

Master of Education (M.Ed.)

Title of the Course: P 11.7: Philosophy of Childhood

(Semester: I & III)

Credits: 4

MM: 100 (External: 70 Internal: 30)

Contact Week 15

Introduction of the Course

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of childhood. This field examines the nature, meaning, and value of childhood and children's experiences from various philosophical perspectives. We will analyse the philosophical assumptions of some of childhood's historical, cultural, and social constructions and ethical, political, and educational issues arising from different views of childhood and children's rights. We will also investigate cognitive, emotional, and moral aspects of children's thinking and reasoning and creative and artistic expressions of their play, imagination, and curiosity. Finally, we will consider some relational and communicative dimensions of children's interactions with themselves, others, and the world, and some challenges and opportunities of intergenerational dialogue and collaboration.

Learning Outcomes

After completing the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and analyse some main philosophical questions and concepts related to childhood and children's experiences.
2. Compare and contrast different philosophical perspectives on childhood and children's rights.
3. Evaluate some ethical, political, and educational implications of different views of childhood critically.
4. Appreciate the diversity and complexity of children's thinking, reasoning, expression, and relation.
5. Reflect on their own experiences of childhood and their interactions with children.

Number of Units (4)

Weeks 15 = 60 hours

Unit 1: Rethinking Children and Childhood

(Weeks 6 = 24 hours)

- Introduction to Philosophy of Childhood


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- Analysing Historical, Social, & Cultural Constructions of Childhood

Unit 2: Rethinking Child Development

(Weeks 4 = 16 hours)

- Revisiting Epistemological, Ethical, and Aesthetic Development in Childhood
- Children's emotions and emotional expressions.
- Adultism, Childism, and their implications

Unit 3: Ethical and Political Issues in Conceptualising Childhood

(3 weeks = 12 hours)

- Children's and adults' moral rights and responsibilities;
- Children as moral agents;
- Children's political rights and participation in society;
- Balancing the interests and needs of children and adults.

Unit 4: Rethinking Education through Philosophy of Childhood

(2 weeks = 8 hours)

- Care in Education
- Developing critical thinking skills

Practicum/ Suggested Projects / Assignments (Any Two)

1. Identify cultural beliefs about child development and child-rearing and analyse them based on the ideas studied during the course.
2. Identify assumptions and beliefs about children in recent policy documents. Try to place them in a theoretical perspective. Analyse, critique and comment on these assumptions and beliefs.
3. Ask children aged 5-17 questions such as:
 - Should you be allowed to make all your decisions?
 - When do you feel heard by adults?
 - What do you wish was different about the world you live in?
 Gently challenge their responses and probe them further. Reflect on the conversation and discuss it with others.

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

Essential/ Recommended Readings

- Ariès P. (1962). Centuries of Childhood: A Social History Of Family Life (pp. 31-125). Vintage Books.
- Balagopalan, S. (2011). Introduction: Children's lives and the Indian context. *Childhood*, 18(3), 291-297.




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- Chakramakkil, A. T. (2017). The Polemics of Real and Imagined Childhood (s) in India. *International Research in Children's Literature*, 10(1), 74-88.
- Cunningham H. (2005). *Children in Western Society since 1500* (pp. 1-16). Routledge.
- Archard, D. (2001). Philosophical Concepts of Childhood. In J. Fionda (Ed.). *Legal concepts of childhood*. Bloomsbury Publishing. 43-56
- James A., & Prout A. (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (pp. 1-6). Routledge.
- Jenks C. (2005). Childhood (pp. 1-10). Routledge.
- Kakar, S. (1979). *Indian childhood: Cultural ideals and social reality*. Oxford University Press
- Kennedy, D. (2000). The roots of child study: Philosophy, history, and religion. *Teachers College Record*, 102(3), 514-538. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/0161-4681.00066>
- Malone, K., Tesar, M., Arndt, S., Malone, K., Tesar, M., & Arndt, S. (2020). History and Philosophy of Children and Childhoods. *Theorising Posthuman Childhood Studies*, 1-27.
- Matthews, G. B. (2009). Philosophy and developmental psychology: Outgrowing the deficit conception of childhood. In H. Siegel (ed.). *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of education*. Oxford University Press.
- Murriss, K., & Haynes, J. (2018). Philosophy for Children: A postdevelopmental relationality. In *Literacies, Literature and Learning* (pp. 50-63). Routledge.
- Matthews, G. (1994). In *The Philosophy of Childhood* (pp. 1-14). Harvard University Press.
- Nandy, A. (1984). Reconstructing childhood: A critique of the ideology of adulthood. *Alternatives*, 10(3), 359-375.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (2013). Theorizing childhood (s): Why we need postcolonial perspectives. *Childhood*, 20(1), 3-8.
- Saraswathi, T. S., Menon, S., & Madan, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Childhoods in India: Traditions, trends and transformations*. Taylor & Francis.
- Qvortrup J. (1994). Childhood Matters: An Introduction. In *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics* (pp. 1-24). Avebury.
- Biswas, T., Wall, J., Warming, H., Zehavi, O., Kennedy, D., Murriss, K., Kohan, W., Saal, B. and Rollo, T., (2023). Childism and philosophy: A conceptual co-exploration. *Policy Futures in Education*, p.14782103231185178.
- Coles R. (1986). *The Moral Life of Children* (pp. ix-xvii, 3-22). Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Damasio A.R. (1994). Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain (pp. 173-191). Penguin Books.
- Huizinga J. (1950). *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture* (pp. 1-27). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- 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.

- Matthews G.B., & Seifert C.M. (1999). *The Art of Childhood and Adolescence: The Construction of Meaning* (pp. 1-14). Falmer Press.
- Mehta, S., & Whitebread, D. (2005). Philosophy for Children and moral development in the Indian context. *University of Cambridge*.
- McNulty, L., & Henning, L. (2019). Children's epistemic rights and hermeneutical marginalisation in schools. *Philosophy and the Study of Education: New Perspectives on a Complex Relationship*, 54-64.
- Piaget J. (1952). *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (pp. 1-33). International Universities Press.
- Tillas, A. (2019). Emotion and effective learning. *Philosophy and the Study of Education: New Perspectives on a Complex Relationship*, 80-90.
- Vygotsky L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (pp. 79-91). Harvard University Press.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Brighouse H., & Swift A. (2014). *Family Values: The Ethics of Parent-child Relationships* (pp. 1-16). Princeton University Press.
- Lipman M., Sharp A.M., & Oscanyan F.S. (1980). *Philosophy in the Classroom* (pp. ix-xviii, 3-18). Temple University Press.
- Wall J. (2012). Can Democracy Represent Children? Toward a Politics of Difference. In *The Child as Democratic Citizen* (pp. 27-43). Intersentia.
- Dewey J. (1938). *Experience and Education* (pp. 17-60). Kappa Delta Pi.
- Noddings N. (2005). *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (pp. 1-18). Teachers College Press.

Additional Readings

- Burman, E. (2016). *Deconstructing developmental psychology*. Taylor & Francis.
- Day, M., Kaul, V., & Sawhney, S. B. (Eds.). (2021). *Early Childhood Education for Marginalized Children in India: Deconstructing Quality*. SAGE Publishing India.
- Holt, J. (1974). *Escape from Childhood*. Boston: E. P. Dutton.


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- Matthews, G. B. (2009). Philosophy and developmental psychology: Outgrowing the deficit conception of childhood. In H. Siegel (ed.). *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of education*. Oxford University Press.
- Nsamenang A. B. (2008). A Critical Peek at Early Childhood Care and Education in Africa. In *Childhood Studies and the Impact of Globalization: Policies and Practices at Global and Local Levels* (pp. 19-32). Routledge.
- Shute, R. H., & Slee, P. T. (2015). *Child development: Theories and critical perspectives*. Routledge.
- Vanobbergen, B. (2018). Children as Consumers. *International Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, 1337-1348.


Teaching Learning Process

The course will be taught through interactive pedagogic methods such as classroom discussion, debates, film discussions, critical media analysis, and collaborative learning tasks, which enhance reading comprehension of core writings in the area and innovative projects. Reflective expression and learning will be encouraged.

Assessment Method

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

Keywords: childhood, children's agency, child rights, and critique of developmentalism.


 HOD
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