

## **RTM 305 – Dynamics of Early Childhood Play Fall 2008**

**Tuesday & Thursday 11:00-12:15**

*class e-mail* [classfa08.16779-c@csun.edu](mailto:classfa08.16779-c@csun.edu)

### ***Contact Information***

**Professor Matthews-Maxwell**

[erin.matthews@csun.edu](mailto:erin.matthews@csun.edu)

[www.csun.edu/~matthews](http://www.csun.edu/~matthews)





Office Hours located in SQ200H  
Monday & Wednesday 1:00-1:50,  
Wednesday 6:00-6:50 pm,  
Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-2:50,  
and by appointment

### **Course Description**

The goal of this course is to expose students to the art and science of critical thinking including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in the fields of play, play theories, leisure, recreation, parks, and/or tourism through a variety of pedagogies. Implications for functional, environmental, and leadership dimensions of organized play experiences in early years. Play as an essential facet of the child's life-span; wherein cognitive, affective, and motor elements are synthesized to form her/his emergent lifestyle.

### **Course Objectives**

Course objectives include, but are not limited to, the following. Students will be able to:

-  Articulate the six functions of play and recognize the operation of these functions in the child's life.
-  Apply play principles in the development of a play environment and to demonstrate an understanding of the principles of, context and setting for, and media used in various play environments.
-  Apply techniques to act as an effective play facilitator. .
-  Demonstrate professional writing skills and mastery of written English.

### **Required Text**

Frost, J. L., Wortham, S., & Reifel, S. (2008). *Play and Child Development*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

RTM 305 **course reader** is available at the Matador Bookstore. You will also find many of the documents, forms, and course materials at our course website <http://webteach.csun.edu>.

## **Course Outline**

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. What is Play?**

- A. Characteristics of Play
- B. Serena Arnold's Theory - 9 Components of Play
- C. Joseph Levy's - Toward a Definition of Play Behavior

### **III. Functions of Play and Sensory Stimulants**

- A. Environmental Cognizance
- B. Socialization
- C. Enculturation
- D. Individuation
- E. Conceptualization
- F. Abreaction/Catharsis

### **IV. Play Spaces**

- A. Play Needs of Children
- B. Playground Design
- C. Playground Equipment
- D. Playground Safety
- E. The outdoor classroom

### **V. Play Tools**

- A. Play Needs of Children
- B. Toy Qualities
- C. Toy Safety

### **VI. Play Facilitation**

- A. Techniques for Observing Children's Play
- B. Techniques in Becoming a Play Facilitator

### **VII. Play Day**

- A. Overview
- B. Selection of Book Themes
- C. Developing a Play Environment
- D. Play Day Portfolio
- E. Implementation
- F. Evaluation

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

Compose an autobiography of your early to middle childhood play experiences. Three different play episodes should be included. The following items must be considered:

1. Description of the experiences as they relate to Levy's characteristics of play integrating references from the course reader article by Levy to justify your conclusions.
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. **Use your text and reader as references.**

### **Specific grading criteria for this assignment in addition to "General Grading Criteria":**

For a "C" grade: complete the assignment as indicated above with limited references.

For a "B" grade complete the assignment as indicated above and **integrate information from Reggio Emilia, play facilitation, and development in play with a minimum of 7 references as follows:** 3 References from Reggio Emilia (**from 3 different sources other than the text**) 2 References from the course reader or text on play facilitation 2 References from the text on development in play.

For an "A" grade complete the assignment as indicated above and **integrate information from Reggio Emilia, play facilitation, development in play, and current brain research with a minimum of 9 references as follows:**

3 References from Reggio Emilia (**from 3 different sources other than the text**) 2 References from the course reader or text on play facilitation 2 References from the text on development in play 2 References on current brain research (**from 2 different sources other than the text**)

Length: Previous "A" and "B" papers have around 5-8 pages in length.

## **Assignment #2: Play Observation Journal**

Each student will observe children in pretend play for the purpose of observing the six functions of play. **(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 your 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 this syllabus, and Play Facilitation techniques as described in the text and the course reader.

2.1. **Describe the play episode** 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 episode.** 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.

**Note: You will be asked to bring your "Play Journal" to class to be used during class discussions on play functions.**

Grading for this assignment is either credit or no credit.

Credit/no credit grading criteria:

Credit: Completed play journals with play episodes and analysis of play functions and play facilitation

No Credit: Incomplete journal or no journal

### **Assignment #3: Playground Critique and Re-design**

Each student will visit an outdoor play area designed for children and critically analyze the environment and create an “ideal” re-design. The written critique must include the following items:

**1. Background information:**

Location and Address of the area; Date and Time of the observation

Diagram of the Play Area

**2. 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.**

**3. 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 redesign diagram. (Note: two diagrams are needed-the existing play area and your creative re-design.) 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.

**Specific grading criteria for this assignment in addition to “General Grading Criteria”:**

**For a “C” grade:** complete the assignment as indicated above using limited references.

**For a “B” grade:** complete the assignment as indicated above and **integrate information (at least five references) from the text on outdoor play areas for children.**

**For an “A” grade:** complete the assignment as indicated above and **integrate information from Reggio Emilia on outdoor environments for children, outdoor play areas for children, and current brain research with a minimum of 8 references as follows:** 2 References from Reggio Emilia on outdoor environments for children (**from sources other than the text**) 2 References on outdoor play areas for children (**with at least 2 references from the text**) 2 References on current brain research (**from sources other than the text**)

Length: Previous “A” and “B” papers have all been 5-8 pages in length with clear “before” diagrams and imaginative concepts in the “after” diagrams.

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

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.

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. Each student receives an individual grade for Component #2.**

The group is not assigned a grade how your participation does affect the 10% of the final course grade based on participation. Group members also have the option to eliminate group members who are not participating or contributing. Limited participation (letting others in the group do most of the work) or elimination from the group results in a deduction of 1 full point from your total grade score. Consideration for outstanding work will be given in assigning plus/minus in final course grades and in borderline final grade scores. Absences, tardiness, leaving class early, and lack of responsibility with your group negatively affect your group participation.

### **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? Cite references in your discussion. (Note: The Frost text has excellent 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.

**Specific grading criteria for Component #2 in addition to “General Grading Criteria”:**

**For a “C” grade:** Complete the assignment as indicated above using limited references.

**For a “B” grade:** Integrate information related to **Reggio Emilia (3 different sources)** throughout your paper. Note: this is not a separate section but woven into your discussion of theme, **Levy play functions and children’s developmental levels.**

**For an “A” grade:** Integrate information related to **Reggio Emilia (4 different sources)** and **brain development (4 different sources)** throughout your paper. Note: this is not a separate section but woven into your discussion of theme, **Levy play functions and children’s developmental levels.**

**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 oral presentation- 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?

5.7 Each group member will turn in a typed ½-1-page statement evaluation about Play Day.

Which will include-What were you happy with? What would you change if you did this project again? Did your group members all participate equally? Did you participate equally?

*\*\*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 will blow supplies if not secured.****

### **Learning Experience**

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. Please note that the grading criteria for each assignment are offered as guidelines and **do not guarantee a specific grade**. For example, you may have included all the references specified for an “A” grade but earn a “B” or “C” on your paper since all aspects of the paper are taken into consideration when assigning a grade.

### **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. Absences and late arrivals to class will affect your ability to synthesize materials, thereby affecting your final grade.

**\*\*\*Absences during Play Day group planning sessions will count as a DOUBLE absence for that missed class. \*\*\***

### **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 Requiring Accommodation:**

Students with disabilities who require course/assignment accommodation, 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.

**RTM 305 *Tentative* Course Calendar**

<b>T/TH</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due/Bring to Class</b>
8/26	Class business; Introduction to the course. Play Day Slides	<b>Forward CSUN e-mail to personal e-mail</b>
8/28	Serena Arnold Components of Play	
9/2	Joseph Levy Characteristics of Play	
9/4	Organization of Play Day Groups: Selecting Children's Books	
9/9	Functions of Play	
9/11	Functions of Play Play Day Slides: Play Day Planning Groups	
9/16	Functions of Play; <b>Play Observation Journals for in class use</b>	
9/18	Functions of Play; <b>Play Observation Journals for in class use</b>	<b>Play Autobiography</b>
9/23	Play Day Planning Groups in class ( <b>layout of environment</b> )	
9/25	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
9/30	Playgrounds and Play Spaces *(Possible Guest Lecturer)	
10/2	Playgrounds and Play Spaces *(Possible Guest Lecturer)	
10/7	Playgrounds and Play Spaces	
10/9	Playgrounds and Play Spaces	
10/14	Play Day Planning Groups in class	<b>Play Day Portfolio Component 2</b>
10/16	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
10/21	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
10/23	Play Day Planning Groups in class	

<b>T/TH</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due/Bring to Class</b>
10/28	Play Day Planning Groups in class	<b>Playground Critique and Re-Design</b>
10/30	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
11/4	Play Day Planning Groups in class	<b>Play Day Final Portfolios</b>
11/6	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
11/13	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
11/18	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
11/20	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
11/25	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
12/2	Play Day Planning Groups in class	
12/4	Play Day Planning Groups in class	<b>Completed reimbursement requests due</b>
12/5	<b>PLAY DAY!!!! FRIDAY Haycox School Set-up 6:15-9:00 Children present 9:00-12:00 pm Clean-up 12:00-1:00 pm Return materials to CSUN 1:30-3:30 pm Haycox School</b>	
12/9	Oral Presentations from Play Day	
12/16	<b>Final Class meeting; Play Day Review/ Group Meetings for evaluations. 10:15-12:15pm</b>	<b>Play Day Evaluations and Class Forms</b>

## **Grading**

- Assignment #1 Autobiography of Play 30% of course grade (40 points)
- Assignment #2 Play Observation Journal Credit/No Credit
- Assignment #3 Playground Critique and Re-design 30% of course grade (40 points)
- Assignment #4 Play Day Portfolio Component #2 30% of course grade (100 points)
- Play Day Group Project Credit/No Credit
- Class Participation 10% of course grade (10 points)

-Active class participation is an essential component of this class. Mere attendance is not satisfactory, your active enthusiastic involvement is essential to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. This is a subjective grade assigned by the professor.

Computation of Final Grades: Each of your 4 grades will be weighted according to their percentage worth and averaged together yielding a score from 190. For a “no credit” (possible on assignment #2 and Play Day Group), 1 full grade will be deducted from your final score. For example, if you have earned an average of (B-) on your graded assignments, but failed to complete assignment #2, your final grade score will be (C-). If in addition, you were eliminated or had limited participation with your play day group project, your final grade score will be a (D-). However, if you have completed outstanding work on assignment #2 and the Play Day Group project and your final score is a (B), it is possible in the case of a borderline grade to be assigned a higher final course grade of B+.

## **Grading Scales**

I strongly suggest that all students check their grade progress periodically during the semester. Grades are posted at my website.

	B+ 87-89.9%	C+ 77-79.9%	D+ 67-69.9%
A 93%+	B 83-86.9%	C 73-76.9%	D 63-66.9%
A- 90-92.9%	B- 80-82.9%	C- 70-72.9%	D- 60-62.9%

If you decide you do not want to continue in this class, it is your responsibility to drop the class prior to the drop date. Failure to do so will result in a grade of “F” in the class.

## General Course Guidelines

- Turn off all cell phones and pagers before entering the classroom. I reserve the right to deduct 5 points for each cell phone/pager interruption. I also reserve the right to deduct 5 points for each text messaging or leaving class to answer a phone call.
- 
- Make friends with someone in class to get handouts for you if you miss class.
- 
- Roll is taken at the beginning of class and used to decide borderline grades.
- 
- Failure to show up for an oral presentation will result in a **deduction of 10 points** per class meeting. I reserve the right to **deduct 5 points** for each tardy and cell phone interruption on the day of an oral presentation, or during class time. Any legal documentation you may provide to substantiate said absence must be produced at the next date of attendance (police report, jail documentation, hospital admittance form, funeral card, doctor's note, tow receipt, NOT a note from mom).
- 
- Protect all of your work. If you have the same work as another person, you both will receive a zero and may be referred to the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs for disciplinary action.
- 
- 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: A) Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus. B) Forgery, alteration or misuse of campus documents, records, or identification of knowingly furnishing false information to a campus. C) Inappropriate behavior inside or outside of the classroom.
- 
- Please take all of your trash with you when you leave the classroom.
- 
- Do **NOT** ask me to give you an incomplete when you don't fit the criteria: a major unforeseen circumstance that can be legally documented, passing work up until the time of the circumstance, and only missing a minority of the course work.
- 
- I am here to help you with class work as well as personal challenges, but you need to come to me if you are having difficulties, I can't read your mind.

### Guidelines for Assignments

- Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be recognized by a grade of “F” on the assignment and will be reported to the appropriate campus authority. Please see pages 531 and 532 in the CSUN Catalog for the campus policy on Academic Dishonesty.
- Late assignments will not be accepted—don’t ask me to make an exception for you.
- Plan for those unforeseen problems by starting on your assignments early—I will gladly accept any assignment early. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. You or someone else **MUST** give them to me personally; they may **NOT** be emailed, faxed, or left in my box.
- Being absent is no excuse for a late assignment.
- Assignments that are **not stapled will not be accepted, and will result in a grade of 0**—don’t ask me for a stapler—I am not your personal Office Depot.
- Assignments must be typed, double-spaced using black ink and white or ivory paper and a 12 font similar in appearance to this one (Times New Roman).
- Handwritten assignments will not be accepted—I can barely read my own writing, don’t expect me to read yours.
- Use a spell checker and have someone read your papers and give you input before you turn them in—give yourself the best chance for the best grade possible.
- CSUN provides a writing lab for students. The tutors will read your paper and give you input on how to improve it. I strongly suggest all students take advantage of this free service.
- Do NOT let them correct your APA formatting. They are English majors and use MLA style.
- Appointments are required for this service.
- Assignments must have your name at the top of the first page so I can give you credit for your masterpiece.

## **General Grading Guidelines for Written Assignments**

An “A” paper demonstrates critical thinking and application of theory/concepts to the subject. Concepts/terms are defined properly. The paper is well conceived and executed, demonstrating proper use of written English. The paper fulfills all specific requirements listed. The source(s) is(are) relevant to the topic.

A “B” paper presents content clearly and displays a firm grasp of the material. Demonstrates some critical thinking. Most of the concepts/terms are defined. May contain some minor grammatical errors. The paper is well organized. The paper fulfills all of the specific requirements listed. The source(s) is(are) relevant to the topic.

A “C” paper displays a reasonable understanding of the material. Treatment of the topic is general and lacks detail. Concepts are defined and not linked to examples. May contain a few major and or minor grammatical errors. The paper fulfills most of the specific requirements listed. The source(s) is(are) fairly relevant to the topic.

A “D” paper demonstrates lack of clear understanding of the topic and a weak grasp of the material. Concepts are not defined, or defined incorrectly, or not linked to illustrative examples, or no concepts are given and the paper is merely a description. Reads poorly and contains major and minor grammatical errors. The paper does not fulfill the requirements listed. The source(s) is (are) not relevant to the topic.

### **Important things to know**

Attendance and participation will be noted and used to decide borderline grades (grades within 1% of the next grade). It is *your* responsibility to be marked in if you arrive after I take roll. It is *my* perception of participation. Failure to bring your course pack each day is non-participation. Text messaging or leaving class to answer phone calls is non-participation.

I will excuse students from class to participate in religious or cultural holidays (yours, not someone else's), however, if anything is due on that day it must be turned in prior to that class meeting and you must inform me of your absence prior to the absence

Please check your grades online periodically throughout the semester. You will be given a three digit code located on my website to check your grades. Please do NOT email me after the semester ends to ask me to reconsider your grade unless I have made an error on the final exam/project grade.

Please do NOT email me to tell me that another person in your class got the next higher grade and only had ½% more than you or even ½% less (think about your attendance and class participation). If you have an 89.9% you have earned a B+. If you have *not* been absent and *have* participated in the class discussions, I will bump your grade up to an A-.

Back up all of your work on the computer. I am not responsible for computer or printer malfunctions or loss of electricity. Save all of your graded work until your grade for this class is posted to your record. In fact, you should save everything until your diploma is in your hand.

Please note the following additional policies:

Penalty for six absences: The highest possible course grade is a C.

**More than 6 absences result in a D or F.** This class is based on a 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.**

**Arriving late to class and/or leaving early will result in final grade penalties.**

### **Our Agreement**

- By remaining on the official class roster and by continuing to attend this class, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the requirements set forth in the syllabus for this course. This is our contract.
- You also acknowledge that you are responsible for asking for clarification about assignments, exams, and due dates.
- You promise to turn off (not place on vibrate) your cell phone/pager before you enter the classroom so that you will not disturb other students.
- You will not leave class to answer or make calls.
- If you have an anticipated emergency that necessitates use of your phone/pager, you will inform me prior to class.
- You are in college because you want to learn.
- You will conduct yourself in a manner consistent with your status as a college student.
- You are in charge of your learning experience and understand that you can get no more out of it than you are willing to put in.
- You understand that my promise to you is that I will do my best to facilitate your learning experience.
- I will be available in person, by email, or by phone.
- Teaching is my passion and I truly believe in a student's rights. If you have any problems or concerns please come and see me about anything.