

“Battling the Undead: The Perpetual Mythology of Education and Learning”

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The history of education is rife with innovative ideas that have not withstood scientific scrutiny, but which nonetheless persist in the popular mindset and dramatically affect educational policies and pedagogical practices. New methods and ideas often hit the market in advance of adequate evidence for their effectiveness, and remain entrenched and influential long after anticipated evidence fails to materialize or produces a more nuanced picture. For years researchers and instructors have been identifying and debunking inaccurate beliefs about how people learn, but these efforts often have little practical impact. Based primarily on common sense and powerful anecdotes, instructors and policy makers often express certainty regarding the inferiority of lecturing and multiple-choice tests, the relevance of independent intelligences and right-brained learning, and the uselessness of standardized tests especially in light of the presumed prevalence of students who are inherently bad test-takers. An examination of the relevant scientific evidence on such topics reveals a nuanced picture that is not reducible to simplistic sound bites. In this talk I will summarize the research on several myths pertaining to education and learning, and I will address some of the psychological mechanisms that make the beliefs so resilient despite contradictory evidence.

Speaker Bio

Jeffrey D. Holmes is Professor of Psychology at Ithaca College where he teaches courses on psychological testing and assessment, abnormal psychology, controversies in psychology, and introductory psychology. His professional training is in Counseling Psychology, and his research and scholarly interests focus broadly on issues pertaining to the teaching of psychology as a scientific discipline, students' beliefs and attitudes about psychology, and attitude measurement. He is the author of *Great Myths in Education and Learning*, as well as a book introducing social psychology for pre-college and beginning undergraduate students. He has published several book chapters, as well as articles in journals such as *Teaching of Psychology*, *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, and *the Social Science Journal*. He is currently Treasurer of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, and he is a licensed psychologist specializing in psychological testing.