PHENOMENOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
Spring 2014
PSYCHOLOGY 11 570(526-01)
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Course Description
This course will develop an understanding of child development through phenomenological investigations of children's life-worlds. We will examine children's diverse experiences of body, other, space, things, and time. Child development will be connected with adult development, particularly as it pertains to adult experiences of embodiment, intersubjectivity, temporality, spatiality, and relationships to things in clinical settings. Each segment will attempt to understand the fundamental structures of particular human experiences, investigate their appearance in the lives of children and adults, and take into account the varieties of cultural forms of childhood.

The course will consist of interactive lectures, exercises, seminar-style contributions, and student research presentations. It requires from you to engage in philosophical reflection, to collect observational data, to engage in hermeneutic activity, to be willing to go beyond the obvious, to be ready to put your thoughts and interpretations on the line, and to have a good sense of humor.

A Blackboard course website will accompany the course and function as a "piazza" where we can create a shared forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Prerequisites: Open to Graduate Students only.

Course Themes and Readings (see BB website)

1. The concept of childhood: We will briefly discuss the cultural/historical appearance of childhood.
   Simms (2008), "The invention of childhood: Historical and cultural changes in selfhood and literacy" in The Child in the World, Detroit: Wayne State University Press (CW Ch. 8)

2. Body and Other. As an introduction to phenomenology, we will discuss Merleau-Ponty's work on child development and his description of the self-experience of the child. We will engage with Merleau-Ponty and a number of other writers in a discussion on the emergence of self-awareness in the first year of the child's life. The experience of the body and the experience of the other are key themes of our reflection.

3. **Space and Things:** We will explore children's experience of things and space and dialogue with Piaget's findings on the development of object permanence and spatial comprehension.


(1983) "The stillness of the secret place", *Phen & Ped*, Vol. 1 no 1

(1983) "The secret place in the life of the child" *Phen & Ped* Vol. 1 no 2


4. **Time:** We will discuss some basic structures of temporal existence and investigate the
sense of time.
Simms, E. (2006) “Because we are the upsurge of time: towards a genetic phenomenology of lived time” CW Chapter 6.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Learning objectives:
a) Familiarity with reading material and ability to apply concepts to childhood phenomena
b) engaging in a sustained intellectual discourse
c) sensitivity to the differential constitution of child existence and the cultural diversity of children’s lives
d) ability to conduct an observational research study
e) acquire a hermeneutic sensitivity when working with research data

Evaluations:
1. Midterm Exam (30%): evaluates a,b,c,e
2. Final Exam (30%): evaluates a,b,c,e
3. Reflections after class sessions (10%): evaluates a and b (to be posted on Blackboard)
4. Life-World presentation and paper, (30%): evaluates a,b,c,d,e
   (this includes completing the N.I.H. on-line training program for investigators at http://www.research.duq.edu/humansub.html)

TOPICS FOR PRESENTATION AND PAPER:

Your research this semester aims to explore the Life-world of the child in one of its existential dimensions. Please choose one topic and work with me to refine your research. Your study should focus on an aspect of children’s lived experience, and you should gather some observational data which you will present to the class. In your paper you interpret your findings and integrate some of the sources discussed in class and/or other material.

Here are some suggested topics. Explore the dimensions of the child's world in terms of

a) time (e.g. temporal structures of childhood, mythical thinking, rhythms, time in language, perception, change in the adult's experience of time, lived time vs. clock time etc.)

b) space (playgrounds, architecture, Bachelard’s poetics of space, dollhouses, nurseries, tree houses, geometric vs. lived space, Piaget etc.)

c) things (toys, guns, dolls, drawings, magical objects, clothes, transitional objects---PLAY in
theory and practice etc.

d) body (embodiment, crawling, walking, horizontality, upright posture, hands, body and speech, body and mother, fragmentation, regression, anality, orality, chiasm, senses, etc.)

e) other (lap, gesture, co-sleeping, breastfeeding, friendship, attachment, culture, social construction, social places, indigenous cultures, family systems, love, etc.)

Please choose one area, and within that area decide on one topic that you want to pursue. The suggested topics are just that: suggestions, and you are free to (and I encourage you to) brainstorm and come up with a topic that speaks to you.

Your paper should have a strong hermeneutic, that is interpretive aspect. I suggest that you conduct a field study, i.e. a series of carefully recorded observations or interviews if possible. Your data will become the text that you analyze and interpret. You may also use literary texts, historical events, or even theoretical works as your data. Interpret your data and dialogue them with relevant theoretical materials.

Your papers should be 10-15 pages long, including your field study data, and documented APA style (i.e. follow APA style with your citations).

As part of your grade you will give a presentation on your findings. Please try to represent your material well and in a stimulating manner. Video, audio, and other media can be arranged.

Your paper is due 2 weeks after your presentation. All papers (especially those with a topic on "time") must be in by Wednesday, April 30. No extensions.

As outlined in the University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, academic dishonesty (plagiarism etc.) will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary actions and failure of the course. Students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations if needed. If you need accommodations, please contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services in 309 Duquesne Union (412-396-6557) as soon as possible. Accommodations will not be granted retrospectively.
Readings, Calendar 2014

History


Body and Other

Feb 4 Introduction to Merleau-Ponty

Feb 11 Merleau-Ponty and Child Psychology

Feb 18 The Face of the Other

Feb 25 Deprivation

Mar 11 Deprivation

**Mar 18**

**The upright posture**


**Spaces, Things, and Time**

**Mar 25**

**Things**


**April 1**

**The psychology of place**


Simms, CW ch. 2 “The world’s skin ever expanding: spatiality and the structures of child consciousness”

**Apr 8**

**Secret Places**


**The pathology of lived space**


**Apr 15**

**Time**


Simms, E. (2006) “Because we are the upsurge of time: towards a genetic phenomenology of lived time” CW Chapter 6.