



FCS/PSY 3300 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Fall 2022

Professor Marissa Diener

Tuesday, Thursday 10:45AM – 12:05PM CRCC 210

3 credit hours

Course Description

This course provides an in-depth examination of typical and atypical infant and early childhood development through a culturally-relevant, relationship-focused lens. This course will allow students to uncover developmentally-relevant risk factors, and learn more about how early life stress and trauma can impact biopsychosocial development in infancy and early childhood. Specifically, we will review the impacts of parental psychopathology, early life stress and other risk factors on caregiver-child interactions and child development. Students will be able to articulate how early life stress and exposure to parental psychopathology “get under the skin” to affect behavioral and mental health outcomes. We will also consider the applications of these concepts to promotion, prevention and intervention.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain how ghosts and angels in the nursery impact parent-child relationships and infant and early childhood mental health
- Describe key concepts, principles, and themes in the field of infant and early childhood mental health with respect to risk in prenatal development and early childhood and develop a working knowledge of this area.
- Identify some of the neurological mechanisms by which early life stress becomes biologically embedded to shape social and emotional development in early childhood
- Distinguish between promotion, prevention and intervention and apply these concepts to the field of infant and early childhood mental health

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Required Materials

- Summers, S.J., & Chazan-Cohen, R. (2012). *Understanding early childhood mental health: A practical Guide for Professionals*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-59857-075-5. Textbook is available at the Campus Store, via online sellers, and FOR FREE at the Marriott library (e-book version).
- Other materials (websites, journal articles) as indicated on Canvas modules.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Students learn best from repeated active engagement with the material. This course will include a variety of teaching methods, including assigned readings, lecture, video, group

discussions, classroom activities, and case studies. Thus, I expect you to read the materials before class, be physically and mentally present in class so that you can engage with us, we can learn from one another, and we can interact. Please direct your attention to what is happening in class and avoid distractions such as cell phone use and internet surfing.

Assignments

1. **Readings. Please complete the assigned reading BEFORE coming to class.** This will enable you to bring questions, have a basic understanding of the material and contribute to class engagement activities. Information on the reading will be on the quizzes.
2. **Reflective Practice Journals (10 journals out of 11 possible journals).** In 1990 individuals from the organization Zero to Three wrote, “The development of competence to work with infants, young children and their families involves the emotions as well as the intellect. Awareness of powerful attitudes and feelings is as essential as the acquisition of scientific knowledge and therapeutic skill” (p. 18). Thus, reflective practice is an essential skill you must acquire to be a competent infant and early childhood mental health professional. Eleven times during the semester you will be asked to journal about your thoughts and feelings related to the material, cases, films, and activities we review during the semester. You will be asked to reflect on what the caregiver is experiencing as well as the child. You will also be asked to reflect on your own thoughts and feelings about the material.
3. **In Class Course Material Engagement Activities (22 out of 27 possible activities)** to help you think like an **Infant Family Associate**. Infant and Family Associate is the credential you will be prepared to receive if you complete the certificate in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health. You will be asked to participate in small-group activities and discussions, reflections, and case studies throughout the semester. Most of these activities occur in class. These activities are designed to challenge your critical thinking skills and apply the course material to real world scenarios. These are graded on a credit/no credit basis. As long as you participate and are engaged (and sometimes submit a short report or reflection), you will receive full credit for these activities.
4. **Quizzes (10 out of 11 possible).** You will be asked to complete 11 quizzes to assess your understanding of the material. Your lowest quiz will be dropped. **These quizzes will occur after we have discussed the material in class.** However, I expect you to **complete the reading BEFORE** we start the material in class. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice, true/false and matching questions.
5. **Parent Resource Infographic.** You will research a parent resource about a topic of our choice. We will discuss options for this and assign topics in class. Possible topics include resources about sleeping, discipline, early intervention, parent support, temperament, prenatal care, etc.

6. **Case Study Conceptualization/Analysis.** This paper will help you practice conceptualizing a case relevant to infant and early childhood mental health. At the end of the semester, you will have developed a strong foundation in early life stress, risk, and caregiver-infant relationships. You will use this knowledge to conceptualize a fictitious case study about a young child.

Grading Policy (Evaluation Methods & Criteria)

Evaluation Method	Points (These are weighted)	Weight
Quizzes	10 X 15 points = 150 points	25%
Engagement Activities	22 X 10 points = 220 points	25%
Reflective Practice Journal	10 X 10 points = 100 points	15%
Screening Memo	100 points	10%
Parent Resource Infographic	100 points	10%
Case Study conceptualization/analysis Paper	100 points	15%

