Syllabus EDUC 543
Children, Family, Culture, and Schools, Ages 4-12

Wednesday: 7:20-10:00                Thompson Rm. 107

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I. Course Description

In this course, students will study how cultures and communities create frameworks for understanding and interpreting child development. Students will examine the interrelationship of children, families, schools, communities, and cultures. The course will highlight the critical roles of families in schooling and the importance of collaboration between schools and with families to support the development of the child. The study of children’s developing abilities in physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains will be linked to curriculum planning. Field observation is required.

II. Nature of Course Delivery

Students in this course will participate in large group discussions led by the instructor and in small group discussions and activities with their classmates. This course integrates a fieldwork observation and the use of technology.

III. Learning Outcomes

Students completing EDUC 543 will be able to:

1. Describe the stages of typical human development in the domains of cognition, language, social/emotional and physical in children ages 4-12.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the interconnections between culture, family, community, and school, and the dynamic interaction between teachers, parents and community members necessary to promote children’s growth and learning.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of contemporary theories of human development and their relevance to educational practices in elementary schools.
4. Understand the diversity of students and their families and demonstrate effective anti-bias educational approaches for use in classrooms with diverse learners.
5. Develop competency in observing and assessing development and learning in classroom settings using performance-based methods that are sensitive to students’ unique cultural/ethnic backgrounds.
6. Demonstrate the teacher’s role in working with families in culturally diverse communities and fostering their involvement in their children’s education.
IV. Standards

INTASC Standards

Principle #2: The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.

Principle #3: The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

Principle #8: The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.

Principle #10: The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support student’s learning and well-being.

ISTE National Education Technology Standards

I. Teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of technology operations and concepts.

V. Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practice and lifelong learning.

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V. Required Texts


VI. Assignments

Field Observation: Fifteen hours of field observation is required for this course. The students will conduct observations of two types (2 ethnographic records and 8 anecdotal observations) in an assigned school and relate what they have seen to topics discussed in class. Students will conduct an interview with their cooperating teacher. Field observations and the teacher interview will be kept in an observation binder.

Ethnographic Records (2) (10%)

Teacher Interview (5%) Students will interview their cooperating teacher to determine which students would make good candidates for the case study assignment. Students will type up their interview questions and the teacher responses.

Anecdotal Observations (6) (30%)

Collaborative Community Project (10%) Students will conduct a collaborative investigation of the community surrounding their school and compare their school community with those of other schools. Results of the investigation will be presented in class. See attached guidelines.

Comparative Case Study (10%) Pairs of students will conduct a detailed comparative analysis of their case study students. The comparative case study will be done using a software program called Inspiration. See attached guidelines.

Case Study (30%) Students will write a detailed case study of a child with a different cultural background from their own in the classroom in which they are observing. See attached guidelines. Case studies will be entered into a course database.

Blackboard Discussion (5%) Students will participate in electronic discussions related to professional goals and expectations through the use of GSE’s conferencing system, Blackboard. You can access this electronic bulletin board at http://blackboard.gmu.edu.

Evaluation: High quality work is expected on all assignments and in class. Grades will be based on the completion of course requirements and on the scope, quality, and creativity of the assignments. All assignments will be graded according to the attached assignment guidelines. Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor. All field observations must be completed satisfactorily in order to pass this course.

Grading Scale:

A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 80-86; C = 70-79.
VIII. Electronic Requirements

Students must have access to email and the internet, either at home, work or GMU campus. GMU provides students with free email accounts, which must be accessed for information, sent from the university or the Graduate School of Education. Go to [Http://mason.gmu.edu](http://mason.gmu.edu) for information on accessing email.

After introductory training (during class meeting 2 or 3), students will also be expected to access Blackboard prior to every class session to download agendas and other pertinent course documents. Blackboard can be accessed by going to [http://blackboard.gmu.edu](http://blackboard.gmu.edu).

IX. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

George Mason University Honor Code:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University, have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarizing, or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the event that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. For further information, please refer to the University Catalog or Website at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu). Code in the University catalog can be found online at [http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html).

George Mason University Policy on Disabilities:

This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs, or activities of all State and local Governments. Under ADA a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as: learning, working, walking, speaking, hearing, breathing, and/or taking care of oneself. If a student has a disability and needs course adaptations or accommodations because of that disability, it must be established with the faculty, in writing, at the beginning of the semester so arrangements can be made. Please call the Disability Resource Center for required documentation (703-993-2474). The Disability Resource Center website is at [http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/).
Course Calendar

January 21
Introductory Session and Review of Syllabus

January 28**
TBD
Development and Culture
Reading Assignment Due: Shade et al., Pages 1-79
McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 14

Class location, time and date to be determined at Class one

February 4
Development and Culture
Reading Assignment Due: Shade et al., Pages 81-139;
Online Introductions Due by 2/11

February 11
Families and Schools
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 12
Ethnographic Record #1 Due

***Note – at this session we will combine with Tuesday Class and they will attend our Weds. session

February 17 (Tuesday)
Cognitive Development
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapters 1 and 4.
Teacher Interview Due

*** Note – at this session, we will combine with the Tuesday class and attend their Tues. session

February 25
Cognitive Development
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 5
Ethnographic Record #2 Due
Online Discussion Due 3/3

March 3
What is Intelligence?
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 6

March 10
GMU Spring Break

March 17
Language and Literacy
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 7 & 8
Anecdotal Observations Due (1-4)

March 24
Personal and Emotional Development
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 9

March 31
Social Development
Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapters 11 and 13; Reread Shade et al., pages 39-60
Online Discussion Due 4/5

April 5  Moral Development

Reading Assignment Due: McDevitt & Ormrod, Chapter 10

Anecdotal Observations Due (5-8)

April 14  Collaborative Community Project Working Session

April 21  Collaborative Community Projects Due/ Presentations

April 28  Comparative Case Study Working Session

May 5  Class

Comparative Case Study Due

May 12  Class meeting to pick up Comparative Case Studies and turn in Individual Case Study Assignments. Important- Reserve as “Snow Day” make up date if needed.

Case Study Due
Detailed Assignment Descriptions

1. Field Observations
Each student is assigned to an elementary school classroom and is expected to conduct a series of targeted observations. You are expected to observe for a total of 30 hours for EDUC 542 and EDUC 543. For this course you will hand in two ethnographic records and eight anecdotal observations based on field notes.
All ethnographic records and anecdotal observations should begin with the following information:
Observer:
Date and Time of Observation:
Length of Observation:
School:
Grade Level:
Subjects/Activities:

Focus of Observation:
- Each observation should begin with a focus paragraph that briefly explains the focus of the observation and references the assigned theorists. Focus paragraphs can be up to a half a page in length.
- Each observation should conclude with a summary paragraph in which you 1) interpret what you have observed by relating it to the assigned theory, 2) suggest implications for development in terms of the assigned theory, and 3) raise questions about what you have observed as it relates to the assigned theory.
- Each observation should be double-spaced in 12-point font. Make sure to proofread and spell-check your work.

List of Required Observations
We will use readings and discussions to define these terms together in class so that you know what you are looking for. As the semester progresses you will be expected to use the readings to define the focus for your observations.

Ethnographic Records of Classroom Culture (About 3 pages each)
  1. Classroom Culture: The teacher, rules and expectations (Week 1)
  2. Classroom Culture: Diversity in the Classroom (Week 2)

Anecdotal Observations of Case Study Student (About 5 pages each)
  1. Physical Description and Physical Development (Week 3)
  2. Cognitive Development: Piaget and Vygotsky (Week 4)
  3. Cognitive Development Part 2: Information Processing Theory (Week 5)
  4. Reading and Writing Development: Chall (Week 6)
  5. Personal and Emotional Development: Erikson (Week 7)
  6. Social Development and Peer interactions: Selman (Week 8)
  7. Moral Development: Kohlberg and Gilligan (Week 9)
  8. Open observation: Supplement data for case study (Week 10)
Evaluation of Ethnographic Records and Anecdotal Observations
Your observations will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
• The student has created a description of the child/teacher/classroom that is rich, specific, and detailed
• The student has focused the observation on the assigned topics
• The student has written a focus paragraph that articulates the focus of the observation and references the appropriate theories.
• The student has created a narrative that is organized and coherent
• The student has written a summary paragraph that relates what was observed to the assigned theory
• The student has written an observation that demonstrates grammatical correctness and proofreading

Scale for each component: Consistently Usually Seldom

2. Teacher Interview (About 2 pages)
Teacher Interview and Reflection: Determine Case Study possibilities

Evaluation of Teacher Interview
According to the following criteria:
• The student has asked the questions and recorded the teacher’s responses.
• The student has typed up an interview that is organized and coherent.
• The student has typed up an interview that demonstrates grammatical correctness and proofreading
• The student has reflected on the case study possibilities in a thoughtful and sensitive manner.

Scale for each component: Consistently Usually Seldom

3. Collaborative Community Project
The purpose of the Group Community Project is to learn about the school and the community surrounding it and to use the information to understand and interpret the developmental learning experiences of the children in the school. The project will be conducted collaboratively by the cohort assigned to each school. The work can be divided up, but students should always work in pairs, at the minimum. Each school group will create one final product. Your project should focus on the community surrounding the school within 1) a 1-mile radius OR 2) the radius within which the majority of students live.

Part I: Scavenger Hunt: Gaining Information and Experiencing the Community
Choose some or all of the following. Be sure to collect sufficient demographic information and be sure to experience aspects of the community as a resident would.
• Go to the community town hall or visitor center for maps and demographic information.
• Find out what the community is famous for and go there.
• Go to a local restaurant and have coffee or a meal.
• Visit the local library, fire station, police station, YMCA or community center, a grocery store, etc. Talk with or interview someone there, either a worker or a patron.
• Collect family and community demographics: How many residents? What languages do they speak? Where do they work? What are the socio-economic demographics?
• Find out what percentage of children walk to school. Ride the bus. Are driven by their parents or other family members.
• Find a teacher who lives in the community and interview them.
• Walk to the school from a block away and record your impressions.
• Do some non-classroom shadowing in the school. (For example, sit in the office for an hour at the beginning or end of school, shadow the vice-principal, nurse, or special teacher.) Get permission first.
• Find out how many churches, mosques, and synagogues are in the community.
• Do/see something particularly related to your case study children: drive by their houses, visit their local playgrounds, visit their after school activities, etc.
• Other information and experiences of your own devising.

II. Creating a Product That Describes the School and Its Community
Choose two of the following. YOU MUST INCLUDE TECHNOLOGY in some way. Be sure to be informative, creative and organized in depicting the community.
Dear Mom Packet (“Dear Mom, I just moved here and this is what it’s like . . .”). Include objects, materials, or artifacts.
Suggestions: video, 3-dimensional Map, Model, Mural, Charts and graphs, PowerPoint presentation, Posters, Photomontage and /or Other products of your own devising; check ideas with instructor.

Part III Comparing Diverse Communities
Each group will present its work to the class. As a whole we will discuss the similarities and differences of these communities and implications this has for teaching.

Evaluation Criteria for Collaborative Community Project (group grade)
Your collaborative community project will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

• The project was informative and comprehensive
• The modes of presentation were creative and engaging
• The presentation was well organized, clear, and understandable
• The students were sensitive to all of the community’s constituents. They were respectful of differences and avoided stereotypes

Scale for each component: Consistently Usually Seldom

4. Comparative Case Study (Collaborative Assignment)
The comparative case study is an analysis of the case study of the child you have observed in your field placement and a case study of a child written by one of your classmates. The purpose is to help you to understand the influences of development and socio-cultural context on children’s growth. This analysis will help you to construct
classrooms that are welcoming to children of various backgrounds and abilities. With an assigned partner you will use Inspiration, a software program, to create a series of webs to display this information.

Each comparative case study should be done using the program Inspiration to include the following:

- physical descriptions of both children
- a comparison of their socio-cultural contexts (family, school, community, ethnicity)
- a comparison of the children’s capabilities in the developmental areas (physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, moral)
- a comparison of the children’s strengths, areas of need, and special interests
- a discussion of the teaching implications for the children

Your ethnographic records, anecdotal observations, teacher interviews, and collaborative community projects constitute the data for your comparative case study. Your knowledge of course material (child development theory and theory on cultural influences on development) should be woven throughout. **Support your conclusions with theory and examples from the data.**

In addition to the webs, the paper should contain an introduction and a conclusion in narrative form, single-sided, double-spaced, of about two pages each pages in length. Use APA format.

**Evaluation of the Comparative Case Study** (collaborative grade)
Your comparative case study will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The students use observational data to compare the children’s development including examples of physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development
- The students use theories of child development to analyze comparisons of the children
- The students demonstrate knowledge of how culture (family, school, community, race, ethnicity) both their own and the influences the conclusions made about the students
- The students have written an introduction to the comparative case study that demonstrates: clarity, organization, grammatical correctness, proofreading, and uses of APA format
- The students have written a conclusion to the comparative case study that demonstrates: clarity, organization, grammatical correctness, proofreading, and uses of APA format
- The webs are comprehensive and easy to follow.

Scale for each component:  **Consistently**      **Usually**      **Seldom**
5. Case Study
The case study is a rich portrait of the development of the child of a different cultural background from your own that you observed in the school context. It is based on your written observations and includes descriptive information about family, community, and cultural context. The purpose is to help you learn how to observe children and collect data systematically so that you gain insight into development. These skills will enable you to assess students and plan developmentally and culturally appropriate learning experiences for them.

**Each case study should include the following:**
- A physical description of the child
- A summary of the child’s socio-cultural context (family, school, community, ethnicity)
- A summary of the child’s capability in the developmental areas (physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, moral) supported by specific examples from your observations
- A description of the teaching implications for the child
- A reflection about how culture, both the child’s and your own, has affected your observations of and conclusions about the child.

Your observations and other notes constitute the data for your case study. Your knowledge of course material (child development theory and research, the influence of family, community, culture and school on development) should be woven throughout.

**Support your conclusions with theory and examples from your observations.**

The paper should be written in narrative form, single-sided, double-spaced, and between 12 to 15 pages in length. Use APA format. Attach your ethnographic records and anecdotal observations as an appendix.

**Evaluation of Case Study**
Your case study will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The student uses observational data to paint a comprehensive portrait of the child’s development including examples of physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development
- The student uses theories of child development to support statements about the child
- The student demonstrates knowledge of how culture (school, community, race, ethnicity, family) of both the observer and the child influences conclusions about the child
- The student has written a case study that demonstrates: clarity, organization, grammatical correctness, proofreading, and the use of APA format

Scale for each component: **Consistently**  **Usually**  **Seldom**

6. **Blackboard Discussion**: Aligned with course work for 543 and connected to course work for 542. Additional details to follow.