

A Pedagogy of Play Course

Class Meetings

Instructor

Office Hours

Contact Information

WORK IN PROGRESS!

Thank you for taking a look at this syllabus and considering how it could be hacked or used for your own context.

This is a DRAFT, created with support from the Pedagogy of Play team.

Envision a group
of children in school.



**The school can be
anywhere in the world.**



The children can be



four-year-olds,



fourth-graders,



or fourteen.

They can be learning about



math,



science,



literacy,



history,



or music.

The essential part of the envisioning is **how the students are approaching their learning. They are in playful mindsets.**



**They are curious. They are engaged and focused.
They are challenged.**

They are joyful.



Because the activities are meaningful to them, the children are building literacy, numeracy and scientific skills along with their abilities to create, collaborate and navigate an uncertain world.

**You have envisioned a moment
of playful learning.**

Course Objectives

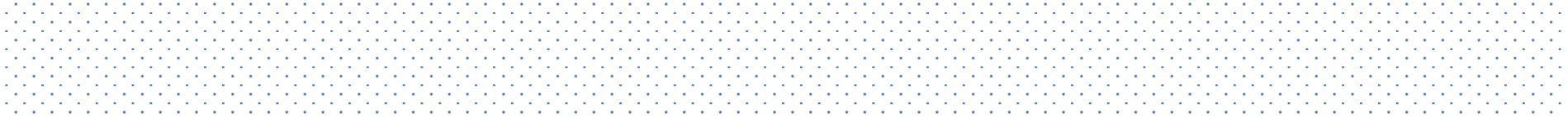
Through this course, students will learn:

- ❑ WHY play is a core resource for learning
- ❑ WHAT play looks and feels like in different cultural contexts
- ❑ HOW educators can promote play and playful learning in schools, including practices and strategies for teaching and assessing learning through play
- ❑ to understand and address social justice and equity issues associated with learning through play through teacher research and equity-centered teaching
- ❑ to advocate for play as critical to children's development and learning in schools

We will work toward these goals by exploring and discussing theoretical and empirical literature on play, as well as examples of play from real classrooms.

Course requirements and grading

Class Attendance and Participation	10
Playful Learning Journey Blog (6 entries at 5 pts each)	30
Responding to colleagues' blog posts	10
Advocating for Play	10
Playful Participatory Research:	
• Learning Experience Plan 1: 5 pts	
• Participation in inquiry group: 10 pts	
• Learning Experience Plan 2: 5 pts	
• Mini-poster or presentation: 10 pts	
• Written paper: 10 pts	
Total points:	100

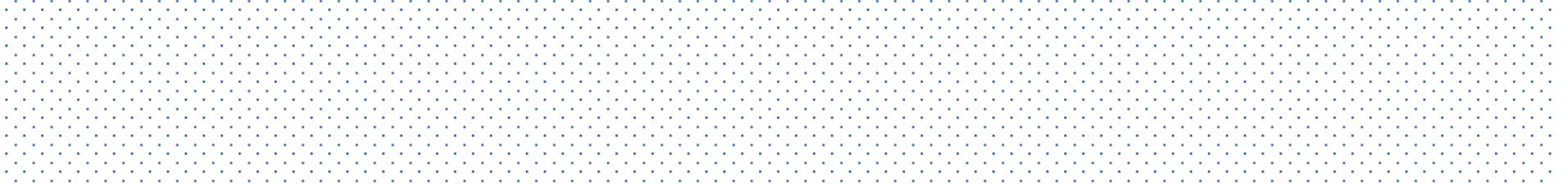


Course Readings



The Pedagogy of Play Book –
forthcoming in 2023 (draft chapters
maybe shareable in advance)

Please see the course schedule
below for readings available online.



Play Kits

In this course, we will regularly use materials to explore ideas. Please assemble a simple kit with the following materials, and bring it with you to class each time:

1. Something to sculpt with (e.g. clay, putty, playdough)
2. Something to build/construct with (wooden blocks, dominos, plastic cups, rocks, sticks, LEGO bricks)
3. Something to collage with (found and/or recycled materials)
4. Paper and something to make marks with (markers, crayons, pastels, paints)
5. A foundation or base to build/play on (a piece of cardboard, a plate, a tray)



Tentative Course Schedule



Course reading assignments will be reflected in class discussions; please read the assigned items prior to class each week. Students are invited to suggest additional topics of interest.

ACT 1

Why do we need a Pedagogy of Play?

ACT 2

What does learning through play look and feel like in different cultural contexts?

ACT 3

How can we promote a Pedagogy of Play?

ACT 1

Why do we need a Pedagogy of Play?

- Course Overview
- Frameworks and Theories to Understand Play
- Equity and Play
- Introduction to Playful Participatory Research
- Children's Right to Play
- Advocating for Play



Session

1

Course Overview

Why do we need a Pedagogy of Play?

Playful Preparation

- [PoP Principles blog post](#)
- [Towards a Pedagogy of Play](#)
(Pedagogy of Play team, 2016)
- Read these and play with ideas:
Which ideas / posts grabbed your attention? Which would you like to investigate further?
How could you experiment with the ideas?

OR

- PoP Book Chapter 1

Recommended

- [Parker & Thomsen \(2019\)](#)
[Learning through Play at School](#)



Assignments Due

Blog Post 1: Play Autobiography

due before the start of class

Session

2

Frameworks and Theories to Understand Play

- What is play?
- Principles of a Pedagogy of Play
- Neuroscience and play connections

Playful Preparation

- PoP Book Chapter 2
- [Liu et al. \(2017\) Neuroscience and Learning through Play](#)
- [A Panorama of Play – literature review](#) (overview of theories on play)
- And look at this [infographic](#)

Session

3

Equity and Play

Playful Preparation

- [Anti-Bias Education](#)
- [Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy](#) (Paris, 2016)
- Listen: [Podcast about Gilliam et al. 2016 study of implicit bias in young children](#)
- Additional reading on equity issues relevant to learning through play in your context e.g. Ramsey (2015) Diversity and Play (book chapter)
- Additional resource for early childhood education: <https://www.antibiasleadersece.com/the-film-reflecting-on-anti-bias-education-in-action/>



Assignments Due
Blog Post 2: Profiles in Playfulness

Session



Introduction to Playful Participatory Research

Children's Right to Play

Advocating for Play

Playful Preparation

Playful Participatory Research:

- PPR Guide (PoP online resource – in development)

And choose one teacher research article:

- [Baker & Salas Davila](#) (2018)
(Playful Participatory Research)
- [Escamilla et al.](#) (international borders)
- Goeson (cultural conflict) pdf
- [Latta](#) (multilingual learners)
- Or others [in Voices of Practitioners](#) (focus on early childhood teacher research)
- Or browse the [current issue of the Journal of Teacher Action Research](#) and choose an article of interest to you (focus on older learners)

Children's Right to Play / Advocating for Play:

- [Souto-Manning](#) 2017
- [Crisis in Kindergarten report summary](#)

ACT 2

What does learning through play look and feel like in different cultural contexts?

- Indicators of Playful Learning
- Examples of playful learning from different cultural contexts
- Advocating for Play - sharing and responding to each other's projects
- Technology, Remote Learning and Play
- Play for All: Inclusive Playful Classrooms
- PPR inquiry groups meet - session 1



Session

5

Indicators of Playful Learning

Examples of playful learning from different cultural contexts

Traditional Games

Playful Preparation

- Read some Pedagogy of Play Pictures of Practice and working papers - choose at least 3 from the resources provided [here](#) and [here](#).
- Play a traditional game you participated in as a child. If possible, bring the materials needed for playing this game to class (great if we can use the materials in our play kits) and be ready to teach a group of your peers how to play



Assignments Due
Blog Post 3: PPR Plan

Session

6

Playful learning in different cultural contexts - continued from last week

Planning playful learning experiences – part 1

Playful Preparation

- Read 2-3 additional PoP resources from provided [here](#) and [here](#).
- Share your advocating for play assignment with someone else – on social media, with your school, etc.
- Recommended reading:
 - Choose 1-2 chapters from [International Perspectives on Children's Play](#) (Roopnarine et al. 2015)



Assignments Due
Advocating for Play

Session

7

Technology, Remote Learning and Play

Readings

- Guidelines about technology and play relevant to your context (e.g. the NAEYC or AAP guidelines in the U.S.)
- [Pedagogy of Play Playful Home Learning Series](#) - choose 1-2 posts

Browse the [Scratch website](#) and watch [this video](#)

Additional resources

- See *instructor guide*



Assignments Due
Blog Post 4: Funds of Knowledge

Session

8

Play for All: Inclusive Playful Classrooms

PPR inquiry groups meet - session 1

Playful Preparation

- Browse and read one or both of these websites and related resources:
 - [Inclusion Toolkit for Play Settings](#)
 - [Autism and Play Guide](#)
- Watch The [Power of Aesthetics and Engagement](#) – an example of a playful learning curriculum in an inclusive kindergarten classroom
- Optional: *Add readings/ videos/ podcasts here relevant to your context to explore inclusion for learners who are learning a new language and learners with dis/abilities*



Assignments Due

First round of bringing documentation for sharing in your inquiry group

(staggered deadline – will be discussed in class)

ACT 3

How can we promote a Pedagogy of Play?

- Pedagogy of Play Practices and Strategies - overview
- Inquiry Groups Sessions 2-6
- Scaffolding Play
- Inquiry Groups Session 3
- Playful Environments
- Outdoor play and nature play
- A Playful Pedagogy in Action: Storytelling / Story Acting
- Practices deep dive



Session

9

Pedagogy of Play Practices and Strategies – overview

Planning learning experiences – part 2

Inquiry Groups Session 2

Playful Preparation

- [PoP practices booklet](#)
- Local learning standards applicable to your context and learners
- Watch a video – *add the link to the relevant video from the PoP Video library you select for this session*



Assignments Due

Blog Post 5: Opportunities for Play

Session

10

Scaffolding Play Or Play in the Learning Domains

Inquiry Groups Session 3

Playful Preparation

- Read the [Play Facilitation Guide](#)
- Watch a video or two from the video library highlighting play in specific learning domains (ADD LINKS HERE TO THE VIDEOS YOU CHOOSE)
- Add your own readings about play in your domain/area of expertise (e.g. mathematics, literacy, science...)
 - E.g. [Mathful Play](#) website

Session

11

Playful Environments

Outdoor play and nature play

Inquiry Groups Session 4

Playful Preparation

Watch these videos:

[Denmark's Forest Kindergartens](#)

[Risk and Play](#)

Look at this tool:

Playful Learning Environments

Tool (PoP)



Assignments Due

Blog Post 6: PPR Memo

Session

12

A Playful Pedagogy in Action: Storytelling / Story Acting

Inquiry Groups Session 5

Playful Preparation

- Listen to this [Podcast](#) about Vivian Gussin Paley and her Storytelling/ Story Acting approach
- Browse this website about [Storytelling and Story Acting](#)

Session

13

**Practices deep
dive** (specific
practice(s) TBD based
on group interest)

**Inquiry Groups
Session 6**

Playful Preparation

- PoP Resources TBD based on topics of students' interest

Session

14

Playful Participatory Research Celebration

Playful Preparation

Free play!



Assignments Due

Submit your mini-poster or presentation

Revise and resubmit your poster and submit your final paper the following week

Assignments



Playful Learning Journey Blog (40 pts)

6 entries @ 5pts each = 30pts; responses to colleagues' posts =10 pts
Due bi-weekly throughout the semester.

Approximately bi-weekly, you will write a reflective blog post and share with the class. Classmates will be able to see and respond to your post. There is no required length for posts, but aim to keep your posts concise, insightful, and engaging. If at any time your ideas feel very personal and you would prefer to share only with the instructor rather than in the class forum, please let the instructor know.



1

Play Autobiography

Describe a memorable play experience from your childhood. Describe the play, reflect on what you learned through this play and the way adults supported the play. Make connections between the Pedagogy of Play team (2016) reading and your experience. Come to class prepared to share your story in 3 minutes or less. You may bring an image or artifact to accompany your story.

2

Portrait of a Playful Learner

Building on the examples provided in class, describe a playful learner you know about or have observed in your own life. This may be a child, a family or community member, a colleague or fellow student, or a historical or current teacher, scientist, athlete, artist, leader etc. Describe the qualities that exemplify why this person has a playful mindset and how they engage in playful learning. Make connections with course readings and topics we have explored in class so far. NOTE: You are encouraged to complete this in a video format rather than a written entry - examples will be shared in class.

3

Playful Participatory Research Plan

Sketch out your PPR study (see more information below). What is context for your PPR study? Who are the learners? What is your research question, and how does it explore a critical issue related to learning through play? What is your documentation plan? What questions do you have about this process, and what supports would help you along the way? Also list the other sources of knowledge (research studies, online sources, others you plan to talk with) that you have identified for your topic.

4

Funds of Knowledge

First, consider who you are as a teacher. What are your funds of knowledge? What aspects of your identity, privilege, and lived experience are important to acknowledge as you prepare for playful teaching? Next, think about your learners. Learning through play is most meaningful when curriculum topics resonate with children's lives and interests. For this assignment, use the Funds of Knowledge worksheet provided in class to learn about the learners you are working with for your PPR study. You may talk with the learners or their family members to learn more about their strengths and sources of knowledge. Select four categories of Funds of Knowledge from the worksheet and describe how you could incorporate these strengths as you plan play-based curriculum for this learner in your classroom or other context. Make connections with the readings on equity and social justice we have read/discussed so far.

5

Opportunities for Play in your Community

As we will discuss in class, opportunities and access to play are not equitably available to all children. Consider the opportunities that children in your classroom, school, or local community have to play, both inside and outside of school. Who gets to play? When? For how long? Consider doing a web search of the local schools in your area, to see what information you find about time devoted to play in the curriculum, and follow up with calls to the school administration to learn more. Do children in all local schools have similar access to play, or does it vary? If so, do children of a particular race or socio-economic status have more access to play than others? Reflect on what you learn and connect with our readings on equity and play. **More than one way:** *Another option for this blog post is to review the curriculum in your local school or locality with a critical lens – where is play included? Absent? If play is marginalized in this curriculum, re-imagine the curriculum in a way that centers playful learning.*



6

PPR Research Memo

After sharing documentation with your colleagues in your inquiry group, memo about what you learned. What did your colleagues notice about your documentation? What questions did they pose? What new thoughts do you now have or next steps you plan to take? Make connections with course topics/readings as appropriate - this may include readings on documentation and PPR as well as other readings that connect with your research questions/topic.

Responding to Colleagues' Posts

Each week, read as many of your colleagues' posts as you are able, and **post a response to at least two colleagues' blog entries**. You might ask a question, make a connection, or offer a resource that could be helpful to explore. Participation in this process is important to our classroom community and is worth 10 points of your final grade.



Advocating for Play (10 pts)

Choose an audience (parents, administrators, colleagues, policy makers, the general public) and create a presentation that advocates for the right of children to play. The presentation should be in a medium that suits your audience (e.g., a position paper for policy makers; a video or series of social media posts for the general public, notes from a talk or photos of a bulletin board for parents). Make the case for play in an engaging manner, drawing on 2-3 course readings to back up your argument. You will submit your presentation electronically (e.g., notes of your back to school night talk; infomercial or social media post) or in hard copy (photographs of a bulletin board) and have a chance to respond in class to others' presentations. You could complete this assignment on your own, or collaborate with 1-2 classmates.



Playful Participatory Research: (40 pts)

For this assignment, you will engage in Playful Participatory Research (PPR - an approach to teacher research we will discuss in class) to explore a critical topic related to learning through play. This is an ongoing project throughout the semester. Each student will meet individually with the course instructor early in the semester to discuss their particular needs and interests for this project and develop a plan that fits their situation.

Identify your learning context and learners. This may be your practicum or fieldwork site (in-person or remote), a place of employment (school, babysitting job, or other experience in which you interact with children), or a home/family situation (if you regularly interact with children in your family or community). If you do not have access to any of these, you may form a group of 2 or more learners of any age in an in-person or remote-learning context. **Note:** If you are working with the same group of learners as another student(s) in the course, you might want to collaborate together for this assignment.

Choose a research question. Select a question related to play or playful learning and anti-bias/social justice to guide your inquiry. For example: *When and how do children talk about race during play?* or *How do read alouds about gender identity influence children's play?* or *What does engagement look like in remote learning play experiences? Is engagement equitable, or are some children more engaged than others? If so, why? Or In what ways do issues of equity come up in children's storytelling and story acting?*





Learn more about your topic. An important part of teacher research is knowing what others have learned about your area of inquiry. Explore other sources of knowledge about your inquiry topic. Here are some ideas for finding out more about your topic:

Read some research studies that you find through your university library system (e.g. in online journals about play or education)

Search online for blog posts, news articles, etc. about your topic

Talk to other educators, children, families, or members of your community to hear what they think about your question, and make notes about what you learn.

Once you have gathered some more information, share what you learned about your question/topic with your inquiry group or the whole class in a playful way. E.g., if you read about a research study where the researchers observed children in a play activity, you could have the class try out that activity and then share about the research findings.



Document. Engage in playful teaching and document the experience with video, audio, written notes, work samples, etc.



Learn from and with your inquiry group. Small inquiry groups of 3-4 members will be formed early in the semester based on common interests or Playful Participatory Research contexts. Each member of the inquiry group will develop a question to guide an investigation into play/playful learning in a current or future site of practice with young children. Group members will regularly bring documentation from their site of practice to the inquiry group. During class time, groups will use protocols to explore the documentation and consider next steps for practice. During inquiry groups in class (October and November), you will share two pieces of documentation related to your question (one piece during one class session, and a second piece during a different class session – specific dates to be agreed upon with your group).



Share what you learn. For the last day of class, create a “mini-poster” or short interactive presentation that shares an example of your documentation and includes an emerging hypothesis about your question.



Write about your research. Write a 5-7 page paper connecting your question and hypothesis with literature from the course as well as the 2-3 additional empirical studies about play you identified in step 3.

Course Policies

Add you own!