C&I 518: Critical Issues in Early Childhood Education
Spring 2016

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**Course Description:** This course is a survey of current issues and practices in early childhood development and curriculum programming for children birth to age eight and their families. The course emphasizes current research on child development and learning, program development, instructional methods, and evidence-based practices related to learning, optimal development and instruction. It also serves as an overview and analysis of cultural context as it influences educational and programmatic decision-making for children and families.

Pre-requisite: Consent of instructor

**Course Objectives:**

1. To use current research literature on child development and learning as a framework to critique pedagogy and models for early childhood programs and curriculum.
2. To understand and analyze the developmental bases of early childhood programs, planning, and practice.
3. To understand and analyze the developmental bases of curriculum planning, programming, and practice for children aged 3 to 8 years.
4. To study the diverse social and cultural contexts that promote or hinder the effectiveness of programs and models for promoting optimal development and learning for all children while considering the complexity and multiplicity of cultural variables and identities (e.g. ethnic, linguistic, racial, gender, physical abilities, socioeconomic, etc.).
5. To become familiar with the perspective of critical pedagogy in understanding educational/developmental decision-making in programs for young children.

**Potential Topics:**

- Historical and Theoretical Bases for Programs in Early Childhood
- Political Influences on Early Childhood Programming
- How do we define “quality” in Early Childhood?
- Cultural Context, Optimal Development, and Equality
- Early Childhood Program models
- The Changing Role of the Teacher in Developing Programs for Diverse Populations
NAEYC 2010 Initial Standards

**Standard 1: Promoting Child Development and Learning**
Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs are grounded in a child development knowledge base. They use their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.

**Standard 2: Building Family and Community Relationships**
Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children’s families and communities. They know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children’s families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children’s development and learning.

**Standard 3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families**
Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. They know about and understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment. They know about and use systematic observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence the development of every child.

**Standard 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches**
Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children’s ages, characteristics, and the settings within which teaching and learning occur. They understand and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children and families. Candidates know, understand, and use a wide array of developmentally appropriate approaches, instructional strategies, and tools to connect with children and families and positively influence each child’s development and learning.

**Standard 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum**
Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs use their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for each and every young child. Candidates understand the importance of developmental domains and academic (or content) disciplines in early childhood curriculum. They know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas, including academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen their understanding. Candidates use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curriculum that promotes comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.

**Standard 6: Becoming a Professional**
Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on their work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. They are informed advocates for sound educational practices and policies.
Course Requirements:

**Article Critiques (10%)**
You can select a current research article from a peer-reviewed journal about an early childhood critical issue or approved topic and write a 3-5 page critique based on the article. Suggested guidelines for writing an article critique are attached.

**Literature Review (45%)**
You can select 6 or more current research articles from peer-reviewed journals about an early childhood critical issue or approved topic and write a 10-12 page literature review based on a synthesis of the articles.

For an additional 5 %, you can share your article critique or literature review with the class.

**Book Club (30%)**
Groups (consisting of 2-3 students each) can read and present a book related to an early childhood critical issue or approved topic. The group’s presentation (30 minutes in length) should provide the class with a description and analysis of the content of the book. The presentation should be done in a way that creatively teaches the class about the content.

**Book Review (20%)**

**Early Childhood Program Demonstration (25%)**
You can prepare a demonstration lesson for the class that models one of the prevalent early childhood programs (i.e. Montessori, Reggio Emilia approach, etc.). The demonstration should be done in a way that creatively teaches the class about the program/model. You should provide the class with a handout that summarizes key tenants of the model and the research that supports the model.

**Academic Dishonesty**
A university course demands the highest standards of academic integrity from both the instructor and the students. Any deviation from acceptable ethical standards on a student’s part will result in referral to the student disciplinary board that administers the Student Academic Integrity Policy. The result of such referral can be either temporary or permanent dismissal from the university.

Ethical infractions that will result in referral to the disciplinary board include cheating on exams. Cheating is defined as use of prohibited material, copying of other students’ answers, or receipt of answers from other students during an exam by any means, including text messages.

Plagiarism also qualifies as an ethical infraction that will result in referral to the disciplinary board. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another’s words without including
those words in quotation marks and citing the source. If text is taken from another course and only a few words are changed, it still qualifies as plagiarism unless the material is enclosed in quotes and the source cited. Use of very long quotes (longer than a sentence) is discouraged. The student should express her ideas in her own words, using quotes only for occasional illustration of points.

The Student Academic Integrity Policy is available from the Office of the Provost and from the deans of the individual colleges.

**Special Needs**
If you have a disability, notify the instructor immediately in writing. Documentation of the disability should come from the Office of Student Disabilities.