**Theory-Based Problems in Early Childhood Education**

**CTEC 7270(6) – 3 credit hours**

**Auburn University – Fall 2015**

**Instructor:** Dr. Sean Durham, Assistant Professor, Curriculum and Teaching

**Office Location:** 5012 Haley Center  
**Office Hours:** Mondays, 10 am – noon and 2 pm – 4 pm; by appointment

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**Course Description:**

In-depth exploration of a problem related to the thought, writings, and research that form the theoretical foundations of constructivist approaches to early childhood education.

With each iteration of this course, a distinct “problem” in the field of early childhood education is explored from a theoretical basis with the goal being the generation of applications to practice that advance the field of teaching and the well being of human communities. Themes have included: mind and causality, gender and cognition, literacy development before schooling. This course will focus upon *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in the Context of the Common Core.*

As we delve into the theoretical supports for the current understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), students are invited to identify problems related to this theme that they have encountered in their experience and propose strategies and identify resources, i.e. research and other literature that will allow them to analyze the problem from a theoretical perspective and generate strategies to support holistic development that addresses the problem in the educational realm.

**Course Objectives:**

1) Examine the contributions of theory and research to better understanding the types of educational environment and practices that are associated with children’s growth and development.

2) Understand the history of the construct “developmentally appropriate practice” and the factors that have contributed to its evolution. Develop and understanding of the prevalence of DAP and the supports and barriers to its implementation in various contexts.

3) Analyze the perspectives of those in the field who view the implementation of Common Core State Standards as an opportunity to promote developmentally appropriate practices. Identify and consider contrasting viewpoints.

4) Recognize and learn to create developmentally appropriate teaching strategies/experiences wherein contemporary learning standards can be documented. Gain skills in critiquing teaching through the lens of developmentally appropriate practice and engage in critical reflection about one’s own teaching practice.

5) Articulate a research base for developmentally appropriate practice that can support advocacy.

6) Evaluate and describe school and classroom contexts that exemplify developmentally appropriate practice that meets accountability standards.

7) Synthesize professional and research literature to compose sound conclusions and convincing arguments about critical issues in education

**Texts:**

Copple, S., & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in*

*early childhood programs serving children birth through age 8.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Goldstein, L. S. (2015). Using developmentally appropriate practices to teach the

common core. New York: Routledge Press.

Hart, C. H., Burts, D. C., & Charlesworth, R. (Eds.). (1997). *Integrated curriculum and*

*developmentally appropriate practice birth to age eight*. New York: State University of New York Press.

There will also be additional readings on Canvas. I recommend you make copies of these

supplementary readings for annotation, study, and reference.

Note: Check Canvas regularly for additional readings

**Course Requirements/Evaluation:**

1. Digital journals (20 points) – Weekly journal entries will be uploaded to Canvas. Entries will contain a summary of the material that has been assigned or encountered, 3-5 carefully thought out discussion questions to propose to the class. Include possible answers or considerations for the discussion questions that include bulleted notes of reflections, posited answers, and/or references to readings. The digital journal is designed in part of aid your preparation for class discussions. Each digital journal entry should conclude with a paragraph (approximately one typed page) containing an impact statement describing why the information from the readings matters to the education of young children. In order to obtain full points for digital journals, distance students will have an additional component. TBA
2. Lesson plan analysis and modifications (30 points) – During the semester, students will collect 5-7 lesson plans and supplementary artifacts from a variety of planned student experiences (e.g. large group, small group, interest areas, outdoors). Using course readings, evaluate the quality of the planned experience/lesson using language and principles of developmentally appropriate practice. Modify the experience/lesson as needed to make it developmentally appropriate and sensitive to learning standards. Conclude with a reflective essay about the supports and barriers impacting the implementation your modified, appropriate lesson – including practical resources, professional development, and other contextual factors.
3. DAP research experience (15 points) – Use a published instrument to assess the beliefs about and use of developmentally appropriate practices in a pre-k or kindergarten classroom. Analyze and draw conclusions from the survey and observational data and write a summary of findings and discussion of implications. You will be trained on the use of the instrument in class and provided further instruction.
4. Theory-based problem paper (25 points) – Write an approximately 15-page paper (double-space, 12 point font, not including references) on a critical component within the theme of the course. This assignment will be discussed several times in class throughout the semester.
5. Course participation (10 points) – The nature of this course requires professional reflection, dialogue, and participation during and outside class. The instructor will assess student participation throughout the course and will determine the number of point to be awarded.

We will discuss your interests and potential topics for research. Your topic should be decided no later than September 15. References required: at least 20 – 10 articles (empirical articles from peer-reviewed journals), additional references may be review articles, or book chapters; only 2 may be conference presentations or proceedings). 3-5 popular press references may be included. Paper must be written in APA style, including a title page, headings, and references. Each reference listed in the references must also be cited in the paper.

**Grading scale:**

90 – 100 A

80 – 90 B

70 – 80 C

60 – 70 D

<60 F

**AUBURN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Competent

Competent professionals demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate the learning of the individuals they serve. Their competence enables them to model and promote active, collaborative, and ongoing learning. Their efforts are enhanced by their abilities to foster learning communities that are safe, stimulating, and enriched with diversity; engage in reasoned and purposeful decision making; and implement their professional practices in proactive, flexible, and self-regulating ways. We recognize that the development of professional competence is linked to levels of preparation and experience. We also acknowledge that competence continues to develop over the course of an entire career.

Committed

Committed professionals make reasoned decisions based on thoughtfully constructed values. As a College, we strive to nurture values that support the learning of all people, honor diversity, protect the integrity of learning, and expand the scholarship of our professions. We view these values as professional dispositions, and we define them as filters for responsible decision-making. Our College emphasizes the conscious development of commitments related to professional responsibilities and ethics, collaboration, diversity, and intellectual vitality.

Reflective

We choose to frame reflection as a critical and pervasive habit of mind that permeates and fuels the ongoing expansion of competence and the continued development of reasoned commitments. Reflective professionals subject their own competencies and commitments to continuous scrutiny as they systematically monitor the impact of their professional practices on the individuals they serve and make adjustments as needed. Thoughtful reflection emphasizes reviewing and analyzing past practices in ways that influence and improve future practices. This stance inspires self-initiated professional growth and results in increased capacities for addressing the complexities and dilemmas situated within the work of educational and human services professionals.

**Class participation:** Students are expected to participate in all class discussions and participate in all exercises. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor if assignment deadlines are not met. Students are responsible for initiating arrangements for missed work.

**Attendance/Absences:** Attendance is required at each class meeting. If an exam or assignment is missed, a makeup opportunity will be given only for University-approved excuses as outlined in the Student Policy eHandbook. Arrangements must be made in advance. Students who miss an class or assignments because of illness should be prepared to provide documentation via a doctor’s excuse. Other unavoidable absences from campus must be documented and cleared with the instructor in advance. Each unexcused absence will result in 5 points deducted from the final grade.

Three unexcused absences may result in a teacher candidate being dropped from the

program.

**Accommodations:** Students who need accommodations are asked to electronically submit their approved accommodations through AU Access and to arrange a meeting during office hours the first week of classes, or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. If you have a conflict with my office hours, an alternate time can be arranged. To set up this meeting, please contact me by e-mail. If you have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT). See https://fp.auburn.edu/disability/faculty/syllabus.asp

**Honesty Code:** The University Academic Honesty Code and the Student Policy eHandbook Rules and Regulations pertaining to Cheating and Plagiarism will apply to this class. See https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/AcademicHonestyCode.pdf

**Professionalism:** As faculty, staff, and students interact in professional settings, we are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors as defined in the College’s conceptual framework. These professional commitments or dispositions are:

1. Creates a caring and supportive learning environment and encourages self-directed

learning by all students

2. Demonstrates behaviors that are consistent with the ideals of fairness and the belief

that all students can learn

3. Demonstrates, models, and exemplifies a commitment to diversity

4. Engages in responsible and ethical professional practices (shows

trustworthiness, nurtures professional relationships, maintains confidentiality

regarding students and school matters)

5. Demonstrates professionalism by being prepared, dressing professionally,

communicating appropriately, and fulfilling attendance expectations

6. Shows respect for and cooperates with students, families, colleagues, and

members of the community

7. Shows initiative and self-direction in classroom activities (e.g., organization and

management of classroom, planning and implementation of instruction)

8. Follows policy regarding use of digital tools and models digital citizenship and

responsibility (e.g., the appropriate use of social media)

9. Contributes to collaborative learning community, models and nurtures intellectual

vitality, and demonstrates interest and enthusiasm for the profession

10. Accepts/acts on constructive criticism and suggestions in a professional way

11. Monitors and adjusts own professional dispositions as necessary

12. Reflects on and analyzes past practices to stimulate ongoing improvement for

future practice

\***Mobile Device Policy:** Smartphone use or text messaging or unapproved iPad/Tablet or laptop usage during the class session is viewed as extremely unprofessional and will result in an automatic loss of points of Class Participation and Professional Behavior grade points (under COURSE REQUIREMENTS) for the first occurrence; additional points will be deducted for repeated occurrences. It is best that phones, iPads, and laptops not be visible during the class session to avoid any misunderstanding of their use.