George Mason University
Graduate School of Education and Human Development
Early Childhood Program-UTEEM

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSE YOUNG LEARNERS (BIRTH - AGE 3):
Universality and Diversity in Child and Family Development

EDUT 521 (3 Credits)
COURSE SYLLABUS
Spring 2009

Instructor: Andrea Sobel, Ed.D
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Office: Robinson A
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Day: To be arranged
Room: Robinson A349
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Purpose and Relationship to Program:
This course focuses on one of the strands in an integrated approach to preparing teachers to work with culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse young children, their families and their community. Teachers are prepared to work with young children with diverse learning needs in a variety of inclusive community settings. This course is linked to a full-time field placement with diverse young children. This course enables students to continue their study of development and to increase their skills as observers and interpreters of the behavior of very young children as it is seen in family and community contexts.

Course Description and Format:
This course provides students with knowledge of the development of infants and toddlers in family/cultural contexts. Students will explore the role of the family, community, and the early childhood educator in providing frameworks for understanding and interpreting behavior of children birth through age three. Students will examine the research on overall development and, in particular, the role of attachment on the development of socio-emotional well being. Students will discuss the factors that place infants and toddlers at developmental risks and examine the means for preventing some of these risk factors. They will learn about various disabilities and about the ways in which risk factors and disabilities affect the functional capacities of very young children. Students will explore issues of social justice as they impact the family and community. An appreciation of the critical role of families and culture in supporting the development of infants and children and overcoming societal and personal challenges will be integrated throughout the course. Students will be given the opportunity to explore their own early development and the effects it has on their work with young children.

This class will meet via seminars and on-line throughout the semester. This enables students to continuously link their internship experiences with the knowledge they are acquiring in the classroom. Seminars will consist of discussions, presentations and reflection through journaling and quick writes. Students are expected to utilize their course readings during seminars and on-
line discussions, and to respond to questions and engage in productive learning and to integrate course readings and class information into their written assignments to demonstrate content knowledge. In addition, students will plan and lead a seminar on a topic pertinent to the early care and education of very young diverse children and their families. It is expected that the presentation will contribute to their understanding of the key theories, research, and practices related to the overall development of very young children and their families.

**Overall Student Outcomes:**
At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe and critically examine the major theories, constructs, and research related to development as they apply to the lives of culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse infants and toddlers and their families.
2. Examine the transactional nature of overall development of infants and toddlers in the context of the family, community, socioeconomic conditions, and culture.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the developmental process of parenting during the infant-toddler period of child development.
4. Understand the role of culture in child-rearing practices and its role in describing and making meaning of the behavior of infants and toddlers.
5. Identify typical developmental milestones of diverse children from the prenatal period to age three and their cultural variations.
6. Observe and describe overall development, including the social emotional domain, as it occurs in natural environments and through play.
7. Identify environmental and biological/physical/medical at risk factors that can contribute to possible developmental risk and atypical development across domains.
8. Discuss the etiology of major disabilities and demonstrate the skill to select culturally and linguistically appropriate resources to use with diverse families and their very young children.
9. Identify culturally and linguistically responsive and research-based professional practices that facilitate development in various domains and promote family-centered practices in natural environments.
10. Plan and present a professional development session for adult learners on developmental issues that impact diverse infants and toddlers and support family-centered practices.
11. Provide critical and constructive feedback to peers on issues related to development and diversity.
12. Demonstrate the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions, understandings of social justice issues, and the use of critical reflection in the work with culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse infants and toddlers and their families.

**Relationship to Professional Standards:**
This course is aligned with the following integrated standards of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

- **Human growth and development (birth through adolescence):**
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the physical, social emotional, and intellectual development of children and their individual learning differences and the ability to use this understanding in guiding learning experiences;
o Demonstrate an understanding of the nature and characteristics of major disabling and at-risk conditions, including social-emotional development issues;
o Demonstrate an understanding that children’s development occurs in the sociocultural context of family and community;
o Develop an understanding of medical aspects of young children with disabling and at-risk conditions and the management of neurodevelopmental and motor disabilities, including emergency care and the role of health care professionals in the lives of individuals with disabilities;
o Develop an understanding of the theories and techniques of family-centered intervention, including the role of culture, language, and disability;
o Develop an understanding of the role that economic, social, racial, ethnic, religious, physical, and mental factors may play on development issues related to but not limited to attention deficit disorders, substance abuse, child abuse, and family disruptions;
o Develop an understanding of the linguistic, sociological, cultural, cognitive, and psychological basis of language and literacy development;

Required Texts:


Required Readings on Reserve


Recommended Texts:


General Course Requirements

1. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities, it is imperative that students keep up with the readings and participate in class.

2. Class attendance is important. If, due to an emergency, students will not be in class, they must call the instructor and leave a message.

3. The university requires that all pagers and cell phones be turned off before class begins. Laptops and other electronic devices are to be used for educational and learning purposes only and should not be used during class time to check email, surf the web, or communicate with people outside of the class unless part of the class activity.

4. It is expected that assignments will be turned in on time (the beginning of the class in which they are due). However, it is recognized that graduate students occasionally have serious problems that prevent work completion. If such a dilemma arises, students should speak to the instructor in a timely fashion.

Written Assignments

All written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation as graduate-level writing. The American Psychological Association (APA) style (recent edition) will be followed for all written work. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the GMU library web guide at [http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/](http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/).

All written assignments must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. The University Writing Center (Robinson A114) 703-993-1200 is a free writing resource open to all GMU students, including graduate students. The Writing Center offers individual, group, and online tutoring sessions in a comfortable, supportive. The English Language Institute also offers help to graduate students who are second language learners.

Students will:

- Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. Remember that longer is not necessarily better. Avoid wordiness and redundancy.
- Develop points coherently and thoroughly. Ensure that points are clearly linked to topic.
- Refer to appropriate readings, studies, and examples to document and support your statements. Citations must adhere to APA guidelines. Avoid judgmental statements.
- Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 70</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A+ is possible if work is of exceptional high quality and includes work above and beyond that required for the course

Grading Policy

Students in a graduate program must maintain a 3.000 GPA (B average). Endorsement coursework grades must be C or better for undergraduate courses, and B or better for graduate courses. Grades of B minus or better are required for all graduate-level education coursework for licensure. Students with a C or lower in a licensure course must re-take the course and earn a B minus or better to be recommended for Virginia licensure. Only two grades of C will be allowed for completion of the master's degree.

College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) Statement of Expectations:
The CEHD expects that all students abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior in class and at internship sites, with professors, peers, families, community members, guest presenters, and with the children.

- The Virginia Department of Education and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education promote standards of professional competence and dispositions. Dispositions are values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and all members of the learning community.

- The Graduate School of Education expects students, faculty, and staff to exhibit professional dispositions through a:
  - Commitment to the profession
  - Commitment to honoring professional ethical standards
  - Commitment to key elements of professional practice
  - Commitment to being a member of a learning community
  - Commitment to democratic values and social justice

- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.

- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/policy/newpolicy/1301gen.html. Click on responsible Use of Computing Policy at the bottom of the screen.

- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

Note: To determine whether the campus is closed due to inclement weather, call 703-993-1000 or go to www.gmu.edu.
DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS and evaluation criteria

1. Attendance and Participation (10 points)
Because active participation and engagement are imperative for optimal learning, preparation for and participation in in-class activities will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Students attend class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class period.
- Students complete readings and prepare for class activities prior to class as is evidenced by their ability to discuss and write about the concepts presented and examined in the texts as well as participate fully in related activities.
- Students are actively involved in in-class learning experiences as is evidenced by (1) participating in all activities, (2) engaging in small and large group discussions, (3) completing written work related to the activities, and (4) supporting the participation and learning of classmates.
- Students show evidence of critical reflective thinking through in-class discussions, activities, and written reflections.

All assignments are expected to be submitted on time. Modifications needed due to disabilities or special circumstances to meet course requirements as outlined in syllabus must be discussed with instructor.

Evaluation Criteria: evidence of comments directly related to the readings, critical reflection of own assumptions, regular and thoughtful participation in in-class discussions and experiential learning activities, and sharing of observations and learning connected to experiences with children, families, community and internship site.

2. Journals and Blackboard discussions (15 points)
Students are required to keep a journal to reflect and respond to the assigned readings. Students can also use it to describe their observations of young children’s development, the social justice issues affecting development, and pose their questions. Students may email their journal entry before class, or bring a hard copy to class. A journal entry is expected in every class session.

Students are expected to become familiar with Blackboard. Blackboard is an online resource that will be used throughout the semester. To access Blackboard-GSE enter the URL https://gmu.blackboard.com into your browser location field.

The purpose of this assignment is to promote reflection, reading and sharing among students. Students will be required to respond to readings, provide ideas, and pause questions for discussion in class. During full time placement, students will participate in a blackboard discussion on the two following topics:

- Developmental Red Flags and Activities (whole class posting)

As part of our discussion on developmental domains, you will need to identify developmental red flags, and activities which would help to facilitate development for one area of development discussed (cognitive development, social/emotional development, or motor development).

- Self Regulation/Behavior and/or Issues of Attachment/Social Emotional Well-Being
(whole class posting)

Evaluation Criteria: Students’ journal entries should reflect evidence of reading the course material. They are evaluated according to the depth of the questions and reflections, and the connections made between observations of children and the course readings. Each student will participate in an on-going discussion via Blackboard. Students will be expected to participate in dialogue regarding children’s self-regulation and socio-emotional well-being. Students will share observed behaviors, and will discuss specific developmental and cultural factors and social justice issues that may be impacting children’s behavior. Students will also consider various intervention strategies, specifically linked to developmental issues. You will be graded based on your own postings, as well as your participation and responses in the large group. You must provide evidence of links to your readings, especially of Shonkoff, during your discussion.

DUE: Ongoing

3. Brain Development exploration (20 Points)

The purpose of this assignment is to connect an understanding of brain development with your integrated observations of infants/toddlers. The assignment consists of three parts.

a) Identify a child either at ACCA or Higher Horizons to observe carefully. Keep detailed observation notes of the child for a morning. You are expected to observe a child and describe their overall development. You must address their cognitive, motor, social/emotional development, including their play with toys and families/caregivers.

b) Using the Zero to Three Brain Map - http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_util_babybrainflash
Find the age of the child you have observed and review the different areas of the brain to read more about how the baby’s brain is developing at this age, as well as specific issues that arise for caregivers.

c) Write a paper that provides a rich description of the child’s development. Provide ideas of what could be done to enrich the child’s development. Use Trawick, Shonkoff, & Batshaw, and other readings to help you understand your observations.

DUE: Week of October 5

4. Cultural Influences and development

(a) Autobiography (10 points)

This paper will help you consider your own family and cultural influences on childrearing practices and beliefs. Tell your birth story, but also explore your sociohistorical-cultural context. Encourage relatives, siblings, friends to help you gather a full birth story including gathering the stories that describe your parents’ understanding of their roles, family and community beliefs about raising infants and toddlers, the role of extended family, and other social, historical, political, economical issues that may have impacted your birth and early years of development such as immigration or loss/trauma. Find family and community members who can help you reconstruct the social, political, cultural, economic, and historical context when you were born.
Ask “what was it like in “those” days?” What was going on in the country? How did it affect the family? Explore your grandparents’ sociohistorical context. Think back to your earliest memories, and what you have been told about your birth and how you were as an infant/toddler. Also, consider your impressions of how babies and children are treated in your family today. Write a description of how various childrearing and developmental issues, including the various roles played by family members, are practiced in your family and community based on cultural and family beliefs, gender roles, routines and rituals. Reflect on issues of social justice that may have impacted your family and community. Consider also how emotion and care was demonstrated to young children in your family and by whom. Use , Gowen & Nebrig, Small, Trawick-Smith and other readings provided, as resources to help you explore your family story.

**DUE: Week of October 19**

(b) Cultural Research Paper (20 points)

The purpose of this paper is to develop a research-based understanding of development and child rearing practices and the impact of culture.

**Identify a culture other than your own that you want to examine more in-depth**

Write a research paper that is both reflective of the culture you have chosen and integrates all reviewed topics within child development, including language and literacy development. The paper should synthesize the cultural influences and beliefs as it relates to child rearing practices and development.

In particular, you will consider issues related to:
- feeding, sleeping, and toileting behaviors
- temperament and attachment
- developmental domains and issues
- language and literacy development
- views of disability
- family influences and factors
- historical, political, and social cultural context
- social justice issues
- behavior & guidance/discipline

In addition, describe in a separate section how you gained first hand knowledge from your family and how their insight compared/contrasted to the research literature. Also address how you would advocate for families from this cultural group in an early care and education setting.

Use your course readings and information, as well as information from your own research. Incorporate at least **FIVE RESEARCH BASED JOURNAL ARTICLES** as part of your comparisons, examples and/or references. Follow APA guidelines.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Rubrics used to evaluate written assignments are developed directly from assignment descriptions found in syllabus. The grading checklist/rubric for this assignment will be provided in the assessment packet. Additional criteria for written assignments are included in the following section.

**DUE: Week of November 16**
5. Presentation of Family-Practitioner Information Project: (25 points)

Research your assigned topic and plan and implement an interactive, hands-on, and creative 40 minute presentation. Obtain information about this topic and about available resources that you might use as an early interventionist/educator. **Schedule a meeting with the instructor before beginning your research to discuss the focus of your topic and presentation.**

You should develop a presentation that will explain the nature of the disability, risk factors, or issue, how it affects children's development, and ideas/resources for professionals working with children with this special need/issue.

The purpose of your class presentation will be to inform your classmates about the topic. Consider what they need to know, as professionals, about this issue. Prepare a handout that will be of use to them in their future work with young children.

**Your presentation should include:** (1) an overview/description and research related to the topic; (2) the impact on a child and family’s development; (3) cultural views and influences related to the topic; and (4) information for professionals to work with the child. You should provide a handout to your classmates, which includes (at a minimum): (1) a description of the disability/special need or issue; (2) practical information for working with children; (3) information related to cultural issues and variations; and (4) a listing of resources/references. Be creative in presenting this information to the class.

You must bring any sample brochures or other resource materials you received/collected on your topic, as well as information related to your experiences in contacting/talking/visiting with agencies while preparing your information file. **Be sure to contact agencies and organizations early in the semester to allow time for items to be mailed.**

**DUE: Week of November 30**

In addition, include your reflection of the project, focusing on your thoughts on researching and accessing materials, and reflections of the impact this topic had on you. Submit this reflection via email by the end of the week.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Rubrics used to evaluate presentations and written assignments are developed directly from assignment descriptions found in syllabus. The rubric for this presentation will be provided in the assessment packet. Additional criteria for written assignments are included in the following section.

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**Tentative Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic, Learning Experiences, Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1</td>
<td>Own Cultural Influences: Understanding self; learning/interaction style; “ghosts in the nursery” or own perception of children; and overview of Course Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 – 9:30</td>
<td>Video: <em>The First Years Last Forever</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Week of September 21  Seminar: The Adult-Child Dyad: Pregnancy/Childbirth and Culture; Newborn babies-reflexes, crying; Role of Culture: Childrearing practices, biology and culture, parenting/caregiving.

Selection of Group Project Topics:
Early Brain Development, Maternal Depression and Other Risk Factors, Premature and Medically Fragile Infants and Toddlers, and Play & Floortime

Reading: Trawick-Smith, Part 2, Ch 4-5
Shonkoff: Part I-Setting the stage

Week of October 5  Socio-emotional Development: Attachment, Infant Mental Health and Family Systems, Earliest Relationship and emotional development, Temperament, Play

Reading: Trawick-Smith, Part 2, Ch 9
Shonkoff: Part II- The nature and tasks of development

DUE: Team observation paper

Week of October 19  Typical Development: Physical growth and motor development; Brain development and play; Cognition and culture.
Reading: Trawick, Part 2, Ch 6-7
Batshaw Ch. 5

Due: Autobiography

Week of Nov 2  Atypical Development: Getting the diagnosis; Growing up with disability; Nutrition and Feeding, Motor development; Positioning, Disability and culture.

Reading: Batshaw, Ch 3, 4, 6-8

Week of Nov 16  Working with Vulnerable Families; Homelessness, Poverty, Mental health; Nov Understanding Sociohistorical contexts & impact on development

Reading: Shonkoff: Part III- The context for early development
DUE: Cultural Research Paper & Sharing in Class

Week of Nov 30  Presentation of Family-Practitioner Information Projects
Reflections and evaluations