ED 516: Theory and Practice in Early Childhood Education
Room 3002

Focuses on the underlying theories, principles and philosophies of the field of early childhood education and helps students understand the process and reasoning behind practices in the field. Puts programs, curriculum and child development into social, cultural and historical contexts in order for students to understand how young children learn.

Course Objectives:

1. To introduce prominent theories in early childhood.
2. To examine children’s development through descriptive review.
3. To develop an awareness and appreciation of different approaches to early childhood education.
4. To develop a personal theory of action in early education.

Course Format:

The course will combine mini-lectures and discussion. Lectures will highlight issues that cut across readings. Discussions will focus on an analysis of multiple perspectives in selected readings.

Requirements of Course:

Requirements:

1. Students are required to attend class. Please be sure to provide a strong rationale if a class must be missed.
2. Required readings: All required readings are available on Course Tools with the exception of Developmentally Appropriate Practice. This book may be borrowed or bought through Amazon.
3. You will be required to conduct a descriptive review.
4. Discussion leader will examine a theory or philosophy of early childhood education and will provide a brief overview of the key elements of the philosophy.
5. Write a critique of “Developmentally Appropriate Practice”
6. Participate actively in discussions
7. Write a 5 page paper on a) your theory of early childhood; b) how your theory would look in action.

SUGGESTED SEQUENCE

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Week 1, Jan. 8: **Introduction: What is Theory? How does it relate to Practice?**

Read Historical and Theoretical Base for Appropriate Programs in Early Childhood Settings

Nourot, “Historical Perspectives on Early Childhood Education

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**Week 2, Jan 15: The History of Early Childhood: From Birth to 8:** Guest Lecture: Sally Adler, Washtenaw Community College

Read, “Developmental Characteristics of Young Children from Birth to 8 Years” Carini, “Descriptive Review”

Assignment:

Assignment #1: Do ONE of the following:

A. 1. Ask a young child, or a group of children (between the ages 1-6) to write a story (encourage them to write it “their way.”). Examine these stories for evidence of the following developmental patterns:

   - The child views drawing as writing. Pictures are used to communicate words and thoughts
   - The child scribbles, intending to write
   - The child makes letter-like forms
   - The child uses letter sequences, sometimes producing letters in long strings or random order
   - The child uses invented spelling, creating his or her own spelling for a word.
   - The child uses conventionalized spelling. Words resemble adult-like writing.

   2. Please assemble these ‘writings’ and write a paragraph (total) indicating at what stage of writing each child is, and what she/he is trying to do.

Assignment #B

1. Record yourself engaged with one or two children in a story-book reading situation. Listen to the recording, paying close attention to the questions the children ask. Write down each question.
2. What do their questions reveal about what they already know about the topic? About books and reading? About their interest? About their vocabulary?
3. Write a paragraph indicating your findings.

Assignment # C

1. Ask a child to “read” you a favorite story. Try to assess his or her early reading behavior. Does he or she:
   
   • Read by labeling pictures, but does not attempt to tell a story?
   • Read by following the pictures and telling a story?
   • Attend to a mix of pictures, reading, and storytelling, using the oral intonation of a storyteller?
   • Read using the pictures, with wording and intonation indicative of story reading?
   • Attend to print using some of the aspects of print?

2. Tell us how you think the child is reading in a paragraph.

Week 3, Jan. 22: Descriptive Review

Reread: Carini

Assignment #1: Due

Week 4, Jan. 29: The Art of Description (NO CLASS)

Select a child for observation; Conduct a descriptive review

Week 5, Feb 5: Observational Analysis

Present your descriptive review

Assignment #2 Due

Week 6, Feb 12: Prominent Theories in Early Childhood

Rousseau and Gesell
We will choose leaders and review each of the topics. Leaders will be responsible for reviewing the philosophy and highlighting bullet points.

Readings:

“The Puritans’ Sinful Child and Rousseau’s Moral Child”
“Gesell’s Growth Gradients”

______________________________________________________________________________

Week 7, Feb. 19: Piaget and Vygotsky

Read “Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory”
“Vygotsky and the Soviet Tradition”
Montessori: The science behind the genius
Discussion Leaders will be responsible for leading discussion.

______________________________________________________________________________

Week 8, March 4: Programs and Practices in Early Childhood—Montessori:

We will have a guest speaker: Nanette Glencor, Montessori Teacher

Please have a set of questions/comments to raise about approach

Readings:

“Skinner’s Operant Conditioning”
“Information-Processing Theory”

______________________________________________________________________________

Week 9, March 11: Skinner and Information Processing

Discussion leaders will be responsible for leading discussion

Readings:

Steiner Education in theory and practice

______________________________________________________________________________

Week 10: March 18: The Steiner Philosophy

We will have a guest speaker

Please have a set of questions/comments to raise about the approach
Readings: The Reggio Emilia Approach

Week 11, March 25: Reggio Emilia: We will visit a Reggio Emilia School  
At the University of Michigan, Dearborn  
Special Time: 3:30

Read, The Hundred Languages of Children (if interested)  
Read: Developmentally Appropriate Practice: What Theory or Theories does this statement include?

Week 11, April 1: Developmentally Appropriate Practice

What is it? What does it mean?  
Read: Robert Pianta, Transition to Kindergarten  
Assignment #2 Due: Write a Critique of the Theory and Practical Implications of DAP

Week 12, April 7: Transition to Kindergarten  
Discuss Transition

Lucky 13: April 15, Paper Due:
   What is your theory of early childhood? What would your program look like?
References


