack Mezirow but expands on Mezirow’s cognitive-rational (psychocritical) theory to include summaries of the following approaches: psychoanalytic, psychodevelopmental, social emancipatory, neurobiological, cultural-spiritual, race-centric, and planetary. Dr. Taylor offers suggestions for educators based on recent research and outlines specific classroom strategies that may be utilized to foster transformative learning; however, he cautions that fostering transformative learning is much more than implementing a series of instructional strategies with adult learners (p. 13). This article is a worthwhile read for educators that wish to expand their view of transformative education.
  - [http://meds.queensu.ca/ohse/assets/new_article_tl.pdf](http://meds.queensu.ca/ohse/assets/new_article_tl.pdf)
  o Dr. Annette Wyandotte, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs at Indiana University Southeast, and Dr. Seonmin Huh, lecturer at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, Korea both contribute to this work that is dedicated to introduce the phenomenological perspective of transformative learning theory. Wyandotte and Huh’s phenomenological approach views transformation through intellectual, psychological, and moral dimensions that foster personal and social change (p. 2) and posits that an authentic learning landscape, as described by educational philosopher Maxine Greene, is necessary for transformation to occur. Drs. Wyandotte and Huh provide educators with strategies and techniques that foster the intellectual, psychological, and moral dimensions of transformation and describe how these dimensions overlap to form the phenomenological approach to transformative learning theory.

VI. Supplemental Resources
The resources listed below were used in the research and creation of this web document. We hope you find them useful in your teaching of adult learners.

• Transformative Learning Theory Website
  o Offers a detailed overview of Transformative Learning
  o http://transformativelearningtheory.com/

• IU Southeast Strategic Plan: 2010-2015
  o See Goal 3 – Embracing Diversity (p. 14)

• Holistic Education Network
  o Provides an overview of Transformative Learning Theory and lists additional resources including books and websites for those interested in learning more about transformative education.
  o http://www.hent.org/transformative.htm