Tufts in Talloires 2016
ED130: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING
Erin Seaton

Erin Seaton, Ed. D.
Department of Education
Paige Hall 307
617-627-3926
ee.seaton@tufts.edu

Draft Syllabus

Description of the Course:
Study in a foreign country invites questions about one's own growth and education. This course introduces students to theories of child development and learning across cultures and asks students to reflect on their own identities as learners. The course begins with formative theories of child development and schooling. Influenced by the philosophies of Jean Jacques Rousseau, students examine the work of pioneering Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget on human cognition and travel to the Archives Jean Piaget in Geneva, Switzerland. Following, students consider how Piaget's ideas may be put into practice through European models of education, such as Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia. Class discussions will explore the universality of human development, the influence of culture on learning, models of schooling and teaching practice, and comparisons between French and American attitudes toward childhood and education, in particular. Through class conversations and written work, students will be asked to develop cross-cultural comparisons between course theories and their own educational experiences.

Goals of the course:
- To engage in a critical discussion of formative theories of human development and learning from different cultural perspectives
- To synthesize, compare, and evaluate these theories in written reflections;
- To articulate and examine the influences that have shaped students’ own identities as learners;
- To appraise qualitative study methods used to examine human development and learning, such as observation and ethnography;
- To grapple with the ways in which culture shapes development and learning;
- To collaborate with peers in an examination of the value of cross-cultural studies and discuss how such studies awaken moments of self-understanding;
- To develop a meaningful final project that demonstrates an ability to meaningfully apply theories of development and learning to personal growth or educational settings.

Course Requirements:
- Carry out readings assigned for each class before coming to the class meeting.
- Participate in class discussions, presentations, excursions, and other activities.
- Keep a journal to record observations, insights, questions, and new knowledge.
- Write a 3-page response paper (typed and double-spaced) analyzing theories of development and learning across cultures.
- Write a 3-page reflection paper comparing and contrasting a student’s own educational experience with theories of education presented in the course.
- Create a final paper or project integrating course and students’ own developing understanding of human growth and learning across cultures.

Course Readings
Weekly readings are listed in the course syllabus and will be made available to students.
**Course Assignments:**

**Journal:**
Due weekly
Adapted from Eleanor Duckworth’s description of this exercise in her article, “Teaching and learning,” the journal invites students to reflect on the construction of their own knowledge by recording weekly observations of childhood, society, and education. For the duration of the course students should keep a thorough record of their empirical observations of childhood, child rearing practices, socialization, schooling, notions of intelligence, and educational practice, policy, and pedagogy. Students can gather data from their interactions with others, conversations with host families, or observations in the community. Student writing should explore the way in which learning, thinking, and education is constructed across cultures. Students should also reflect on the process of observing and collecting data, proposing and discussing ideas, and studying how we come to know something. We will reserve a few minutes of class time each week to talk about the journals and observations. Students should submit the complete journal at our final class meeting. Students will be evaluated on the detail of their observations, the quality of their reflections, their ability to ask relevant and thoughtful questions, and the creativity of their work.

**Response paper:**
Due week 2
This 3 page paper asks students to respond to course theories on the development of learning and cognition, including the work of Jean Piaget. Students should compare and contrast different cultural expectations for childhood learning and the differing values cultures place education as studied in class. At the end of the paper, students should discuss possible applications of theories of learning. Students should cite course readings and materials. Papers will be evaluated on their clarity, strength of writing, overall understanding of course theories, and presentation of critical thinking and analytical skills.

**Reflection paper:**
Due week 4
In this 3 page assignment, students are asked to draw from course readings, materials, activities, observations, interviews, or on-site experiences to compare and contrast American and French and/or European models of education. Responses might highlight the ways in which cultures value early childhood education, assess student learning, envisions the role of play, or instruct students. Again, papers will be evaluated on their clarity, strength of writing, overall understanding of course theories, and presentation of critical thinking and analytical skills.

**Final paper:**
Due week 6
For the final assignment, students are asked to create a paper or project that demonstrates their competence with course readings, insights on cross-cultural comparisons of education, and their own developing ability to apply theories of human growth and learning. Students should cite course readings and materials explicitly. Examples of final projects might include a lesson plan or program for young children, the creation of a children’s book that emphasizes particular cultural values or traditions, or a website or blog relevant to course themes. Students may work with a partner or group on this assignment. Students will have an opportunity to present final projects in the last week of classes.

**Grading:**
Final grades will take into account:
Attendance (including attendance on class excursion) and class participation (20%)
Journal entries (10%)
Response papers (40%)
Final project (30%)
Class Meetings Dates, Discussion Topics, and Reading Assignments:

**Week 1: Introduction and Overview**

*What is human development and learning? What is culture? What assumptions do we have about education? Where do these assumptions come from? What are some core theories of learning, and how do they differ?*

Readings:

Recommended reading to spark further interest:

**Week 2: Growth in early childhood across cultures**

*Where does knowledge come from? How does thinking change as a child develops? What influences cognitive development? Who was Jean Piaget? What are the major principles of his theory? How might language development differ across cultures? What does play look like from a cross-cultural perspective?*

Readings:
- Browne, M. (May/June 2013). Why there is no French Harry Potter. *Intelligent Life.* http://moreintelligentlife.co.uk/content/arts/anonymous/french-childrens-books?page=full

Recommended reading to spark further interest:

**Week 3: The development of the self**

*What do we know about the construction of the self? How do different cultures view identity development? Is the goal of human development autonomy or connectedness? How are emotional development and moral thinking related to culture?*

Excursion to the Archives Jean Piaget

Readings:


Recommended reading to spark further interest:

In-Class Film Clip:

**Week 4: Perspectives on learning and schooling**

*How do different cultures view education and schooling? Who attends school? What are the perils when children are not educated? How do different cultural practices influence learning and instruction?*

Readings:


In-Class Film Clips:


**Week 5: French and European approaches to education**

*How do French and European models of child development, learning, and educational practices compare and contrast with American models and practices? What are the guiding philosophies of Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, and Loris Malaguzzi’s approaches to education? How do these theories reflect the sociocultural context? What are the strengths and limitations of the Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia approaches to education?*

Readings:


**Week 6: Pedagogies and practice**

*How do we apply theories of learning? What can we take away from the experience of studying child development and education in different cultural context? How might the theories and experiences of this course shape our own understandings of human growth and learning?*

Readings:

- Kohl, H. “I won't learn from you.” In “I won't learn from you” and other thoughts on creative *maladjustment* (pp. 1-32). New York, NY: W. W. Norton.