

EDEC 4243.001: Environmental Processes and Assessment

Spring 2021

University of North Texas

Department of Teacher Education and Administration

Instructor: Molly Doherty [pronouns: she/her/hers]

Preferred: Molly

Student Hours: By appointment (Zoom only)

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COURSE STRUCTURE

This course is scheduled for Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. during the semester, which runs from January 11th to April 22nd. Given the nature of the current situation, I am adapting the course. We will meet both synchronously and asynchronously so it is very important you review the syllabus and check our Canvas page regularly for synchronous class meeting times. The course is being modified this way based on the uncertainties of the moment and on being taught online this summer/fall. I will explain this further the first week of the course. While I know this can be challenging for those of you who find independent study challenging and isolating, ***I want you to know that I am here to support you in this.***

On weeks that there is no scheduled synchronous class meeting time, there will be optional Zoom discussions (Wednesdays from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.) for those who would like to discuss course texts, ideas, and assignments. I also have one-on-one student hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:45 – 2:15 p.m. You can sign up for 1-2 time slots [here](#).

BRIEF 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 play a part in their feelings of self-worth, their intellectual and social capacities, and their sense of belonging.*

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. I expect you to keep up with readings and to reflect these texts within modules and assignments.

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). *[2000 points, or 66.67% of your final grade]*

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

Annotations (2): You'll annotate two readings, one by Christakis (2016) and one by Leavitt & Power (1997) to consider the role of teachers and environments in children's early 'learning'. *[500 points total, or 14% of your final grade]*

'Spaces for Children' Analysis (and Revision): You'll view two classroom scenes and provide an analysis of the ways the spaces are designed for and with children in mind. *[250 points total, or 7% of your final grade]*

Pedagogical Documentation: During the course, you'll create documentation panels or stories. This documentation should capture children's inquiries through narrative/story. *[250 points total, or 7% of your final grade]*

Provocations Discussion Board: You'll post a simple provocation for your peers to explore themselves at home. Then you will respond to three people's provocations. *[250 points total, or 7% of your final grade]*

Documentation & Curricular Provocations: You'll describe and enact curricular provocations over the semester. These provocations should focus on **inquiry** (not direct instruction). *[300 points total, or 8.5% of your final grade]*

COURSE EVALUATION

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Self-paced modules (10 at 200 points each)	See Canvas	2000
Annotations (2 at 250 points each)	01/29 and 02/19	500
<i>Spaces for Children</i> analysis & revision	02/12 and 03/05	250
Pedagogical documentation	03/19	250
Provocations discussion board	04/14 and 04/16	250
Pedagogical documentation & provocations	04/28	300
	TOTAL:	3550

COURSE GRADING SCALE

A = 3195-3550 points	(90%-100%)
B = 2840-3194 points	(80%-89%)
C = 2485-2839 points	(70%-79%)
D = 2130-2484 points	(60%-69%)
F = <2129 points	(<60%)

NOTE ON GRADES

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	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Week 1: 01/11-01/15	Introduction to the course & how we will thrive this semester!	Wurm (2005) Ch. 1	Self-paced PearDeck FlipGrid – Childhood Spaces Introduction Synchronous class meeting, Wednesday 01/13 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. What is your conception of a child? What are children's capacities and rights?
Week 2: 01/19-01/22	Play as fundamental to children's rights	Jones (2003)	See Canvas for module activities
Week 3: 01/25-01/29	Inquiry as fundamental to children's rights	Bentley (2012) ('Preschool Stroll...') Christakis (2016) Ch. 2	Christakis (2016) annotation due Friday, 01/29 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 4: 02/01-02/05	Learning as experiential, co-constructed and dialogic	Kuh (2014) Intro Kuh & Rivard (2014) Ch. 1	Module assignment OR Zoom discussion Wednesday, 02/03 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Week 5: 02/08-02/12	Classrooms as spaces for children	Wurm (2005) Ch. 2 Curtis & Carter (2005)	Spaces for children analysis due Friday, 02/12 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 6: 02/15-02/19	Adult power and children's freedom		Leavitt & Power (1997) annotation due Friday, 02/19 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 7: 02/22-02/26	Teachers as facilitators of children's environments	Bentley (2011)	Module reflection OR Zoom discussion Wednesday, 02/24 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Week 8: 03/01-03/05	Pedagogical documentation: part I	Halls & Wien (2013)	See Canvas for module activities Revision of spaces for children analysis due Friday, 03/05 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 9: 03/08-03/12	Pedagogical documentation: part II	Stacey (2015) Wein (2013) <i>Optional:</i> Shabazian (2016)	Module reflection OR Zoom discussion Wednesday, 03/10 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Week 10: 03/15-03/19	Introduction to emergent curriculum		Pedagogical documentation due Friday, 03/19 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 11: 03/22-03/26	Lead-in to curriculum design		See Canvas for module activities
Week 12: 03/29-04/01	Emergent curriculum design	Seitz (2006) Biermeier (2015)	Module reflection OR Zoom discussion Wednesday, 03/31 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Week 13: 04/05-04/09	Material inquiry as a mode of provocation	Schaefer (2016) Pelo (2007)	Module reflection OR Zoom discussion Wednesday, 04/07 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Week 14: 04/12-04/16	Writing and responding to provocations		See Canvas for module activities
Week 15: 04/19-04/23	Emergent curriculum – inquiry and provocations	Young & Morgan (2015) Eckhoff (2017)	Module reflection OR Zoom discussion Wednesday, 04/21 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Finals week: Pedagogical documentation & provocations due April 28 th at 11:59 p.m.			

REFERENCE LIST

- Bentley, D. F. (2011). Reflecting on ways to help the reluctant artist communicate. *YC Young Children*, 66(2), 42-46.
- Bentley, D. F. (2012a). "Rights are the words for being fair": Multicultural practice in the early childhood classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40(4), 195-202.
- Bentley, D. F. (2012b). Fire makers, barnyards, and prickly forests: A preschool stroll around the block. *Childhood Education*, 88(3), 147-154.
- Bentley, D. F. (2013). Transparent curtains and teensy-weensy dots: Reflecting on emergent curriculum and the Project Approach. *YC Young Children*, 68(2), 78-85.
- Biermeier, M. A. (2015). Inspired by Reggio Emilia: Emergent curriculum in relationship-driven learning environments. *Young Children*, 70(5), 72-79.
- Christakis, E. (2016). *The importance of being little: What preschoolers really need from grownups*. Penguin.
- Curtis, D., & Carter, M. (2005). Rethinking early childhood environments to enhance learning. *YC Young Children*, 60(3), 34-38.
- Eckhoff, A. (2017). Meaningful art and aesthetic experiences for young children. *YC Young Children*, 72(5), 14-20.
- Halls, D., & Wien, C. A. (2013). "The wind goes inside of me": Kindergarten children's theories about running fast. *Canadian Children*, 38(1), 4-10.
- Jones, E. (2003). Play and creativity reflecting children's right to dream, imagine, explore. *Our Children*, 3, 1-4.
- Kuh, L. P. (Ed.). (2014). *Thinking critically about environments for young children: Bridging theory and practice*. Teachers College Press.
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- Leavitt, R. L., & Power, M. B. (1997). Civilizing bodies: Children in day care. In J. Tobin (Ed.), *Making a place for pleasure in early childhood education*, pp. 39-75. Yale University Press.
- Pelo, A. (2007). *The language of art: Inquiry-based studio practices in early childhood settings*. Redleaf Press.
- Schaefer, R. (2016). Teacher inquiry on the influence of materials on children's learning. *YC Voices of Practitioners*, 11(1), 40-48.
- Seitz, H. J. (2006). The plan: Building on children's interests. *YC Young Children*, 61(2), 36-41.
- Shabazian, A. N. (2016). The role of documentation in fostering learning. *YC Young Children*, 71(3), 73-79.
- Stacey, S. (2015). *Pedagogical documentation in early childhood: Sharing children's learning and teachers' thinking*. Redleaf Press.
- Wien, C. A. (2013). Making learning visible through pedagogical documentation. *Think, feel, act: Lessons from research about young children*, 27-30. Ontario, Canada: Ministry of Education.
- Wurm, J. (2005). *Working in the Reggio way: A beginner's guide for American teachers*. Redleaf Press.
- Young, T., & Morgan, A. (2015). Show Me What You Know: Creating Classroom Projects. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(5), 388-392.

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. Incompletes will not be granted, with the exception of a documented emergency.

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. Assignments have been assigned to time points that allow me to give you ample and timely feedback. *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.