

## PSYC 398-98: Field Placement with Children and Families Spring, 2005

*Professor:* Dr. Steven Meyers

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*Office Hours:* Wednesdays, 4:30 – 5:45 pm, and Thursdays, 10:30 – 11:30 am

*Required Texts:* All students will read the following book:

Kozol, J. (2001). *Ordinary resurrections: Children in the years of hope*.  
New York: Perennial.

In addition, you will read either one of the following texts. Choose the one most appropriate based on the age of the children at your site:

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (1998). *Your child: Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development from birth through preadolescence*. New York: HarperCollins.

- or -

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (1999). *Your adolescent: Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development from early adolescence through the teen years*. New York: HarperCollins.

### *Course Prerequisites:*

Advanced enrollment is needed in this class to ensure sufficient time to obtain a service-learning placement. In addition, you must have a signed and approved agreement with the site supervisor by February 7 to remain enrolled in the class. Other prerequisites include instructor consent to determine if you have sufficient preparatory coursework, which includes nine semester hours in psychology or a related discipline that focuses on children and families.

### *Course Overview:*

Field Placement with Children and Families is a three-credit course in which you participate in a community service placement for a total of 48 hours during the semester. Volunteer activity must occur in an organized setting, such as an elementary school classroom, a day care facility, an after-school or YMCA program, or a pediatric health care setting. In addition, you will complete readings and written assignments during the semester that connect the course material with your experiences at the site.

*Course Goals:*

At the end of this course, you should display a greater ability to:

- Interact with children in empathic, developmentally appropriate, and ethical ways.
- Apply theoretical and research knowledge in your observations of and interactions with children at your site.
- Identify the ways in which broader factors (such as race, socioeconomic status, access to resources) and social policies can shape the lives of children.
- Recognize the ways in which your own experiences and personality influence how you interact with children.
- Produce change, at the individual or community level, that can improve the lives of children.

*Summary of Weekly Schedule:*

Each learning module is one week in duration (with the exception of Week 1, which is several days longer to allow you more time to acclimate to the on-line environment). A week begins on a Thursday and ends on the following Wednesday. Check the course site on a frequent basis because you, other students, and I will be posting material as the week progresses. Brief check-ins can be very helpful, too.

- Each Thursday morning, I will post the week's announcements, virtual field trips, and discussion questions.
- Complete the readings for the week by no later than Sunday night.
- I will write and distribute my Commentary on the topic during the week.
- Discussion on the week's topic will conclude by Wednesday at 9:00 pm. I will write comments regarding your postings on Thursday.

Reminder: Complete your discussion postings earlier in the weekly module rather than waiting until the last day. Extra time will NOT be given for any reason, including computer problems. Use the computers at the university or another public access location (such as a public library) if your own computer does not work. In addition, I recommend that you compose your service learning journals on a word processor, save the file to disk, then transfer the document to the Blackboard site rather than composing it while you are on-line. This will preserve your document in case of a computer problem.

This weekly schedule supplements your work at the placement. Days and times for site work are arranged in consultation with your site supervisor. Absences and changes to your schedule must be negotiated with and approved by your supervisor as well. Keep in mind that the site's schedule and needs may not overlap with University breaks. Discuss these matters beforehand.

*Specific Requirements:*

1. Volunteer 48 hours in the context of an approved site placement.

The Field Placement involves a requirement of 48 hours of direct contact with children. These 48 hours must begin by the first week of PSYC 398 and must be distributed across the entire semester.

The Field Placement must involve interacting with children (birth – age 18 years) so that you can learn about their psychological, emotional, social, or cognitive development. Placements that allow you to get to know a smaller number of children in greater depth are generally better than those that those with rotating populations. Consistent with Roosevelt University's commitment to social justice, I encourage you to select sites that allow you to work with children and families who experience some form of challenge or adversity.

Certain tasks at the site do *not* count towards your contact hours, such as clerical tasks, administrative work, and any training that the site requires. In addition, you cannot “double-count” hours that you work at the site with any other college-related experience (e.g., students enrolled in teacher preparation programs cannot simultaneously apply their volunteer work for PSYC 398 towards the College of Education's field observation or student teaching courses).

The Field Placement can only be completed in organized settings, such as a school, social service agency, or hospital. Informal arrangements (such as babysitting) are not permitted. In addition, the Field Placement must be supervised by an appropriate staff member at the site. The supervisor must be available to provide training, answer questions, and provide you with appropriate feedback. Supervisors must be sufficiently knowledgeable about your performance so that they can complete the required evaluation forms.

*Your 48 hours at the site only begin to count after you obtain my signature on the Site Approval and Contract Form which you received prior to the beginning of this semester.*

Your supervisor will complete a mid-semester and a final evaluation of your work at the site by the due dates specified on the course calendar at the end of the syllabus. You will be responsible for providing your supervisor with the forms (which will be available through the course website) and verifying that they have been mailed to me. In addition, you will complete a form that relates your own perceptions of the site at the end of the semester.

Your supervisor's final evaluation of your work will account for one-third of your final grade in the course.

2. Complete the assigned text readings each week.

Readings from your textbooks are the primary source of information in this course. Books are available for immediate purchase at both campus bookstores. All students will read Jonathan Kozol's book, *Ordinary Resurrections*. It describes his interactions with children in schools located in the South Bronx in New York City. We will use this text to understand the lives of children who encounter environmental adversity.

Based on the age of the children at your site, you will read either *Your child: Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development from birth through preadolescence* or *Your adolescent: Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development from early adolescence through the teen years*. Both are published by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and cover the same topics. The only difference is that the information presented addresses different age ranges.

Complete the assigned readings for each week by Sunday so that you have sufficient time to participate in on-line discussions. For example, Week 2 begins on Thursday, February 17 and ends on Wednesday, February 23. You should complete all Week 2 readings listed on the syllabus by Sunday, February 20. You have access to the entire course timeline, so you can always begin the readings in advance.

3. Read the Commentary that I post each week.

I will write and post a Commentary on the topic that you are reading about each week. I will highlight a particular issue in greater detail or will integrate important course themes. Sometimes I may provide case illustrations or will connect the topic to a controversial debate in the field. My Commentary will occasionally be supplemented by a guest speaker who will asynchronously answer questions that you pose in advance.

4. Take "virtual field trips" each week.

I will post several external links related to the topic of study for each week. These links will connect to newspaper articles and websites that address pertinent themes.

5. Participate in on-line discussion groups with other members of class each week.

Your participation is essential if we are to learn from each other. It isn't simply a matter of choosing to participate; this is a collective effort that requires conversation and reflection.

I will post a discussion question or topic each Thursday that builds on your field experiences and the material covered in the readings. You will develop responses to these questions and post them on the asynchronous discussion board. Postings must be completed before Wednesdays at 9:00 pm; however, do not wait until the last day or two before posting your discussion contributions for the week. This cramming would result in holding up the entire discussion process for your group!

Your discussion postings will be evaluated each week of the semester. Each will be graded on a 10-point scale using the criteria listed below. If you do not write a discussion posting within the week's time frame, you will receive 4 out of 10 points (rather than a 0). Discussion postings account for one-third of your final course grade.

- (a) Postings must be substantive. You should write no less than 250 words each week. Students who receive the highest grades on these assignments will generally post more than one time during the week; their postings will be longer and more detailed than the 250 word minimum length;
- (b) Postings must reflect your knowledge of the reading material (from both the current week as well as previous weeks' readings, as appropriate). Your postings can be informed by information that you have gathered from the virtual field trips as well;
- (c) Your postings must build on those written by other class members. That is, these threaded discussions reflect a dialog between you and your classmates rather than a series of independent and disconnected essays on the same topic.
- (d) Postings should also display your critical thinking and careful analysis of the issue at hand. They should not stray far from the topics that I pose at the beginning of the week.
- (e) Note that I will generally grade postings that have been completed earlier in the week more favorably than those that are posted immediately before the end of the weekly module. This incentive should encourage you to complete this assignment earlier so that a dialog can develop over several days rather than at the last minute.

Note: I also have created another forum for online student discussion called the Cyber Lounge. All students have access to this common area. This is a place for you to post questions and concerns about anything that interests you. I encourage you to respond to each other often. The Cyber Lounge allows online students to get to know each other and to develop a sense of community for our class. These informal conversations allow us to create one setting for a relaxed online environment. Posting in the Cyber Lounge is optional and will not be evaluated.

6. Maintain a journal about your volunteer work.

After each visit to your site, you should type a journal entry. The minimum length for each journal entry is between 500 and 750 words (two to three pages) per week of volunteer work. Longer entries are recommended for higher grades. Journals must be composed using Microsoft Word (double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides) and will contain the following parts:

- (a) The date(s) and the start and stop time(s) of your volunteer work for the week;
- (b) A summary of your activities and interactions at the site. Focus on describing the social, emotional, and cognitive functioning of children;

(c) Concrete connections between your volunteer work and the readings. Note that these connections must be detailed and specific. They may relate to any part of the readings rather than only to the topic of the week.

(d) A commentary on what you learned, found interesting, and your emotional reactions.

Even though you are writing your journal entries on a weekly basis, you will send me your journals in three batches. The first set of journals will be due on March 9. In addition to the weekly entries that address the points above, this first submission will also include a two page preface that provides an overview of the site and a description of your responsibilities. The second set of journals will be due on April 13. The last set of journals will be due on May 13. In addition to addressing the points above, the final journal submission will also include a three page summary of the main things that learned from your volunteer experience.

E-mail your journals directly to me (smeyers@roosevelt.edu) as an attachment. Journals will be graded on a 10-point scale; late submissions will be penalized 0.5 points per day late. The journals collectively account for one-third of your grade in this course.

#### *Base Groups:*

Base groups are long-term cooperative learning groups with stable membership whose primary responsibility is to provide each student the support, encouragement, and assistance they need to make academic progress. Base groups personalize the work required and the learning experience. During this course you will be part of a base group consisting of four or five participants. These base groups will stay the same during the entire course.

Questions regarding course assignments and class material may be addressed in the base group; however, clarification is always available from the instructor. All members are expected to contribute actively to the on-line discussions within base groups and strive to maintain effective working relationships with other participants.

#### *Computation of Grades:*

I will only assign a passing final grade in this course if you successfully complete your 48 hours of volunteer work at your site. The basis for the grade reflects the quality of your performance on the following course requirements. Each component counts for one-third of your grade in this class:

- (a) Supervisor's assessment of the quality of your work on your final evaluation;
- (b) Your journals that document your experiences and connections to the reading material;
- (c) Your weekly on-line posting of responses to the discussion questions and other activities.

Weighted scores from each component of the class will be added together. Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale. Please note that there will be absolutely no "rounding" of final scores under any circumstance. For example, a final score of 89.99 will translate into a "B" for the course.

Grades can be interpreted using the framework below:

A	Superior	90.00 - 100
B	Above Average	80.00 - 89.99
C	Average	70.00 - 79.99
D	Lowest Passing Grade	60.00 - 69.99
F	Failure	59.99 and below

A grade of “A” indicates superior work. The evaluation from the agency is very positive. The journal includes and thoroughly addresses all aspects. Though journals may have minor flaws, they present an outstanding examination of the experience and demonstrate penetrating understanding. It clearly grounds community service to specific concepts from the course. Discussion postings are timely, thorough, and integrative. These postings exceed the 250 word minimum length and draw consistently on the reading materials from the course.

A grade of “B” indicates very good work. The evaluation from the agency is positive. The content of the journals is better than adequate. It is somewhat less developed than the "A" paper and may neglect one element of the assignment. It may have minor problems with spelling or grammar, or it may have less integration with course material. Discussion postings display understanding of core concepts. They are submitted on time and mention the reading material, but lack detailed and rigorous connections.

A grade of “C” indicates adequate work. The evaluation from the agency is good, but likely indicates some areas of concern. Journals superficially touch on relevant interactions or observations at the site, and offer minimal connections with course material. Discussion postings are occasionally missing or superficial. All written assignments are generally at or below the minimum length requirements as stated on the syllabus.

A grade of “D” reflects minimally acceptable work which does not meet all of the requirements. The journals show problems in many areas and could reflect a lack of understanding of the assignment. The evaluation from the agency may be average or suggest problems. Discussion postings are characterized by significant problems in terms of length, content, or timeliness.

A grade of “F” indicates a failing journal which has major deficiencies and does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment. The student may have not have obtained and submitted evidence of the required hours of service as documented through evaluation forms. Discussion postings are seldom submitted or are highly problematic in terms of appropriateness of content.

Please note that I strictly follow the Registrar’s policy for assigning Incompletes for this course. That is, a grade of **I** will only be assigned when a small portion of the total semester’s work has to be completed and the student has a compelling reason why the work cannot be completed within the regular timeframe. I encourage you to withdraw from this class if you feel that you will be unable to complete the requirements for the course within the expected timeframe.

Late assignments will not be accepted after the specified due dates or will be penalized as explained above.

### *Religious Holidays*

Roosevelt University respects the rights of students to observe major religious holidays and will make accommodations, upon request, for such observances. Students who wish to observe religious holidays must inform their instructors in writing *within the first two weeks* of each semester of their intent to observe the holiday so that alternative arrangements convenient to both students and faculty can be made at the earliest opportunity. Students who make such arrangements by the deadline will not be required to attend classes or take examinations on the designated days, and faculty must provide reasonable opportunities for such students to make up missed work and examinations. However, all work missed for such absences, including papers and examinations, must be made up. Students who do not arrange for excused absences by the deadline are not entitled to such accommodations.

### *Academic Dishonesty*

All students will be held to the University's standards on academic dishonesty, as described in the student handbook and planner and on the University's website. Ignorance of standards will not be accepted as an excuse. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty will receive an **F** for the course, and their names will be forwarded to the Student Services office.

### *Additional Readings*

The required readings in this course provide you with a foundation for understanding children within societal contexts. Here are some recommended readings that can allow you to explore selected topics in greater detail.

Pelzer, D. J. (1995). *A child called "it."* Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Axline, V. M. (1967). *Dibs in search of self.* New York: Ballantine.

Kaysen, S. (1994). *Girl, interrupted.* New York: Vintage.

Pipher, M. B. (2001). *Reviving Ophelia.* New York: Ballantine.

Garbarino, J. (1999). *Lost boys: Why our sons turn out violent and how we can save them.* New York: Free Press.

Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Scales, P. C., & Leffert, N. (1999). *Developmental assets: A synthesis of the scientific research on adolescent development.* Minneapolis: Search Institute.

Oremland, E. K., & Oremland, J. D. (Eds.). (2000). *Protecting the emotional development of the ill child: The essence of the child life profession*. Madison, CT: Psychosocial Press.

Kotlowitz, A. (1992). *There are no children here*. New York: Anchor Books.

*General Note:*

I am committed to the education of each student in this course. If there is a problem that is negatively affecting your course performance, *contact me immediately* so that we can develop an appropriate plan to help you succeed in this class. I urge you not to wait until the end of the semester or until after an assignment is due to speak with me. I encourage you to attend my office hours or contact me by telephone, voice mail, or e-mail.

There are other important university resources that you can access if you feel they will be helpful. At the Downtown Campus, these include the Tutoring Center and Writing Lab (HCC 310, 312-341-3818), the Academic Success Center (HCC 310, 312-341-3810), and the Counseling Center (AUD 854, 312-341-3548).

At the Robin Campus, these include the Writing Lab and Learning Resource Center (Room 112, 847-619-7978), the Academic Success Center (Room 113, 847-619-8846), and the Counseling Center (Room 114, 847-619-7929).

Finally, people characterized by a variety of backgrounds, ages, experiences, abilities, and other differences contribute to the community of learners in our class. We can all learn from these different perspectives, and everyone should be respected and appreciated.

## **READING LIST AND CALENDAR**

### ***Unit 1: The Life of Children and Adolescents***

#### ***Week 1: February 7 – February 16***

Topic: CHILD DEVELOPMENT I

Readings: *Your Child*, Chapters 1 and 2; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapter 1.

#### ***Week 2: February 17 – February 23***

Topic: CHILD DEVELOPMENT II

Readings: *Your Child*, Chapters 3 and 4; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapters 2 and 3.

## ***Unit 2: Day-to-Day Challenges of Children***

### ***Week 3: February 24 – March 2***

Topic: CHALLENGES AT HOME

Readings: *Your Child*, Chapters 5 and 6; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapters 4 and 5.

### ***Week 4: March 3 – March 9***

Topic: CHALLENGES AT SCHOOL AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Readings: *Your Child*, Chapters 7 and 8; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapters 6 and 7.

Note: *Submit the first set of journals by Wed., March 9 at 9 pm. Remember to include the two page introductory preface.*

## ***Unit 3: Environmental Risk, Resilience, and Social Justice***

### ***Week 5: March 10 – March 23***

Topic: RISK AND RESILIENCE

Readings: *Ordinary Resurrections*, Introduction and Chapters 1 to 5.

Note: *Week 5 actually spans a two week period because Spring Break is scheduled between March 14 and March 20.*

### ***Week 6: March 24 – March 30***

Topic: SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITY

Readings: *Ordinary Resurrections*, Chapters 6 to 11.

Note: *Your mid-term evaluation from your site supervisor is due this week.*

### ***Week 7: March 31 – April 6***

Topic: RACE AND ETHNICITY

Readings:     *Ordinary Resurrections*, Chapters 12 to 15.

***Week 8: April 7 – April 13***

Topic:         GENDER AND IDENTITY

Readings:     *Ordinary Resurrections*, Chapters 16 to 20.

Note:          *Submit the second set of journals by Wed., April 13 at 9 pm.*

***Week 9: April 14 – April 20***

Topic:         SOCIAL JUSTICE

Readings:     *Ordinary Resurrections*, Chapters 21 to 23, and Epilogue.

***Unit 4: Abnormal Development and Treatment***

***Week 10: April 21 – April 27***

Topic:         PHYSICAL, DEVELOPMENTAL, AND EATING DISORDERS

Readings:     *Your Child*, Chapters 9 and 12; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapters 8, 11, and 14.

***Week 11: April 28 – May 4***

Topic:         EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

Readings:     *Your Child*, Chapters 10 and 11; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapters 9, 10, and 12.

***Week 12: May 5 – May 11***

Topic:         PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT

Readings:     *Your Child*, Chapters 15 and 16; or *Your Adolescent*, Chapters 16 and 17.

Notes:         *Your final evaluation from your site supervisor is due by the end of this week.*

*Your evaluation of the site placement is due by the end of this week as well.*

*Finals Week*

Topic: FINALS WEEK

Readings: No readings for today.

Note: *Submit the last set of journals by Friday, May 13 at 9 pm. Remember to include the three page summary of what you learned.*