**A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Play, BHP 253 March 21-May 5, 2022**

Professors:

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines how children from two different countries – the United States and Japan – play, and analyzes the influences of factors such as parents, environment, school, and culture. If travel is permitted, students will directly observe children at play in several different locations in each country – including (but not limited to) playgrounds, schools, play therapist’s offices, museums, indoor play places, zoos, and theme parks. Interviews with parents, teachers, therapists, and potentially children themselves will help to clarify how play is viewed and practiced in each culture. Readings on the evolution of play, the benefits of play, the practical applications of play (e.g., in education and in therapy), and cultural differences in play will be used to support and help to inform the data students will collect through the interviews and observations.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

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| **Course Learning Outcomes** | **University Learning Outcomes** |
| Investigate and analyze the evolutionary origins of play, the benefits of play, the practical applications of play, and cultural similarities and differences in play | Critical Thinking, Written Communication, Connected Learning |
| Observe children at play in unstructured environments (e.g., parks, playgrounds, school recess periods, free play in preschool centers) and apply relevant background literature to the observation (e.g., looking for gender differences, differences based on cognitive maturity, relationships to language ability, relationships to creativity, etc.) | Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Connected Learning |
| Evaluate the merit of play places, museums, theme parks, and/ or zoos for children’s play, creativity, and imagination | Critical Thinking, Connected Learning, Oral Communication |
| Synthesize research material regarding play and play therapy. | Connected Learning, Written Communication, Information Literacy |
| Collect data through interviews with parents, teachers, play therapists, and/ or children themselves regarding the influence of environment, culture, various play spaces, etc. on children’s play. | Critical Thinking, Oral Communication, Scientific Reasoning |

**METHODS OF EVALUATION:**

Students will be expected to complete course readings and assignments both while in Japan and before and after the trip, as noted below. They will also be required to complete all assignments, including reading response papers, observations, interviews, and a final project. *Detailed instructions for each assignment can be found on the course website*. The final project will consist of a review of literature on a selected topic related to play and culture, a description of data gathered both in the United States and abroad in Japan, and a discussion of the cultural similarities and differences observed. The exact nature of the data collected will vary for each student. The project will include both a written portion (paper) as well as a presentation, which can be filmed/ delivered virtually after returning from Japan, and which may be used by the Center for International Education during their showcase event in November.

Grading procedure:

* Assignments (5): 10% each (50% total)
* Class participation: 15%
* Final project:
  + Paper (8-10 pages): 20%
  + Presentation: 15%

**Course Calendar (Exact Itinerary in Tokyo subject to change)**

Week of Mar 21: Background on Play/ The Benefits of Play

Week of Mar 28: Creativity in Play

*Assignment #1 due (2nd class of the week)*

Week of Apr 4: Cultural Similarities and Differences in Play

*Assignment #2 due (2nd class of the week)*

Week of Apr 11: Play as Part of the Educational Curriculum

*Assignment #3 due (2nd class of the week)*

Week of Apr 18: Play Therapy

*Assignment #4 due (2nd class of the week)*

Week of Apr 25: Play in Different Types of Children (gender, culture, ability level)

*Assignment #5 due (2nd class of the week)*

Week of May 2: Preparation for Travel

Part 1 of final paper due (May 6)

**Course Calendar (cont’d)**

May 16-17 (approx.) Travel to Tokyo/ Orientation & class meeting

May 18: National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation (a.m.),

Sensoji Temple and Asakusa Area visit (p.m.)

May 19: Elementary school visit (a.m.), Preschool/ daycare visit (p.m.)

May 20: Hands-On Experience/ Service Learning Project

*Class meeting*

May 21: Tokyo Tower visit (a.m.), Ueno Zoo and Ueno Park visit (p.m.)

May 22: Haginaka Park visit (a.m.), Garakuta Park visit (p.m.), Meiji Shrine visit (late p.m.), Self-exploration of Harajuku (eve)

May 23: Sanrio Puroland visit; Baseball game (optional)

May 24: Class meeting (a.m.); Play Therapist office visit (p.m.)

May 25: Free Day

*Part 2 of the paper due*

May 26: Return to NY/ NJ

May 28 (approx.):Class meeting (Zoom): Trip Recap, final project questions

May 29: *Part 3 of the paper due*

May 31 (approx.): Final presentations (over Zoom)

**Important Notes:**

--Detailed Assignment instructions for Assignments #1-5 can be found on Canvas and will be gone over in class before they are due.

--Course readings (or links to the readings) that correspond to assignments will be posted on Canvas.

--Students are expected to maintain BHP-level work and to participate in class regularly.

--Attendance is REQUIRED at all the class meetings and at all destinations on the trip related to course assignments; it is recommended for all other sites on the trip; students should inform their professors if they will be absent.

--Cell phone use (texting, calling, surfing the web, etc.) during class meetings is prohibited unless one of the professors asks students to use/ look up information on their phones.

--Laptop use during class meetings is restricted to note-taking unless one of the professors asks students to use/ look up information on their laptops.

Assignment #1: Using an article about either creativity in play or about the benefits of play in general, along with what you learned about creativity and the benefits of play in class, discuss your memories of your experience as a child with any TWO of the following: play grounds/ play places, zoos, museums, schools/ day cares, or sports. Discuss how these experiences fostered (or hindered!) your imagination and creativity as a child.

Assignment #2: Create a rubric for observation of children at play based on themes we’ve discussed in class.

Assignment #3: Visit a public playground in the U.S. and ONE of the following: a children’s museum/ indoor play place, a zoo, a theme park, a preschool\*, an elementary school.\* Observe children at play in each location for at least 30 minutes. Use the rubric you designed for Assignment #2 to note the corresponding behaviors of interest.

\*If desired, talk to your professors about helping to arrange school visits.

Assignment #4: Create a list of interview questions for a play therapist

Assignment #5: Visit a play therapist’s office in the U.S./ speak with a play therapist and ask the questions you created for Assignment #4. Be sure to document the responses/ your experience.

**Final Project Instructions**

For this project, you will work with 1-2 partners to complete one of the 4 following options: **EITHER**

(a) Design, conduct, and report the results of a brief survey/ interview (e.g., 10-15 questions) or observation of children[[1]](#footnote-1), and/ or parents, and/ or teachers from the United States and from Japan exploring their views of play and its importance/ relevance in their (child’s/ students’) life. **OR**

(b) Propose a hypothetical study (describing the participants and methods you would use) to examine some aspect(s) of play and/ or creativity in children in the United States and in Japan. **OR**

(c) Choose one currently existing television program, movie, game, toy, play place, or video game/ app for children in the United States AND one for children in Japan.

* Analyze your choices in terms of their ability to stimulate creativity, imagination, and play in children.
* Would they hold any therapeutic value? Why or why not?
* Compare and contrast the choice from the United States to the choice for the children from Japan. **OR**

(d) Write a paper dealing with the topic of play therapy in American and Japanese cultures.

* Detail the play therapist’s training background.
* Outline the play therapist’s view on play and approach to play therapy.
* Discuss the set up and materials in the playroom.
* Discuss common clients’ presenting issues.
* Describe the play therapist’s experiences working with boys and girls.
* Describe the play therapist’s experiences working with parents
* Compare and contrast your findings from each culture, and compare to the previous research.

You should expect your paper to be anywhere from7-14pages in length. The following break-downs are approximate, but might help to serve as guidelines as you plan the 3 main parts of your paper:

1. Introduction and Critical Analysis of Background Research: 2-4 pages
2. Method (actual or hypothetical)/ Analysis of American product/ Description of the training, views, set-up, experiences etc. of the play therapists from each culture.: 2-5 pages
3. (Possible) Results & Conclusion/ Analysis of Japanese product/ Cross-cultural comparison of play therapists and relation to previous research: 3-5 pages.

**1. Introduction/ Critical Analysis of Background Research**

*For the* ***Introduction for ALL options****, you must*:

* Conduct a search of current literature that is relevant to your topic. The introduction of your project will involve a critical analysis of this background research (cited properly)\*\*: what have the researchers already done, how does their research motivate your project, what flaws do you see in their methodologies, and what questions did they leave unanswered? For this introduction, you should expect to review **no fewer than 3 primary sources *per individual***.\*

\*These primary sources MUST come from peer-reviewed journals that you find from a search engine such as PsycInfo (instructions for using PsycInfo can be found on Canvas under “Files”), jstor, or ERIC.

\*Only ONE of these 3 sources can be a reading already assigned for class (if it came from a peer-reviewed journal); the other 2 must be different sources that you find.

\*\*ALL references to information that is not common knowledge MUST BE CITED properly. We suggest that you use either APA or MLA format (***no footnotes please***). A Guide to how to use APA format for both your in-text citations and your References list can be found on Canvas under “Files.” ***Please avoid direct quotes***. Use your own words and ***paraphrase*** what the sources say.

For Options (a) and (b), you should choose articles related to cross-cultural comparisons of play in whatever topic you are choosing to explore in more detail (e.g., parental views on play, play in education, play and creativity, etc.)

For Option (c), the Introduction should cover literature pertaining to the format of your choice (e.g., children and television, apps for children, games/ toys and children, etc.) Where possible, look for articles related to cross-cultural comparisons of children and these areas.

For Option (d), your articles should be related to play therapy and its various approaches. If you are able to find articles about play therapy in different cultures, include those as well.

*Part 1 of the Paper is due on May 6, 2022.*

**2. Part 2: Method/ Analysis/ Description (see p. 6 of this syllabus)**

*For Options (a) and (b)*:

* Identify the *participants* that you used\*/ would use: e.g., age(s), gender(s), ethnicity(ies).
* Explain in detail the *procedure* you used\* (would use). If you distributed (or would plan to distribute) a survey or conducted (or would plan to conduct) an interview, include a copy of the survey/ interview questions in an Appendix.

\*NOTE: For option (a), you should write this portion of the paper in the ***past tense***. For option (b), you should write this portion of the paper in EITHER ***future tense***(“will”), OR in ***hypothetical tense*** (“would”).

*For Option (c):*

Choose one currently existing television program, movie, game, toy, play place, or video game/ app for children in the **United States**. Based on your research and what you learned in class, answer the following questions:

* Analyze your choices in terms of their ability to stimulate creativity, imagination, and play in children. Be sure to also reference your readings (both background research that you found for the Introduction *and* readings from class). Cite all references properly using APA or MLA format for in-text citations.
* Would this show, movie, game, toy, play place, or video game/ app hold any therapeutic value for children? Why or why not?

*For Option (d)*:

* Detail the play therapist’s training background.
* Outline the play therapist’s view on play and approach to play therapy.
* Discuss the set up and materials in the playroom.
* Discuss common clients’ presenting issues.
* Describe the play therapist’s experiences working with boys and girls.
* Describe the play therapist’s experiences working with parents

*Part 2 of the paper is due on May 25, 2022.*

**3. Results & Conclusion (Options (a), (b), and (d)/ Analysis of 2nd Product (Option (c))**

*For Option (a):*

* Report the results of your study: what exactly did you find?
* Write a discussion that includes *all of the following*: a comparison of your results to those of the background research that you read (citing your references appropriately in APA or MLA format), a description of the implications of your findings (i.e., What do they mean? Why are they important?), and suggestions for future research.

*For Option (b):*

* Discuss the implications of at least two possible sets of results. For example, if the results of your study found *x*, it would suggest…. If the results of your study showed *y*, it would imply…Discuss whether each of these possible results aligns with or contrasts with the findings of the previous research that you analyzed in the literature review (Part 1). Include citations.
* Conclude your discussion by summarizing the previous work (citing appropriately in APA or MLA format), the proposed work, the importance of the work (and why it should be carried out), and any questions left open that should be addressed by future research.

*For Option (c)*:

Choose one currently existing television program, movie, game, toy, play place, or video game/ app for children in **Japan**. Based on your research and what you learned in class, answer the following questions:

* Analyze your choices in terms of their ability to stimulate creativity, imagination, and play in children. Be sure to also reference your readings (both background research that you found for the Introduction *and* readings from class). Cite all references properly using APA or MLA format for in-text citations.
* Would this show, movie, game, toy, play place, or video game/ app hold any therapeutic value for children? Why or why not?

*For Option (d)*:

* Compare and contrast your findings from each culture
* Compare your findings to the previous research.
* Discuss what future research on play therapy should examine.

**For all options, your** **References list/ Bibliography** must be **alphabetized** by first authors’ last name, in **proper APA or MLA forma**t. (See also Guide to APA format on Canvas.)Do NOT separate sources by partner (e.g., “Chloe’s sources/ John’s sources”). Put all the sources from each group member into ONE alphabetized list.

*Part 3 of the paper is due on May 29, 2022.*

**4. Presentation**

Create a presentation that explains the background research, your (proposed) methods and (possible) results/ the American and Japanese products that you analyzed/ the findings from your interviews with play therapists, and your conclusions. Include in-text citations throughout (using APA or MLA format) and a References list as your final slide. You should also include 4-5 questions that would be designed to spur a discussion of your topic if you were presenting it in a class setting.

*Presentations will take place over Zoom on May 31, 2022.*

**References**

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1. If you plan to survey or observe ANYONE *under the age of 18*, you *MUST* FIRST meet with Dr. DiYanni (a member of Rider’s Institutional Review Board for research) *AND* have EACH child’s parent(s) sign a copy of a parental consent form (one can be found on the course Canvas site). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)