

EDEC 4243: Environmental Processes and Assessment
Spring 2021
University of North Texas
Department of Teacher Education and Administration

Instructor: Darla Sue Taylor, Ph.D. (she/her/hers)
Preferred: Dr. Taylor, Dr. Darla, Professor Taylor
Course Meets: T/Th 8:00 - 9:20 p.m.
Office: **Matthews Hall**, Room 205 (seldom) I would prefer that you email me and we set up a Zoom meeting or a phone call. It is really important that I try to stay safe in respects to my husband, family, and myself at this time.
Student Hours: TBA or by appointment
E-mail: Darla.Taylor@unt.edu (24-hour response, except on weekends)
Please put “**EDEC 4243. 03 Remote**” in subject bar. I teach three classes. I will use Canvas announcements to distribute class information. It is your responsibility to check Canvas announcements regularly. You should be checking your student email regularly. Consider forwarding your UNT email to an account of your choice.

LIVING AND LEARNING IN THESE TIMES

These are challenging times given the effects (known and unknown) of COVID-19, economic instability, and given the current pain and trauma related to centuries of racial injustice. Each of us is impacted by these issues directly or indirectly to varying degrees, and I am fully aware that this may at times impact your engagement with this course. This syllabus represents one possibility for engaging in these ideas and meeting the course objectives. As our short time together unfolds, we may have to shift how we do things so that first and foremost, your physical and emotional well-being are taken care. ***All I ask is that you communicate with me about your needs (to the extent that you want to share) so that I may better support you.***

NOTE: THIS STATEMENT IS ADOPTED FROM DR. DJANGO PARIS, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course is scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 a.m.- 9:20 a.m. during the semester, which runs from January 11 – April 30, 2021. Given the nature of the current situation, the course has been adapted. We will meet synchronously starting on January 14th at 8:00 a.m. Otherwise, the modules will be asynchronous with synchronous meetings. We are modifying it this way based on the uncertainties of the moment and on teaching the course online this summer. we know this can be challenging for those of you who find independent study challenging and isolating, ***we want you to know that we are here to support you in this.***

OVERVIEW

This course considers the significant role that environments play in children’s learning and development. In their designs for material and social interactions, classrooms and schools are spaces that can impede or enhance children’s sense of themselves as capably intellectual, social, and aesthetic beings. That is, ***the spaces that we design for children have a part in who they can be and become.*** As we embark on this

course, we build on previous coursework (i.e. EDEC 3613) in which we considered that children have complex sociocultural identities, interests, knowledge, and theories that are always in formation. As teachers, our roles include the careful observation and study of children in order to provoke new ways of being/knowing through the design of thoughtful provocations. The classroom environment *is* a curriculum that should continually be assessed and reconfigured by teachers. Classrooms should always be spaces that *belong to children*; we need to design them as shifting in response to children's ongoing inquiries about themselves and their worlds.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Conceptualize the role of spaces and environments in early years curriculum.
2. Identify and critically assess elements of inclusive, anti-biased, anti-racist child-centered spaces.
3. Document children's inquiries through processes of pedagogical documentation.
4. Develop understandings of critical and emergent curriculum through the design of provocations.

TEXTS

All texts will be uploaded to Canvas, corresponding with each week. We expect you to keep up with readings and to reflect these texts within modules and assignments. Please have these read by Thursdays Zoom meetings so that you can participate in the conversations. This course is designed to encourage YOU to discuss what you have observed and experienced as well as studied.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Further details will be provided about the assignments during the semester.

Self-paced modules: There will be 10 self-paced modules over the course of the semester that are worth 200 points each. Modules may include multiple activities; they may be both independent and social (where you will need to interact with myself and/or classmates).

Assignments: You will have five assignments during the course. More information will be provided closer to the deadlines, but these assignments include:

Artifacts analysis: You'll choose two (2) artifacts of schooling processes to research and analyze.

'Spaces for Children' Analysis: You'll view two classroom scenes and provide an analysis of the ways the spaces are designed for and with children in mind.

Discussion Posts: For two weeks, we'll engage in material inquiry. In that time, you'll be asked to present provocations to peers as well as respond to peers' provocations.

Pedagogical Documentation: You'll create a documentation panel to synthesize a group of children's learning. This documentation should capture children's inquiries through narrative/story.

Documentation & Curricular Provocations: You'll describe and enact curricular provocations over the semester. These provocations should focus on **inquiry** (not direct instruction).

Commented [T1]: probably want to change some of this.

Commented [T2]: I'm face to face so I'm not doing this but left this here for you.

Commented [T3]: For those of you who've taught the intro course, we do this in that class. I'm bringing this back in because I think it's important - will share more if you are going to do this.

COURSE EVALUATION

Assignment	Points
Self-paced modules and/or Zoom meetings	2000
Artifacts analysis	100
Discussions: provocations (2)	200
<i>Spaces for Children</i> analysis	200
Pedagogical documentation	200
Pedagogical documentation & provocations	300
	3000

COURSE GRADING SCALE

A = 2685-3000 points	(90%-100%)
B = 2385-2684 points	(80%-89%)
C = 2235-2384 points	(75%-79%)
D = 2085-2234 points	(70%-74%)
F = <2085 points	(<70%)

I have always had a motto with my students whether they are 3 years old or 51 years old: “We learn to love; we love to learn.” But it goes further than that. “We treat others the way we want to be treated!” That goes for the instructor, as well, right? Kindness and being courteous is always the key to what we do whether we are teachers, nurses, or servers of others. During this particular novel time of our lives, I want to encourage you to practice kindness and courtesy. This translates to loving one another and peace. My goal is to be my best with you by being kind, courteous, as well as keeping a listening ear and heart to your needs so you can be successful. This is a new way of teaching for me, too. I will do my very best. Let’s be patient with each other.

NOTE ON GRADES FROM DARLA

I realize that society’s emphasis today on achievement and testing have unfortunately created a particular kind of anxiety for students around grades. I am not interested in grades; I assign them because regrettably that is the system we are held to in the university.

In this course, I want you to stay focused on the formulation of critical ideas and pushing your thinking around children and schooling. If I see that you are putting forth effort in this course to further your thinking of what learning *is* and can be, then you will be absolutely fine in this course. Reasons for making less than A would include:

1. Not completing and/or turning in assignments;
2. Maintaining ideas about learning as primarily and solely lecture-oriented or teacher-directed. *I am asking you to think about learning as happening within our experiences in the world;*
3. Thinking that the role of the teacher is to be the expert over “students”. I am asking you to think about teachers as facilitators of environments and as learning *alongside* children (not students, do not use the word “students” in this course).

All of this is to say a few things:

1. It is your responsibility to keep track of your grades. Grades on Canvas may be inaccurate so to figure out your grade, total up your points and divide it by the total possible number of points.

2. Please refrain from emailing me about your grades unless you feel that you are seriously in danger of losing a scholarship, grant, or some other award. If you are upset because you “lost 2 points” out of 150 points, I want you to stop and put it into perspective that that is problem a fraction of a fraction of your total grade. Life is still okay if you are “not perfect” --- and personal perfection is not the right pursuit in education. Rather, justice and equity are.
3. If you have anxiety around grades, do let me know early on. I have made arrangements with students to not give grades until the end, at which point it is a discussion between us. I’m happy to do the same with you.

Note on late assignments: *If you turn assignments in late, I reserve the right to only provide a grade and zero to few comments. Late assignments may be subject to grade reduction.*

CALENDAR

**The readings and assignments on this calendar are subject to revision.
All activities and assignments are due by Friday night at 11:59 p.m.*

Date	Inquiry Question	Readings	Assignment
Week 1: Jan 12/14	Why listen to children? Orienting towards children	Rinaldi (2001) Children explain the coronavirus [<i>Atlantic</i> video]	Getting to know you survey
Week 2: Jan 19/21	What is your conception of a child? Recognizing the child as constructed by adults	Kohn (2015) Christakis (2016a article)	
Week 3: Jan 26/28	What is the role of play in the lives and learning of children? Children’s play as a fundamental right	Gray (2014) Decline of play [TEDTalk] Gaunt (2020) Sesame Street: Handclapping chants [video]	
Week 4: Feb 2/4	What are the aesthetics of school and must they be static? The ways school look/feel and what they do	Kuh & Rivard (2014) Ch. 1 Curtis & Carter (2005)	Two artifacts of schooling analyses due Sunday, 02/07 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 5: Feb 9/11	Whose classroom is this? Classrooms and schools with and <i>for</i> children	Christakis (2016b article) Leavitt & Power (1997)	Be prepared for discussion activity on Leavitt & Power
Week 6: Feb 16/18	Where can learning happen? “Classrooms” outside of classrooms	Bentley (2012b) (‘Preschool Stroll...’) Hollingsworth (2020)	
Week 7: Feb 23/25	How can learning happen? Learning as experiential, co-constructed and dialogic	Christakis (2016) Young children investigating containers video	Spaces for children analysis due Sunday, 02/28 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 8: March 2/4	No class meetings: Mental health break		
Week 9: March 9/11	Why do materials matter? Considering the affordances of materials in curriculum	Pelo (2007) Eckhoff (2017)	Discussion: Art & aesthetic provocations with classmates
Week 10: March 16/18	What happens when I experience the world? Material inquiry through exploration of our common worlds	Biermeier (2015) Young children investigating rocks video	Discussion: Provocations of the natural world with classmates
Week 11: March 23/25	What do I do while children play, inquire, and experience the world? Teachers as facilitators and observers	Stacey (2015) Documenting children's learning video	
Week 12: March 30 & April 1	How do I know what children are learning? Pedagogical documentation as a tool for assessment	Wien (2013) Video to be determined	Pedagogical documentation due Sunday, 04/03 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 13: April 6/8	What do I do with documentation and with what children say and do? Emergent curriculum as a pedagogy of listening	Video by Tran Seitz (2007) Other video(s) to be determined	No class meetings as Tran will be "at" a digital conference
Week 14: April 13/15	How can children's interests be curriculum? Thinking and doing school with children's interests as central	Sweeney & Filmore (2018) Project Approach: Dog Project	
Week 15: April 20/22	Can children think critically? Emergent curriculum and the pursuit of an anti-racist world	Kuh et al. (2016) Bentley (2012a) Video to be determined	
Finals week: Pedagogical documentation & provocations due April 29 th at 11:59 p.m.			

NOTEWORTHY

University Mental Health Services: We are currently facing not only a pandemic, but for students of Color, and particularly Black students, the recent (and numerous historical) cases of police brutality and violence (not only by police) done to Black bodies may be challenging your fortitude. UNT has resources to support students who may find it difficult to find joy at this time: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/>. You can also contact the center at 940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu. For mental health resources, please refer to the following website: <https://speakout.unt.edu/content/mental-health-resources>

Food/Housing Insecurity: The UNT Food Pantry is open for curbside deliveries. Please visit the website for more details: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>. A student with difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, is urged to contact the Dean of Students, Suite 409 at the University Union.

Title IX Services: Sexual discrimination, harassment, & assault: The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are civil rights violations. UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of resources to help support survivors, based on their needs: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources>. Renee McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached via email at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648.

POLICIES

Course Policies

Incompletes: All assignments need to have been completed for a grade to be issued.

Extra Credit: Because I will not make grades the central focus of learning, I do not assign extra credit.

Assignments: If you are unable to turn in your assignment on the specified due date, please make arrangements with me ahead of time. Submit assignments via Canvas. *If you turn an assignment in late, you will receive zero to little feedback. I reserve the right to simply give a grade in the case of a late assignment.*

Integrity: Students who submit work either not their own or without clear attribution to the original source, fabricate data or other information, engage in cheating, or misrepresentation of academic records will be subject to charges. **Any infraction of this nature, whether it be a phrase or more, can result in a grade of a 0 (zero) for the assignment.** Please also see the UNT policies below for more on this.

Department of Teacher Education and Administration: Preparing Tomorrow's Educators and Scholars

The **Department of Teacher Education and Administration** seeks to improve educational practice through the generation of knowledge and to prepare education professionals who serve all students in an effective, inclusive and equitable manner. Our focus is on the preparation of highly competent educators, researchers and administrators who employ current theory and research as they fill these important roles.

Mission: The Department of Teacher Education and Administration integrates theory, research, and practice to generate knowledge and to develop educational leaders who advance the potential of all learners.

Vision: We aspire to be internationally recognized for developing visionary educators who provide leadership, promote social justice, and effectively educate all learners.

Department Policies

Student Evaluation Administration Dates. Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available in the final 3 weeks of the long semesters to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. You will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course

Evaluations via *IASystem* Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. I will also provide a link in an email and on the course Canvas page. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

Sexual Assault Prevention. UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to [UNT Policy 06.003](#), Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Acceptable Student Behavior. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the [Code of Student Conduct](#). The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

The [Dean of Students Office](#) enforces the [Code of Student Conduct](#). The Code explains what conduct is prohibited, the process the DOS uses to review reports of alleged misconduct by students, and the sanctions that can be assigned. When students may have violated the Code they meet with a representative from the Dean of Students Office to discuss the alleged misconduct in an educational process.

ADA Accommodation Statement. UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the [Office of Disability Accommodation](#) (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Emergency Notification & Procedures. UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course.

Undocumented Students. Please see [UNT'S Resources for DACA](#) web page for more information.