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Lecture: Monday 9:30 – 12:10, Psychology Clinic Classroom, Democracy Lane

Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:30, or by appointment (office: 202H, Democracy Lane)

Course Overview:
Assessment of infants and preschool aged children requires special sensitivity to and knowledge of the unique characteristics of this developmental period. The pace of physical and neurological maturation may vary significantly among children of similar chronological ages. In addition, even typical young children may be difficult to assess accurately due to factors such as activity level, distractibility, wariness of strangers, and discomfort in novel environments. Further, factors such as cultural and linguistic differences, environmental disadvantage, and limited interaction with other children or unfamiliar adults can have substantial effects on the interpretation of assessment findings. This course extends other assessment training by introducing considerations and methods needed for evaluating young children (ages two – six). The skills necessary for formulating, conducting, and reporting comprehensive developmental evaluations will be the primary course focus. While the evaluation of preschool children will receive emphasis, information relating to infants, as well as older children functioning at lower developmental levels, will be included.

Course Goals
The ultimate course goal is for students to be able to obtain and integrate information into a comprehensive—but concisely written—evaluation report that will lead to appropriate interventions. This, however, requires a number of sub-objectives:
1. Discuss key considerations in the assessment of young children, as opposed to older children and adolescents, including ethical, legal and psychometric principles.
2. Describe the nature of common problems and disorders beginning in early childhood, including primary characteristics, risk factors, assessment issues, and research based interventions.
3. Plan evaluations of young children with specific, suspected problems using a comprehensive, hypothesis guided approach.
4. Determine the appropriateness of various assessment techniques and instruments for use with young children for measuring pre-academic and language skills, adaptive behavior, psychomotor functioning, and socio-emotional functioning.
5. Understand the contributions of multiple specialized disciplines to the assessment process (psychologists, pediatricians, speech therapists, vision and hearing specialists, physical and occupational therapists).
6. Administer and score selected assessment instruments.
7. Integrate and interpret assessment findings with an emphasis on preparing oral and written reports that guide interventions for young children.

**Instructional Methods**

Class time will include didactic presentations of material and active discussion of assigned readings. Some class sessions will be devoted to demonstrations and in-class exercises to develop skills in areas such as test administration and scoring, case formulation, and reporting of results. Application of these skills with children will be through direct work with child volunteers in the community.

**Course Organization**

The course is organized into instructional modules. Each module consists of materials and activities that teach a specific content area. These do not necessarily correspond, however, to specific class topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Content</th>
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| 1      | Early Childhood Assessment: Special Considerations and Challenges  
- history of early childhood assessment  
- controversies surrounding the use of standardized tests with young children  
- ethical/legal issues in assessing young children  
- screening and school readiness  
- technical/psychometric issues in early childhood assessment |
| 2      | Alternatives to Norm-Referenced Assessment  
- developmental and criterion based measures  
- play based assessment |
| 3      | Preschool Psychological Disorders  
- psychological disorders of infancy and early childhood  
- prevalence, incidence, risk factors, outcomes |
| 4      | Conceptualizing, Planning, Reporting  
- hypothesis based models of assessment planning  
- selection of appropriate assessment tools |
Course Requirements and Grading
Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each class session, as well as to attend class and participate fully. Final grades will be based upon an evaluation of student performance in four areas: test administration/scoring; class participation/exercises; class presentation; and a final psychological report.

Practice Test Administrations with Children: Each student is expected to administer, score and submit for review the specified number of measures listed below to children of kindergarten age or younger. Grading will be based on both completion and quality of test administration and scoring. If your protocols do not demonstrate mastery of administration/scoring techniques, you will be asked to complete additional administrations. (30%)

1. Denver Developmental Screening Test (DDSDT-II) – 2 children, preferably one toddler and one preschooler.
2. LAP-D: in class practice
3. Peabody Pictorial Vocabulary Test (PPVT) – 1 child (or classmate)
5. Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement – 1 child (or classmate)
6. Bracken School Readiness Assessment – 1 child

Class Participation and in-class exercises: In-class exercises will focus on administering the tests presented in the course. One student will role-play the child, while the other practices sections of the test. Other exercises may focus on scoring completed test protocols or planning and reporting evaluations. Overall class participation is also considered. (10%)

Research Article: review and lead discussion: Each student will be required to (1) write a brief reaction paper on an assigned research article (one page, maximum), and (2) lead the class discussion of the article on assigned date. Articles will be selected during the first or second class period.

Class Presentations: Each student (or pair of students) will select a test appropriate for young children and prepare a brief class presentation covering the test. (20%)

Quizzes: Multiple choice and/or short answer quizzes will periodically be given, covering assigned readings, test administration, etc. (10%)

Final Psychological Report: You will be required to submit a written evaluation report based upon a comprehensive package of information (background, observations, test results) provided by the instructor. (20%).
Of Special Note:
The test interactions in this course are for learning purposes only. Test results are not considered valid and may not be communicated in any form to any individual or organization, nor may they be used as research data. All data collected and submitted must be non-identifiable to preserve confidentiality. Tests administered within the context of this course may not be used for any purpose other than learning to administer, score and interpret the assessment instruments. Any breach of this policy, or falsification of data, will result in immediate failure.

Students are expected to attend class and participate in the discussions and activities. Classroom participation involves sharing information and ideas, contributing to a positive and enthusiastic class atmosphere through asking questions and volunteering ideas. At times, particular students, with advance notice, may be asked to lead the class in discussion of specific assessments; please bring relevant materials to class regularly.

Honor code:
The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Students should be familiar with the code and connected policies, set out at http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies. This course will be conducted in accordance with those policies.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All accommodations must be arranged through that office, and must be initiated immediately, prior to any anticipated need.

Required Texts


Selected chapters from Bracken and Nagle (2007), provided by instructor BN

Articles


Others as assigned, provided by instructor.

**Recommended Texts**

*DC 0 – 3: Diagnostic and classification system for birth to three years* (1994). Zero-Three: Washington, D.C.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic 1</th>
<th>Topic 2</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Controversies and Technical Considerations</td>
<td>Measurement and Statistics</td>
<td>BB ch. 3, 11 BN, Ch 1 (provided) Neisworth, J.T., and Bagnato (2004),</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>Observation, history taking and interviewing</td>
<td>Bayley Scales: scoring, practice exercises</td>
<td>Start Bayley manual; BB. ch. 4; Albers, Craig &amp; Grieve, Adam (2007)</td>
<td>Bayley checkout</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Screening; Assessing Academic Readiness</td>
<td>DDST admin. &amp; practice, Bracken</td>
<td>Denver manual; Bracken manual Rene, P.P.(2002); BB ch.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>Curriculum Based Assessment/ Language &amp; Communication</td>
<td>Bracken admin. PPVT admin and Practice</td>
<td>BB ch. 7; Archibald (2008)</td>
<td>Denver checkout Quiz</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Task Description</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>4/1</td>
<td>Overview of Educational &amp; Clinical Classification</td>
<td>WJ preschool assess.</td>
<td>BB 12, 13 Fantuzzo, (2007)</td>
<td>(turn in Denver)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
<td>Campe (2007)</td>
<td>(turn in Denver, WJ, PPVT if possible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Assessing infants, special populations</td>
<td>Wrap-up, course Evaluations</td>
<td>Turn in all protocols</td>
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<td>5/8</td>
<td>FINAL REPORT DUE</td>
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