I. Descriptive Information

A. Course Number and Title: EDEC 250 - Play and Early Learning

B. Bulletin Description: Theory and practice related to children’s play and early learning in family, community, and educational settings.

C. Course Credit: Three (3) hours

D. Prerequisites: None

E. Intended Audience: Students in early childhood education, psychology, physical education and related fields.

F. Instructor: Early childhood faculty with appropriate expertise

II. Statement of Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

A. Goals
   1. The goal is for students to understand and appreciate the role of play in the development and education of children in community and educational settings alike.

B. Learning Outcomes
   1. Cite the theories of play and identity play behaviors in typically developing young children.
   
   2. Identify the various factors which influence children's play such as family, culture, media, schools, exceptionalities, etc.
   
   3. Explain the interrelationship of the play process to social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of young children.
   
   4. Explain the play process as a route of young children's learning.
   
   5. Explain the role of play in various program models, curricula, and play spaces.
6. Identify, plan and implement developmentally effective strategies to enhance children's learning through play, with an emphasis on creating learning environments that reflect the social/cultural contexts of children and families in the program and beyond.

7. Employ diagnostic procedures for the purpose of assessing children's development through play.

8. Professional decision making, including ethical considerations, related to educational activities for young children.

III. Required Readings


IV. Academic Course Requirements

A. Maintain a Play Journal of your observations and thoughts on children’s play. Journal entries include your description of play episodes, connections of observations to the text, and your personal reflections. (40 pts)

B. Collaborative Research project (15 pts) - each student will participate in a research project that systematically studies some aspect of young children’s play. Research projects will be presented in class using presentation software and incorporating digital photos, sound, and videos.

C. Paley Response (5 pts) – each student will evaluate the dynamic occurring in Paley’s classroom and those described by children in other grades. Particular attention will be focused on examples that represent bullying behavior, or may lead to bullying. (Safe Schools Climate Act)

D. Pernel Response (5 pts) students will analyze this description of a 1970’s Head Start class, and draw parallels to Head Start and other programs serving vulnerable children and families today.

E. Successful completion of midterm and final exams (30 pts)

F. Professionalism and participation (5 pts)

V. Administrative Course Requirements
A. The University attendance policy will be followed: “absence from more than 10% of scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and the instructor may choose to exact a grade penalty.” Students are responsible for obtaining information from missed classes, including lectures and assignments.

B. Completion of all academic requirements in a timely manner. Work handed in late without a doctor's excuse will result in a grade penalty.

C. All cell phones, pagers, etc. are to be off or silenced (not on “vibrate”) during class. All cell phones are to be put away – in a purse, backpack, book bag, etc. during class. If a cell phone rings during class time, you may be asked to leave the class and/or counted absent. There is no text messaging, web-browsing, etc. during class. Failure to adhere to this rule may result in your being dismissed from class and/or an academic penalty.

D. Any disrespectful, argumentative, or disruptive behavior may result in your being asked to leave the class, and may result in your dismissal with a “WF” (Withdraw Failing), and/or a referral to the Office of Student Judicial Programs.

E. It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this Honor Code or who knowingly assists another to violate this Honor Code shall be subject to discipline.

VI. Evaluation and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>93-100 = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Journal</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>89-92 = B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85-88 = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paley Response</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>81-84 = C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernel Response</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>77-80 = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>74-76 = D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>70-73 = D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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VII. Major Topics of the Course

Defining Play  
Play in the Social and Cultural Contexts of Young Children  
Children’s Play and Development  
Influences on Play (family values, gender, media, schools, exceptionalities)  
Learning Through Play  
Play and Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Schools
Observing, Recording, and Assessing Children’s Play Behaviors
Play and Curriculum Standards
Play Spaces
Ethics and Play

VIII. Modes of Instruction

Lecture
Class Discussion
Video Recordings
Blackboard: Assignments, Experiences, & Communication
Small Group Activities
On-line Research

IX. Bibliography


Play Journal

The Play Journal has two parts. Part A is the description of what was observed, and Part B is connections to the text and class discussion.

Part A – Descriptions of the Play Episode (5 pts)

Label each journal entry with:

- Journal Entry Number
- Classroom (age group & teachers)
- Your name and date
- Segment of daily schedule
- Beginning & Ending time
- Location
- Descriptions should be limited to what you actually observed. Avoid value judgments and generalities such as “they played nice” or “they played well together.” Focus on describing the behaviors children perform, samples of language, and use of materials. Give very specific, detailed information.

Part B – Connections to the text (3 pts)

Identify examples of play and developmental expectations described in the text and class discussions. Describe the teacher's role in supporting the play, materials and equipment involved, and its effects.
Collaborative Research Project

Each student will participate in a group research project. Projects will be based on observing children and teachers in various play settings and systematically recording their behaviors. The researchers will identify patterns of behavior.

Step 1 – Arrange schedules of team members so you can systematically observe the particular play environment you are assigned. Be sure you are in agreement on what you are looking for.

Step 2 – Record three hours of play behaviors with video, photographs, field notes, etc.

Step 3 – Plan team meetings to review the video, field notes, etc. and to code data. Coding data means to review observations looking for patterns. The patterns you identify are described and then analyzed for time, frequency, gender, outcomes, adult interactions, play stages, levels of play, language, etc.

Step 4 – Findings are organized onto video clips, charts, graphs, lists, power point, or some other visual display of data that will help others to see what you have found.

Step 5 – Write a brief description of your findings explaining what you have observed and how it relates to the information in the text about your topic and what you know about the developmental level of children being observed. This will be used as a 2-page handout for your class presentation.

Step 6 – Prepare 20 minute presentation for class, with PowerPoint, video, and other visual displays and handouts that explain what you were looking for, what your findings are, and how they relate to theory.