

**Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)**

**Title of the Course: E.9: Rethinking Childhood  
(Semester: IV)**

**Credits: 4**

**MM: 100 (External: 70 Internal: 30)**

**Contact Week: 15**

**Introduction of the Course**

This course aims to rethink the mainstream understanding of childhood and child development. The course will begin with a discussion of childhood's historical, social, and cultural construction, followed by the ethical and political questions that arise from such constructions. Furthermore, the course will explore alternative frameworks for understanding children's cognitive, moral, emotional, and aesthetic development to provide an alternative viewpoint to childhood developmentalism in education and psychology. Finally, the course will conclude by considering the importance of communities and relationships in conceptualising and exploring childhood, child development and related ideas.

**Learning Outcomes**

After completion of the course, student will be able to:

1. Critically analyse and reflect upon the characteristics of present-day society - and their impact on Childhood.
2. Understand the construction of childhood historically, socially, and culturally.
3. Identify, analyse, and reflect on the normative questions that emerge from a contextual understanding of childhood
4. Critically evaluate the various theories of cognitive, moral, emotional, and aesthetic development to understand the critique of child developmentalism
5. Appreciate the importance of community and relationships in childhood - concerning individualism - dialogue & collaboration -and collectivism.
6. Underline the importance of the transition from childhood to adulthood as an evolution of self-awareness, authenticity, and responsibility
7. Consider alternate ways of understanding childhood in diverse contexts

**Number of Units (5)**

**Weeks 15 = 60 hours**

**Unit 1: Understanding the Societal Context of Childhood**

**(2 weeks = 8 hours)**

- What characteristics of present-day society influence our conceptualising and engagement with children?
- How do societal changes impact experiences and conceptualising of childhood, such as post-COVID?
- How do the imaginations of a child change across societies?

  
Head/Dean

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**Unit 2: Constructions of Childhood: Historical, Social, & Cultural (3 weeks = 12 hours)**

- How has the discourse on children and childhood changed over different historical periods?
- How has a change in discourse on children and childhood influenced and impacted experiences in society for both children and adults?
- How does culture shape our views and expectations of childhood?
- What are some similarities and differences in childhood across cultures?
- How does society nurture, regulate, and control childhood?
- What are some social issues and challenges that children face?
- How have the practices and discourse on Children, childhood and child development changed in India historically, socially and culturally?

**Unit 3: Ethical & Political Perspectives on Childhood (3 weeks = 12 hours)**

- Are children moral agents?
- Do children have moral rights and responsibilities?
- How can we nurture children as moral agents?
- How do we prepare children to exercise their rights responsibly?
- How should we balance the interests and needs of children and adults?
- How do we conceive of children as evolving beings: self-discovery, authenticity, and responsibility
- How does children's literature help them to perceive their self? (Discuss about different texts/ graphic novels/ TV shows, etc. Texts such as Mogli, Cinderella, Batman, Shraavan, Gopal, and Nachiketa may be used)

**Unit 4: Rethinking Development in Children (5 weeks = 20 hours)**

The following unit emphasises the importance of reconceptualising child development. It begins with understanding the foundational assumptions of popular developmental theories and their critique. This will be followed by exploring the alternatives to understand children's relationships with other children, adults, and society.

**A. Cognitive & Moral Development in Children**

- What is development?
- How do children develop cognitively and morally?
- What is the critique of some popular developmental theories?

**B. Emotional Development in Children**

  
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- How do children experience and express emotions?
- What are the roles and functions of emotions in children's learning and development?
- What is the importance of Care in child development?
- How does the structure of family and society impinge on the Socio-emotional well-being of the Child?

### C. Aesthetic Development in Children

- How do children engage in creative activities such as play, art, and music?
- What can we learn from children's creativity and imagination?
- Is there such a thing as Children's art: Children's art vs Art for Children?
- How do children understand art?
- How do children perceive harmony and conflict?

### Unit 5: Relations in Childhood

(2 weeks = 8 hours)

- How do children form relationships with themselves, others, and the world?
- What is the role of dialogue and collaboration in forging relations in childhood?
- What are the dynamics of dialogue and collaboration?
- What are the benefits and challenges of intergenerational dialogue and collaboration?

### Practicum/ Suggested Projects / Assignments (Any Two)

1. Recall incidents from your childhood when you felt very strongly that some injustice was done to you. Discuss and analyse. Why was that injustice? Did you have a voice in that situation? What did you wish had happened instead? Can you conclude something about the ethos/culture/society from this?
2. Select some representations (books/ movies/ photographs/ paintings) from different time periods and geographical locales and bring out some implicit aspects of childhood in them.
3. Speak with people of different ages around you regarding their views about children's rights, agency, and selfhood.
4. Enlist cultural beliefs about child development and child-rearing.
5. Reflect on whether the following are functions of age. If yes, how and why is it a function of age? If not, do we find that the world around us normatively considers these a function of age?
6. Reflect on the fundamental differences between children and adults through these situations and questions. Speculate the processes that must occur in a human to transform from a child to an adult.
  - Thinking about abstract concepts pervading our lives (such as love, death, self, fairness and so on).
  - Engaging in complex inquiry (often involving others) before acting during conflict and dilemmas.

- Flourishing in a caring, stimulating and engaging environment.
  - Feeling emotions in response to one's physical and social environment.
  - Expressing emotions in direct or indirect ways to convey one's needs, discomforts, or pleasures.
  - Feeling sensory pleasure while playing, painting, dancing and so on.
  - Using sports, art, writing and so on as creative outlets and self-expression, often accompanied by feelings of catharsis.
7. Talk to children about ideas such as friendship, relationships, fairness, love, and compassion to appreciate the depths of their thinking. (Let them choose the theme that they would like to talk about. Talking of 4-7 children at a time is advisable)

**Note:** On the basis of the above, the teacher may design his/her own relevant projects/ assignments.

#### Essential/ Recommended Readings

- Anthony, S. (2018). Children and well-being. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 90-100). Routledge.
- Archard D., & Macleod C. M. (2002). Introduction: The Moral and Political Status of Children. In *The Moral and Political Status of Children* (pp. 1-18). Oxford University Press.
- Balagopalan, S. (2011). Introduction: Children's lives and the Indian context. *Childhood, 18*(3), 291-297.
- Brennan S., & Noggle R. (1997). The Moral Status of Children: Children's Rights, Parents' Rights, and Family Justice. *Social Theory and Practice, 23*(1), 1-26.
- Cain, M. J. (2018). Language and communication: Evidence from studying children. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 23-32). Routledge.
- Chakramakkil, A. T. (2017). The Polemics of Real and Imagined Childhood (s) in India. *International Research in Children's Literature, 10*(1), 74-88.
- Coles, R. (1986). *The Moral Life of Children* (pp. ix-xvii, 3-22). Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Corsaro, W. A., & Everitt, J. G. (2023). *The sociology of childhood*. Sage publications. Chapter 1: Social Theories of Childhood.
- Fabrice, C., & Melissa, K. (2018). Epistemology: Knowledge in childhood. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 13-22). Routledge.
- Feezell, R. (2013). A pluralist conception of play. In *The Philosophy of Play* (pp. 11-31). Routledge.
- Gheaus, A. (2019). The right to parent. In *The Routledge handbook of the philosophy of childhood and children* (pp. 304-314). Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

- Hanson, K. (2017). Embracing the past: 'Been', 'being' and 'becoming' children. *Childhood*, 24(3), 281-285.
- Immordino-Yang M.H., & Damasio A.R. (2007). We Feel, Therefore We Learn: The Relevance of Affective and Social Neuroscience to Education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 1(1), 3-10.
- Jonathan, F. (2018). Art and creativity. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 45-52). Routledge.
- Kalle, G. (2018). Paternalism towards children. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 123-133). Routledge.
- Lipman, M., Sharp A.M., & Oscanyan F.S. (1980). *Philosophy in the Classroom* (pp. ix-xviii, 3-18). Temple University Press.
- Lotz, M. (2019). The vulnerable child. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 304-314). Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Mathews, G.B. (1994). Child Art. In *The Philosophy of Childhood*. (pp.111-127). Harvard University Press.
- Mohr, L. J. (2018). Philosophical thinking in childhood. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (pp. 53-63). Routledge.
- Mulcahey, C. (2000). Talking about Art: Understanding Children's Perspectives.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (2009). Is there an Indian childhood?. *Childhood*, 16(2), 147-153.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (2013). Theorizing childhood (s): Why we need postcolonial perspectives. *Childhood*, 20(1), 3-8.
- Noddings N. (2005). *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (pp. 1-27). Teachers College Press.
- Saraswathi, T. S., Menon, S., & Madan, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Childhoods in India: Traditions, trends and transformations*. Taylor & Francis.
- Walczak, P. (2019). Why does Piaget not philosophize? Critical discussion of Gareth B. Mathews with the Piagetian concept of cognitive development. *Childhood & philosophy*, 15.
- Wall, J. (2012). Can democracy represent children? Toward a politics of difference. *Childhood*, 19(1), 86-100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568211406756>

#### Additional Readings

- Bowen, Z. & Hinchy, J. (2015). Introduction: children and knowledge in India. *South Asian History and Culture*. 6(3), 317-329, DOI: 10.1080/19472498.2015.1030875
- Brighouse H., & Swift A. (2014). *Family Values: The Ethics of Parent-child Relationships* (pp. 1-16). Princeton University Press.
- Burman, E. (2016). *Deconstructing developmental psychology*. Taylor & Francis.
- Cohen, D. (2006). *The development of play*. (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Cunningham H. (2021). *Children in Western Society since 1500*. (3rd ed.). Routledge. pp. 1-16.

- Damasio A.R. (1994). *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (pp. 173-191). Penguin Books.
- Day, M., Kaul, V., & Sawhney, S. B. (Eds.). (2021). *Early Childhood Education for Marginalized Children in India: Deconstructing Quality*. SAGE Publishing India.
- Huizinga J. (1950). *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture* (pp. 1-27). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Kakar, S. (1979). *Indian childhood: Cultural ideals and social reality*. Oxford University Press
- Matthews, J. (1999). *The Art of Childhood and Adolescence: The Construction of Meaning*. Falmer Press.
- Shute, R. H., & Sleg, P. T. (2015). *Child development: Theories and critical perspectives*. Routledge.
- Vansielegem, N. (2005). Philosophy for Children as the Wind of Thinking. *Journal of philosophy of education*, 39(1), 19-35. (बच्चों के लिए दर्शन: विचार के एक झोंके की तरह. शिक्षा विमर्श: मार्च-अप्रैल 2005 p.6-16)
- Wall, J. (2013). Childism: The challenge of childhood to ethics and the humanities. In *The children's table: Childhood studies and the humanities* (pp. 68-84). University of Georgia.

#### Teaching Learning Process

The course will be built on reflections on readings through interactive pedagogic methods such as dialogues, discussion, debates, critical media analysis, and collaborative learning tasks.

#### Assessment Method

The assessment will be formative in nature and will factor in student participation. Individual and group tasks and assignments will be given. Summative evaluation will be done through end- semester examination.

**Keywords:** Childhood studies, philosophy of children and childhood, children's being, childhood developmentalism



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