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Office hours by appointment
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Wednesdays, 7-9 pm

EDUC 808: THE STUDY OF CHILDREN IN DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS THROUGH OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

Course description

Students learn to use a variety of observational approaches and recording techniques as basic assessment tools to increase their understanding of and skill in planning for children who are developing normally, as well as children with disabilities and special needs. Through observing cognitive functioning (stage and style), social-emotional behaviors, motor ability, and the interplay between the individual child and the group as well as between the individual child and adults, students become aware of how specific behaviors yield insight into the overall life of the child. Students will use their observations to reflect on possible curriculum and classroom adaptations that would allow children to build on their strengths and better meet their challenges. An additional goal is to help students, as participant-observers, to develop greater sensitivity to their own feelings and interactions with children and to consider how these affect the selection, omission, and interpretation of observable data. Emphasis is placed on a growing sensitivity to what is “subjective” and what attempts to be “objective” observation. Each student conducts an in-depth study of a child. Prerequisite: EDUC 500 or EDUC 800 or permission of instructor.

Course Goals

- Deepen your curiosity about and learn from children.
- Become increasingly able to identify and understand your own feelings and biases in observing children and systematically reflecting on the intersection of your identity, perspective, and observations and what you are able to “see.”
- Become an increasingly close observer of the details of children’s language, interactions, behavior and physical expression.
- Become increasingly adept at discerning patterns in children’s behavior and consider these patterns in the intersecting contexts of human development, the political and social history of education, race, ethnicity, language, gender, and socio-economic status.
- Develop a sense of “professional vision,” which synthesizes your knowledge of children; historical, social and political context; educational practice; and observation and recording to attend to the salient aspects of a child’s experience in an educational setting. This includes learning to use your careful and reflective observations to inform your curricular and instructional work with children.

Course Policies and Information

Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class and actively participate. In the unusual event that you are unable to attend in person, please contact me by email to arrange how to access the course session via Zoom. If you are unable to participate in a scheduled Zoom session, or as an alternative when you are unable to attend in person, please let me know and I will ask you to complete a make-up assignment. **No more than two classes may be missed to receive credit for the course.**

Class Participation

You are expected to prepare for and participate both in-person and online class discussions and activities. Part of your participation will happen outside of class time, as you work to analyze data for the study of your focal student.

Online Etiquette

- Follow the Golden Rule (i.e., be respectful and collegial, but challenge ideas with which you don't agree or about which you have questions)
- Giving your undivided attention during class sessions is required. Do not engage in unrelated private chat conversations, text on your phone, etc. during class time.
- Mute by default and unmute when you would like to contribute or raise a question.
- Participate in online discussions.
- Ask classmates questions first, and if you have outstanding questions, contact me by email. Expect a response between 24-48 hours from the time you email. If I don't respond within 48 hours, feel free to reach out again. **Call for very urgent matters only.**

Healthy Community Interaction

Here is a list of traits to practice in discussion that help create the successful interaction required for healthy community:

- Stay involved
- Be willing to initiate
- Raise appropriate and intellectually provocative topics and questions
- Provide evidence to support your ideas
- Listen to others
- Respond to others
- Learn from others
- Respect and encourage difference

Communication

Taking a graduate course involves a mutual contract and commitment to learning. If you are having trouble of any kind with course content, pace, or expectations, please contact me immediately and convey the nature of these difficulties so they may be addressed. I am best reached by email, and under most circumstances I will reply within 24 hours. If there is a matter that would be better discussed in person via zoom or over the phone, I am happy to set up appointments.

Religious Observance

The College respects individuals' religious observances. If you are unable to make any class session, including a Friday session, because of religious observance, please notify the course instructor **by the first class session** so that an alternative means can be identified for fulfilling missed class material and course assignments.

Students with Disabilities

Bank Street has both a legal obligation and a philosophical commitment to making reasonable accommodations in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Any student requiring specific academic accommodations should contact the Coordinator of the Office for Students with Disabilities, Peggy McNamara. Phone: 212-875-4586, Email: mam@bankstreet.edu, room 607. If you are already registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities, please let me know your particular needs and how I can help you successfully complete this course.

Technology

If you need help with the technology required for this course, please contact Tech Fellows at: techfellow@bankstreet.edu or 212-875-4528.

Academic integrity

See Bank Street Graduate School of Education Catalog. Students at Bank Street are expected to adhere to high standards of academic integrity. Students should be aware of the definition of plagiarism (see below); all violations will be taken seriously, and may result in consequences as serious as expulsion.

Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas, words, or theories as one's own – or without citation – in an academic submission.

What does this mean?

- All work submitted must be original.
- Any reference to another person's work (including ideas, theories, or concepts) must be cited explicitly. See APA Citation Guidelines.
- Work presented as actual experience cannot be invented or fabricated.

NAEYC and ACEI Standards

This course fulfills NAEYC Standards:

1 - Promoting Child Development

1a. "Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs, from birth through age 8.

1b. Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on early development and learning.

1c. Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging learning environments for young children.

3 - Observing, Documenting and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families

3a. “Understanding the goals, benefits and uses of assessment—including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum and teaching strategies for young children.”

3b. “Knowing about and using observation, documentation and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches, including the use of technology in documentation, assessment and data collection”

3c. Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities.”

3d. “Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues to build effective learning environments.”

4 - Using Developmentally Effective Approaches

4a. Understanding positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation of their work with young children.

4d: Reflecting on own practice to promote positive outcomes for each child.

This course fulfills ACEI Standards:

1 - Development, Learning and Motivation

Candidates know, understand and use the major concepts, principles, theories and research related to development of children and young adolescents to construct learning opportunities that support the individual students’ development, acquisition of knowledge and motivation.”

3.2 - Adaptation to Diverse Students

Candidates understand how elementary students differ in their development and approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse students.

4 - Assessment for Instruction

Candidates know, understand and use formal and informal assessment strategies to plan, evaluate and strengthen instruction that will promote continuous intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of each elementary student.

5.1 - Professional growth, reflection and evaluation

Candidates are aware of and reflect on their practice in light of research on teaching, professional ethics and resources available for professional learning; they continually evaluate the effects of their professional decisions and actions on students, families, and other professionals in the learning community and actively seek out opportunities to grow professionally.

5.2 - Collaboration with Families, Colleagues and Community Agencies

Candidates know the importance of establishing and maintaining a positive collaborative relationship with families, school colleagues, and agencies in the larger community to promote the intellectual, social, emotional, physical growth and wellbeing of children.

Grading Policy

Grading distribution

Reading and Discussion posts	20%
In-class activities	20%
Course Assignments	30%
Final Child Study	30%

Assignment grading criteria

- A= Each requirement addressed thoroughly, carefully and thoughtfully and is responsive to instructor feedback
- B= Some requirements are addressed more thoroughly and carefully than others, may not incorporate instructor feedback or demonstrate sufficient thoughtfulness
- C= Unacceptable or incomplete work that will be returned for revision until at least a grade of B is attained

Course grading criteria

- Professionalism, including regular and prompt attendance, timely and thorough completion of all assignments, courteous demeanor towards fellow students, instructor, and course assistant.
- Reflective and collaborative class participation.
- Ability to provide clear, detailed observation-based descriptions of children.
- Ability to consider observations in the intersecting contexts of human development, the political and social history of education, race, ethnicity, language, gender, and socio-economic status.
- Ability to systematically analyze documentation of children in order to identify emerging patterns across a variety of contexts.
- Ability to reflect upon various observed aspects of a child's experience to generate tentative hypotheses about underlying explanations for emerging patterns, as well as what they suggest about the child as a unique individual, and the implications for working with that child in an educational setting.
- Ability to reflect on one's potential biases and perspectives as an observer, and to systematically work to develop "professional vision."
- Ability to reflect on how to share with colleagues and parents/guardians the information and insights gleaned from observing a child over time.

Feedback

- You will receive ongoing feedback on your observations. Whenever it is feasible, you should address the feedback by revising your work. You are not required to turn this work in again, but you will need as strong and thorough of observational notes as possible to successfully complete your observations.
- Please expect a variety of types of feedback over the course of the semester; feedback ranges from a line-by-line review of your work with commentary, to a summary of the strengths and/or areas to improve. Once you have become proficient in taking observational notes, I will turn my feedback to the content, rather than the form, of your notes. Only letter grades will be given on all assignments.

Required Reading

A Note on Readings/Other Media

It is essential that you complete the required reading for each session before class, as these texts will ground our discussions and inform your assignments.

Required Texts

Each of these texts is available online or in the Bank Street library. No purchase should be necessary.

Readings:

- [Cohen, D., Stern, V., Balaban, N & Gropper, N. \(2016\). *Observing and recording the behavior of young children*, 6th edition. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.](#)
- [Gupta, A. \(2015\). Using postcolonial theory to critically re-frame the child development narrative. In *the Routledge International Handbook of Philosophies and Theories of Early Childhood Education and Care* \(pp. 171-180\). Routledge. \(On Canvas\)](#)
- [Shalaby, C. \(2017\). *Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children at school*. The New Press.](#)
- [Strieb, L. Carini, P. Kanevsky, R., Wice, B. \(Eds.\) \(2011\). *Prospects descriptive processes: The child, the art of teaching, and the classroom and school \(Revised Edition\)*. North Bennington: Prospect Center.](#)

Reference books:

- Trawick-Smith, J. (2013). *Early childhood development: A multicultural perspective*. Pearson Higher Ed.
- OR**
- Wood, C. (2017). *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14. A Resource for Parents and Teachers*. (4th Edition) Turners Falls, MA : Center for Responsive Schools, Inc.

If you are interested in purchasing these, they can also be found through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and many other book sources.

Required Supplies

- One college-ruled black composition notebook or double-entry journal OR a google/word document.

Session 1
Wednesday, January 19th
Introduction & Overview
Building Class Community

Guiding Questions:

- Who am I as a teacher and observer?
- What will we be learning this semester?
- What are the expectations of this course and our class community?

Session 2
Wednesday, January 26th
The Discipline of Careful Observation:
Developing Professional Vision

Required Reading

[Prospect's Descriptive Processes \(pp.1-26\)](#)

Online Discussion A

Please post by January 23rd, respond by January 25th.

Guiding Questions:

- How can I use a double-entry journal to separate my observations from my interpretations?
- How does observing carefully help me develop “professional vision”?

Session 3
Wednesday, February 2nd
The School Experience: Observing Routines

Required Reading

Observing and Recording. Chapters 1- 2 (pp. 1-31)

Online Discussion B

Please post by January 30th, respond by February 1st.

Assignment 1a: Identify and write a brief description of your study child that you will share in class.

Assignment 1b: Obtain Permission to Observe.

Please upload both assignments to Canvas by February 2nd.

Guiding Questions:

- What do we hope children will learn from their experience at school? How does that affect the experience of children at school?
- How does close observation and description of a child help us understand their experience as well as the competing purposes of schooling?
- How can observing a child during routines help us understand the child's experience of school?

Session 4
Wednesday, February 9th
Classroom Materials

Required Reading

Observation and Recording. Chapter 3 (pp. 32-49)

Online Discussion C

Please post by February 6th, respond by February 8th.

Assignment 2: Notes from 30-minute observation of your child

Please upload to Canvas by February 9th.

Guiding Questions:

- What do children's interactions with materials tell us about their learning and development?
- What do observations of a child's interactions with materials tell us about how well the environment works for the child?
- How might observations of children surprise us? How might that help us avoid "pigeon-holing" a child?
- What are you beginning to learn about yourself as an observer?

Session 5
Wednesday, February 16th
Interactions between Children

Required Reading:

Observation and Recording. Chapters 4&5 (pp. 66-103)

Online Discussion D

Please post by February 13th, respond by February 15th.

Assignment 3: Notes from 30-minute observation of your child

Please upload to Canvas by February 16th.

Guiding Questions:

- How do children use play to develop:
 - language?
 - reasoning?
 - understanding of self and others?
 - community?
- How can observations help teachers nurture individual child development?
- How can observations help teachers build classroom community?

Session 6
Wednesday, February 23rd
Interpretation of Behavior

Required Reading

Observation and Recording. Chapter 6 (pp. 91-103) and Chapter 11 (pp. 163-168)

Online Discussion E

Please post by February 20th, respond by February 22nd.

Assignment 4:

Notes from 2, 10-15 min observations/jottings/anecdotes.

Please upload to Canvas by February 23rd.

Guiding Questions:

- What does it mean to be “good” at school?
- How do a child’s interactions with adults reinforce ideas about “goodness”?
- What do our behavioral expectations for children tell us about what we value?
 - How does a child’s behavior relate to the environment?
 - How does a child’s behavior relate to teacher behavior?
- How can close observation help teachers share authority with children?

Session 7
Wednesday, March 2nd
Observing Children's Thinking and
Approaches to Learning

Required Reading

Observation and Recording. Chapter 7-8 (pp. 104-132).

Online Discussion F

Please post by February 27th, respond by March 1st.

Assignment 5: Review your first three observations and craft a draft inquiry question, rationale, and plan for observation.

Please upload to Canvas by March 2nd and be ready to share in class.

Assignment 6:

Notes from 2, 10-15 min observations/jottings/anecdotes.

Please upload to Canvas by March 2nd.

Guiding Questions:

- How do we learn about how children think from observing them and their work?
- What are the similarities and differences in the Observation & Recording approach and the Descriptive Review process?
- How can your observation skills enable you to engage deeply in the Descriptive Review process?

Session 8
Wednesday, March 9th
Language and Culture

Required Reading

Observation and Recording. Chapter 9-10 (pp. 133-162).

[Using postcolonial theory to critically re-frame the child development narrative.](#)

Online Discussion G

Please post by March 6th, respond by March 8th.

Child Study: Descriptive child study groups in class

Assignment 7:

Notes from 2, 10-15 min observations/jottings/anecdotes.

Upload to Canvas by October March 9th.

Assignment 8: Child study group notes

Upload a record of your meeting with your child study group to Canvas by March 10th.

Guiding Questions:

- What have you noticed about your child study child's use of language?
- What does it tell you about how your child thinks, feels, and learns?
- How do language, culture and learning connect?

Session 9
Wednesday, March 16th
Developing a Descriptive Discipline

Required Reading/Viewing

Troublemakers. Preface and Introduction (pp. xv-xl)

[25th Anniversary Tribute to the Art of Teaching, Patricia Carini](#)

Online Discussion H

Post by March 13th, respond by March 15th.

Child Study: Descriptive child study groups in class

Assignment 9:

Notes from 2, 10-15 min observations/jottings/anecdotes

Upload to Canvas by March 16th.

Assignment 10: Child study group notes

Upload notes from of your meeting with your child study group to Canvas by Thursday, March 17th.

Guiding Questions:

- What can the Descriptive Review process help us learn about a study child?



No Class March 23rd

Session 10
Wednesday, March 30th
Looking for Patterns

Required Reading

Troublemakers. Forest School, Zora: On Being Out-Standing (pp. 9-39)

Observation and Recording. *Chapter 13*

Online Discussion I

Post by March 27th, respond by March 29th.

Child Study: Individual, 20-min meetings with Jessica
[Sign up here.](#)

Assignment 11: Review all your observational notes and descriptive child study group notes to discuss patterns that may be emerging. Complete the graphic organizer provided.
Please upload to Canvas one day before our scheduled meeting.

Assignment 12: Code for descriptive themes in your notes
Please upload evidence you have for each theme (thematic data summaries) to Canvas by March 30th.

Guiding Questions:

- What constitutes a pattern?
- How do I identify a pattern?
- How do I account for information that doesn't fit a pattern?

Session 11
Wednesday, April 6th
Meaning Making

Required Reading

Troublemakers. Lucas: On Being Pigeonholed (pp. 40-72)

Online Discussion J

Post by April 3rd, respond by April 5th.

Child Study: Bring your draft thematic codes and a computer to class. You will meet in descriptive child study groups to discuss evidence that responds to your inquiry question.

Guiding Question:

- What themes seem most promising to focus on in your child study?
- What evidence have you collected that enables you to discern these themes?

Session 12
Wednesday, April 13th
From Patterns to Prose

Required Reading

Troublemakers. The Crossroads School, Sean: On Being Willful
(pp. 73-114)

Online Discussion K

Post by April 10th, respond by April 12th.

You will spend this class session outlining a draft of your child study independently and sharing in groups for feedback.

Assignment 12: Code for evidence that responds to your inquiry question.

Upload evidence (Inquiry Data Summary) to Canvas by April 13th.

Guiding Questions:

- What are the themes you have identified from your analysis of your records?
- What have you learned about your study child?

Session 13
Wednesday, April 20th
Implications for Classroom Planning
Reflections on Observing & Recording

Required Reading

Troublemakers. Marcus: On Being Good & Conclusion (pp. 115-169)

Online Discussion L

Post by April 17th, respond by April 19th.

Child Study: You will spend this class session discussing potential recommendations for your study child in child study groups.

There will be NO WHOLE CLASS MEETING this day.

Guiding Questions:

- How can observing, recording and describing help us to plan for individual children by using their strengths within the context of the classroom?
- What insights have we gained about working with the child as an individual within the context of the group?

Session 14
Wednesday, April 27th
Reflections on Observing & Recording

Required Reading

Troublemakers. A Love Letter to Teachers & A Note to All Readers (pp. 170-187).

CELEBRATE!

Final Child Study Gallery Walk

Complete revisions and submit to Canvas no later than May 4th.

Guiding Questions:

- Revisiting the question, "Why should we observe, record and describe?"
- How have our abilities to observe, record, and reflect changed over time?