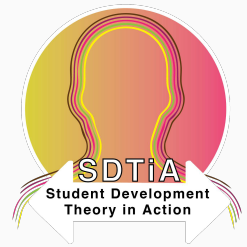


Case-Based Teaching



Pedagogical Rationale

Case-based teaching is a problem-posing pedagogical approach that promotes deep learning through critical thinking, reflexivity, and dialogue. Consistent with critical inclusive pedagogies (CIPs), case-based teaching decenters the instructor as the authoritative knowledge holder and instead creates learning conditions for the co-construction of knowledge among students and between students and the instructor (Tuitt et al., 2023).

The cases in our book were designed to be used in different ways. This allows instructors to connect case analysis to the SDTiA framework. The cases should not be seen as neutral or objective stories. They reflect real experiences shaped by social context, institutional practices, and location. In this way, the case analysis “empowers educators to design theoretically-grounded classroom and practice interventions that are evidence-based, equity-minded, and culturally responsive” **(Chapter 1)**.

Implementation Strategies

Instructors can employ case-based teaching using a range of approaches, each emphasizing different dimensions of the SDTiA framework. Cases may be used individually or collaboratively and can be engaged through written analyses, structured discussions, reflective writing, or multimodal responses.

- One common approach is **case interpretation**, in which students use the guiding prompts we provide to analyze a case. This approach is particularly useful in introductory courses, as it helps students build familiarity with theoretical language while beginning to make theory-to-practice connections.
- Cases may also be used for **contextual analysis**, where students focus on how institutional type, policy, culture, and sociopolitical conditions shape the experiences described in the case. This approach shifts attention away from individual students as problems and toward the environments in which development occurs, reinforcing SDTiA's emphasis on sociopolitical context.
- Another approach centers **positionality-focused case reading**, inviting students to reflect on how their identities, professional roles, and lived experiences shape what they notice in a case and which developmental outcomes they prioritize. This method makes sense-making of informal theory an object of inquiry, offering educators the “profound opportunity to document informal theories” **(Chapter 1)**.
- Instructors may also use a single case to facilitate **theory comparison**, asking students to analyze the same case using multiple developmental frameworks.

Students then examine what each theory makes visible or obscures, surfacing tensions, limits, and underlying assumptions across theories. The SDTiA framework posits that theory should “evolve as educators traverse theory borderlands, blending theories to address the evolving needs of students and institutions” (**Chapter 1**).

- Cases can also be used as sites for **case extension or re-authoring**, particularly in advanced student development theory courses. In this approach, students revise or extend one of the cases in our book by adding missing perspectives, altering contextual variables, or imagining alternative institutional responses. This method positions students as knowledge producers and encourages ethical accountability. This approach to case analysis offers educators another opportunity within the SDTiA framework to build on theory and assess practice.
- Finally, instructors may use cases to support **practice-to-case translation**, inviting students to compare the book’s cases with situations from their own professional contexts. This approach strengthens students’ ability to translate theory across settings and reinforces the relevance of student development theory to lived practice.
- Across each of these approaches, instructors are encouraged to pair case-based teaching with the **Formative Feedback** teaching method (included here – Teaching Method 7). After engaging a case—whether through writing, discussion, or reflection—students exchange feedback that identifies strengths, suggests areas for growth, and poses probing questions. This feedback process reinforces the iterative nature of learning and deepens students’ theoretical reasoning.

Instructional Value

Using cases in multiple ways allows instructors to scaffold learning and revisit the same case across a course as students’ theoretical understanding, reflexivity, and critical awareness deepen. Through written, discussion-based, and reflective engagements—supported by formative feedback—students learn to approach student development theory as contextual, contested, and ethically consequential. Case-based teaching helps develop the analytical and reflective skills central to the SDTiA framework, which educators use to improve campus learning conditions for all students.