

**RTM 305:  
Dynamics of Early Childhood Play  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE  
FALL 2008**

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RE 265

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**Course Description**

This course is designed to study play in relation to the child's early growth and development. Implications for functional, environmental, and leadership dimensions of organized play experiences in early years are explored. Play as an essential facet of the child's life-span; wherein cognitive, affective, and psychomotor elements are synthesized to form her/his emergent lifestyle.

**Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Articulate the six functions of play and recognize the operation of these functions in the child's life.
  
2. Apply play principles in the development of a play environment and to demonstrate an understanding of the principles of, context and settings for, and media used in various play environments.
  
3. Apply techniques to act as an effective play facilitator.

### Text

Frost, J.I., Worthan, S., & Reifel, S. (2005). Play and Child Development. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall

### Course Reader

Available from CSUN Library Electronic Reserve or printed and bound copies are available at the Matador Bookstore.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES

All of the assignments are designed as "learning experiences" to assist you processing and integrating the course material. You will be analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating what you are reading and thinking about. *In this class there are no exams. You read right there are no exams. This is a GE course so you will have to write papers to demonstrate your understanding of the material read.* Please note that you are responsible for attending your classes and actively participating in class discussions and activities.

### **Assignment #1: Autobiography of Play 100 points**

Each student will thoughtfully compose an autobiography of his or her own early childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood play experiences. One play experience for each age cohort should be discussed. The following items must be considered:

1. Description of the experiences as they relate to Levy's characteristics of play.
2. Description of the environment in which the play experiences occurred

(very important to include as much sensory stimulation characteristics or attributes as remembered, utilizing adjectives).

3. Identification of play tools used during the play experiences (very important to include as much sensory attributes and/or characteristics as remembered, utilizing adjectives.)
4. An explanation and analysis of the facilitation techniques, both direct and indirect, utilized by other people (e.g. adults, older siblings) and "things" within the play setting itself. Be certain to specifically use the terminology "facilitation" in your discussion.
5. Discuss theorists presented in class and how their work and theory of play relate to each of your play experiences. Use examples from your play scenarios to support.

### **Assignment #2: Journal Article Critiques (2)**

**You will be asked to obtain two journal articles and critique them.**

1. This assignment is designed to get you more acquainted with the library and its vast amount of resources. You are to explore the topic area of 'Women & Leisure.' The topic can include but are not limited to: benefits of recreation such as health, relational, personal, and societal, obstacles to recreation, and influence of family. A write up is mandatory. **This is not a book report!!**
2. **It is a critique evaluated and analyzed by you!!** Your critique will include the following information: Reference Page, name of

book/article, name of author, publication year, library call number (books & journals from CSUN), analyze the book/journal's content.

3. Based on Thomas's Criteria (1979) -Given in class-. Identify Strengths/Weaknesses of article using specific examples from the article to support.
4. Even though this paper will be based on your opinion it still needs to be supported with specific examples from the article.
5. If you summarize article versus analyze your paper will be returned to you without a grade for a rewrite.
6. Relate the information in the book/journal to the information presented and discussed in class.
7. If you are using a journal article a copy must be submitted along with your paper before it can be graded. If you are using a book the book must be present in class the day you hand in the assignment.

### **Assignment #3 Play Observation/Play Ground Design 100 points**

Each student will observe children in pretend play for the purpose of observing the six functions of play. This will be a written and oral presentation! **(Note: Though each play episode may not exhibit all six functions you must keep making play observations until you have observed good examples of all six functions.)**

Record in a journal the following for each play episode:

1. **Background information:**

Date and Time of the observation(s)

Description of the Children (e.g. approximate ages, gender)

Description of the play environment

2. **Analysis and discussion of the Children's Play** specifically related to the **Functions of Play as identified in class discussion, and Play Facilitation techniques as described in class.**

2.1. **Describe the play episodes** in detail that clearly is characterized by Suspension of Reality. This is an anecdotal observation. Write down everything you see the children doing and saying. It should be as if it is a video playback.

2.2. **Analyze the play episodes.** Provide examples from the play episode and **explain why** they are illustrative of the following:

2.2.1. ***Functions of play.*** Give examples from the play episode that demonstrate the six functions of play and **justify why** each is an example of that function of play.

2.2.2 ***Play facilitation:*** Analyze and discuss Facilitation Techniques (both direct and indirect) utilized by people or "things" in the environment. Use the text and materials from the reader to analyze the play facilitation in detail. Is it indirect? Direct? Etc. Explain why? Give examples.

2.2.3 **Theorist discussed in class.** Be sure to demonstrate an understanding of each theorist and use examples from your observations to support.

Along with the observation you need to analyze play area for safety.

1. **Rating of the Play Area** utilizing the Playground Rating System from the course reader; include a copy of the completed rating scale. **Provide an overview narrative of your evaluation and observation of safety and design, citing specific examples.**
2. **Summary and Evaluation of the Play Area with a Re-design**, including recommendations as to how the environment could be improved to enhance the play experiences of the children. It will be helpful for you to refer back to the materials in the course reader, the text, and the items from the Playground Rating System that scored low for ideas for your re-design and recommendations. Link the items from the Playground Rating System to your written evaluation and re-design diagram.

This summary and evaluation needs to be a narrative discussion as well as a diagram of your re-design. The narrative discussion should explain your rationale for the elements included in the new diagram and should link directly to the items from the Playground Rating System.

**Assignment #4 Group Play Day Project and Written Portfolio**

**Rough Draft Due Two weeks before play day**

Each student will participate in the group planning, implementation and evaluation of a play environment for the Children's Play Day Event. THIS IS A GROUP PROJECT! Students will share equal group responsibilities. Each student will complete a confidential group evaluation during the planning

process and after the Play Day. If it is deemed necessary by the group individual will be displaced from the group and forced to work independently. Don't make us have to take this kind of action. Group projects work best when everyone contributes their strengths to the project.

Each student will participate in the development of a written *Play Day Portfolio* that will include the following:

NOTE: There are a total of 5 components: Theme, Program, Personnel, Facilities and Evaluation. Components 1, 3 and 5 are written by the whole group. Component 2 is written by each individual student. Some sections of Component 4 are group generated and some are generated by each individual. Component 5 is an oral class presentation as a group on the final exam day.

**Component #1 Theme of the Story/Book and Play Environment (Group)**

**Component #2 Program (written by each student for her/his play activity)**

Describe the activity for which you are responsible in the play environment.

For each activity, this discussion must include the following:

2.1 Description of activity and how it relates to the theme:

2.2 Opportunities for "Levy" play:

2.3 Opportunities to experience the functions (all six) of play:

2.4 Developmentally Appropriate:

Describe how your activity is developmentally appropriate for the various developmental levels of the children participating in Play Day: pre-k-

grade 1,  
grades 2-3, grades 4-5. How will your activity be adapted for the children from grades 4-5? **(For a B or A grade this discussion must be based on literature presented in child/human development texts. Remember to cite those sources. (Hint: Use the Frost text for information regarding developmental milestones for the various age groups.)**

#### 2.5 Interest:

Describe why children would be attracted to and interested in playing in your environment.

2.6 Integrate information related to Brain Research (5 different sources) and discuss how it relates to your activity. **(For A grade)**

#### **Component #3 Personnel (Group)**

Describe the responsibilities of each group member in each of the following phases and/or categories: Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation.

#### **Component #4 Facilities**

4.1 Diagram of the environment (Group)

4.2 Materials - list the materials necessary for your play environment. Be sure to include type, amount, and use of each material listed (Individual).

4.3 Safety - describe the specific safety considerations of your play

environment (Individual).

**Component #5 Evaluation (Group - to be completed after the Play Day)**

- 5.1 What were the positive and negative aspects of your play environment?
- 5.2 Did the children utilize the play environment as you had designed it to be used? If not, how did they modify it?
- 5.3 Did it meet your expectations with regard to Play functions, Levy's characteristics of play, and components of environmental enrichment? Describe how.
- 5.4 Discuss any changes you made from your original plan.
- 5.5 Discuss your group's flexibility in regards to any changes necessary on Play Day.
- 5.6 What modifications would you make if you were to do this project again?

**\*\***Historical comments from students: 1) it is difficult to accomplish this project with less than three members in a group; and 2) while there is some class time devoted to planning for this event, outside time will be necessary, therefore it may help if group members are geographically close to each other.

**\*\***Students from past semesters have also suggested that it be emphasized that there is a **vast amount of open space** and that there is a lot of grass area to use with the children. Many children come at once to your environment-so be

prepared.

**\*\*Be as prepared as possible for Play Day. In past semesters students have found it helpful to bring the following:**

Duct tape                      Drinking Water

Chairs                              Camera

Scissors                         Trash bags

Sunscreen                      Hammer

A sign with the group/book name for your environment

**\*\*Prepare for the possibility of wind and/or rain. Signs MUST be backed with cardboard or made from fabric. Also, note that the wind may blow supplies if not secured.**

### **Relationship With Professor**

The professor is available as a resource. You are encouraged to seek guidance and assistance and initiate requests for individual appointments.

### **Attendance and Participation**

This course is designed to use techniques of interactive-discussion-collaborative learning-activities. Course material is compiled from a wide variety of sources and class attendance is mandatory. The synthesizing of class material and assignments is dependent upon your effort and active participation in class. Regular attendance, prompt arrival, preparation, and active participation during entire class session is expected. Each class session is worth 20 points.

This class is based on high level of class participation and depends on your

consistent attendance for you to be engaged with the course material. I suggest you think carefully about missing class. Being late to class, leaving early or leaving class for great lengths of time, lack of participation during class activities, talking with peers during class discussions, and not being ready for class session will result in grade reduction.

In the event it is necessary to miss a class, the student is responsible for the information discussed in class and will be expected to be prepared to participate with other class members relating to the material discussed during the student's absence. If you miss class, please do not ask me, "What did I miss?"

Note: All cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off prior to entering the classroom.

Please review the "Grading Criteria" carefully and ensure that your paper meets the requirements for the grade you are working towards.

#### **Grading Criteria**

|                              |            |
|------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Attendance</b>            | <b>320</b> |
| <b>Autobiography</b>         | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Journal Critiques</b>     | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Playground Redesign</b>   | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Play Day Portfolio</b>    | <b>200</b> |
| <b>Total Points Possible</b> | <b>820</b> |

#### **Grading Characteristics**

| Grade | Characteristics of Work  |
|-------|--|
| A     | Outstanding. Work demonstrates a superior level of proficiency. It must show depth of thought, analysis and integration of |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | knowledge. Uses references from the texts and other literature and research to support ideas. Maintains a level of excellence throughout demonstrating creative thinking and evidence of engagement in the subject matter. Explores ideas extensively and in-depth. |
| B | Very Good. Demonstrates a good grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical thinking and analysis, reasonable understanding of issues, and evidence of familiarity with the texts through use of references. Explores ideas in some depth.                    |
| C | Satisfactory. Meets the requirements of the assignment and demonstrates overall understanding of the subject matter and competence. Deals with the subject matter in a cursory manner.  |
| D | Barely meets requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates only superficial familiarity with the subject matter with little critical thinking.   |
| F | Does not meet the requirements of the assignment. Lacks evidence of understanding and familiarity with the subject matter.  |

ALL WRITTEN WORK MUST FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- A. be typed with adequate margins, double spacing, and font size 12 ;
- B. is a clear, organized, and logical development of your ideas;
- C. avoid vagueness and unsupported generalizations, and never use another person's ideas, phrases, sentences, or terms without acknowledging the source (this is plagiarism);
- D. is thoroughly proofread; NOTE: More than five typo or grammatical errors

may result in the paper being returned for re-write before professor evaluation.

E. is turned in on time. Late papers lose the right of being re-written. No late paper will be accepted. Rewrites are due no later than two weeks following the date you receive your graded paper returned to you. Emailed papers are not acceptable. Computer crash, theft, printer failure etc. is not an acceptable excuse for a late assignment.

Any work not meeting these criteria will be returned with no evaluation.

If a student has concerns or questions about progress in the course, it is the student's responsibility to make an individual appointment to discuss this with the Professor.

It is the responsibility of each student to know and follow all the written guidance given by the professor in this syllabus.

### **Student Discipline:**

Inappropriate conduct by students or by applicants for admission is subject to discipline as provided in Sections 41301 through 41304 of Title 5, California Administrative Code. Some of these sections are as follows: 41301, Expulsion, Suspension and Probation of Students. Following procedures consonant with due process established pursuant to Section 41304, any student of a campus may be expelled, suspended, or placed on probation or given a lesser sanction for one or more of the following causes which must be campus related:

**\*\*Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program on campus.**

\*\*Forgery, alteration or misuse of campus documents, records, or identification of knowingly furnishing false information to a campus.

\*\*Inappropriate behavior inside or outside of the classroom.

### **Ethical Behavior:**

It is understood that all students will demonstrate the highest ethical behavior.

This includes respect for other students, the professor, the children and teachers at Play Day and observations, and the materials for classroom instruction and Play Day.

Appropriate behavior as outlined in the University Catalog is expected both inside and outside of class. Further, since this class requires the interaction with the public, ages K - 5<sup>th</sup> grade, it is essential that all students conduct themselves with professional behavior.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

I very much look forward to working with you. Please know I am always a resource to you, I am here for you, simply email or call me. Communication is very important for a successful semester.