



Course title:	Play Therapy with Young Children	
Course #/term:	SW 625	
Time and place:	Wednesday, 6 to 9 pm	
Credit hours:	3	
Prerequisites:	521/511 or permission of instructor	
Instructor:	Julie Ribaldo (you can call me Julie or Professor Ribaldo)	
Pronouns:	She/her/hers	
Contact info:	Email: Jribaldo@umich.edu	Phone: 734-936-4949
	I will do my best to respond within 2 working days. If you do not hear from me, please re-contact me.	
Office:	2710	
Office hours:	It is easiest to make an appointment.	
Required Texts	Ray, D. C. (2011). <i>Advanced Play Therapy</i> . Routledge.	
	Axline, V. (1967). <i>Dibs in Search of Self</i> . Ballantine.	

Pandemic Statement:

You are in the MSW program during 2 major pandemics – Covid-19 and the long-standing pandemic of racism and oppression. I hope we will strive to treat ourselves and each other with compassion and grace, while also encouraging our collective growth. There will be glitches along the way. The course outline is my best attempt to help you predict what the class holds in store for you.

1. Course Statement

a. Course Description

This course will examine theories and techniques for working directly with children ages eighteen months to nine years, and their caregivers, via play therapy. This course will emphasize evidence-based play therapies that address diverse groups of young children. Special attention will be given to the meaning of play across cultures, as well as the role of play in the healthy development of children. We will also cover the interaction between environmental risk factors, protective factors and developmental factors as they contribute to coping, resiliency, and emotional and behavioral disorders. Primary emphasis will be given to Child Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) as well as other forms of child or parent/child play therapy, such as Theraplay, Adlerian play therapy, Infant-Parent Psychotherapy, and Child-Parent Psychotherapy.

b. Course Content

We will address both the objective aspects of observing and interacting with young children and their caregivers, as well as the subjective experience of interacting with children, some of whom face significant environmental challenges, including poverty and the consequences of systemic oppression on them and their parents. We will address specific strategies for helping children who are distressed or dysregulated. Finally, students will have the opportunity to observe and reflect upon multiple domains of child development, including state regulation, attachment behaviors, play themes and emotional, language, cognitive and motor development.

c. Course Objectives and Competencies

Students will engage in holistic social work practice, including developing the knowledge, skills, values and affective and cognitive processes related to working with young children and their caregivers, and the related practice behaviors.

KNOWLEDGE -

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities: Social workers apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies

Outcomes:

- Describes the role of development in stages of play
- Distinguishes between normative and non-normative play
- Describes the benefits and limitations of play-based therapy
- Describes three evidence-based, play-based therapies

SKILLS -

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities: Social workers critically choose and

implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies

Outcomes:

- Demonstrates the capacity to observe multiple domains of child development
- Accurately appraises and expresses the themes addressed in children's play
- Demonstrates in writing and orally the capacity to understand and respond to the unique communications of play;
- Demonstrates the capacity to engage with a young child through play, including the capacity to engage in child-led play
- Synthesizes modalities in order to choose an appropriate intervention modality
- Accurately assesses the effectiveness of chosen modality or intervention technique

VALUES –

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice: Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education.

Outcomes:

- Articulates the position of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on play
- Lists arguments for and against the US ratification of the UNCRC
- Develops capacity to advocate for the retention of play in the lives of children

COGNITIVE and AFFECTIVE PROCESSES

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice: Social workers present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences. Social workers apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Outcomes:

- Compares and chooses modalities of treatment to address the goals and values of diverse families
- Articulates the role of privilege and oppression in the role of play in the lives of families and communities

- Describes child/caregiver behaviors and interactions through a multicultural lens, making accurate meaning of what is observed through understanding the child in the context of their caregiving environments, which are influenced by broader societal influences
- Identifies own biases and assumptions
- Demonstrates capacity to modulate emotional arousal by staying in a well-regulated state (neither withdrawn nor flooded) in interaction with a young child
- Articulates the roles and responsibilities in bringing clinical material to supervision

d. Course Design

Through lecture, discussion, reading, videos, and course assignments, we will address both the objective aspects of observing and interacting with young children and their caregivers, as well as the subjective experience of interacting with children, some of whom face significant environmental challenges, including poverty and the consequences of systemic oppression on them and their parents. Specific strategies for helping children who are distressed or dysregulated will be addressed. Finally, students will have the opportunity to observe and reflect upon multiple domains of child development, including state regulation, attachment behaviors, play themes and emotional, language, cognitive and motor development.

This course will take place in a combination of classroom experiences and working with children in a play environment in the community. To the best of my ability, I will help structure opportunities for students to interact with children, but there may be times students will have to arrange their own “play partner.”

I approach the class with the goal of developing your skills and confidence. I encourage you to enter our class sessions, and your assignments, **with a spirit of curiosity**. I encourage you to ask questions, bring your experience to the class in a way that links to the material we are discussing and offer input if we fail to address issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. I welcome the opportunity to grow and learn with you!

I recognize that the material we cover in class is sometimes evocative. We will be watching videos of actual sessions and thinking and talking about children who have experienced relational harm and other forms of trauma and/or oppression. Please do what you need to do to take care of yourself. “The role of body-based recovery from trauma and stress is gaining increasing scientific attention. So that you have techniques to teach clients, as well as ways to help with your self-regulation, I will begin each class with a “mindful self-regulation” technique to help settle our bodies/spirit. My hope is that you will practice these so that when you have evocative moments in the class, with clients or in your life more broadly, you have ways to mindfully attend to your present-moment experience. I will try to offer a

variety in hopes that one speaks” to you but knowing not every exercise is right for every person. You are free to participate or not, but please mute your mike so that others who want to can engage.

Finally, it is not uncommon for social work students to desire therapeutic support during their program. If you find that you would like to see a therapist (which I especially encourage for anyone who desires to be a clinical social worker), I keep an updated list of therapists and phone numbers in the file tab of Canvas. If you would like a more personalized recommendation, please feel free to talk to me. Additionally, we have an embedded CAPS counselor who you can access. The information to reach that person is found in the link at the end of this syllabus.

e. Curricular Themes

Multicultural and Diversity themes will be addressed by careful attention to the impact of social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, physical and psychological ability, and community support, on young child and parent interactions. Different patterns of development which may result from different biological and/or social environments will be identified and differentiated from those patterns of development which may result from deprivation or impairment.

Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed through discussion of the impact of economic and social oppression on child development and family relationships.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation is particularly important in social work with infants and young children because of the potential lifelong impact of facilitating or harmful conditions at this stage of life. This course will emphasize factors that may contribute to resiliency and vulnerability and identify the kinds of environmental conditions, programs, and interventions that promote optimal development.

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be emphasized throughout the course and will draw on empirically and qualitatively based knowledge regarding observation and assessment from a number of other disciplines, particularly developmental psychology and psychiatry.

f. Relationship to Social Work Ethics and Values

Because child development is so profoundly impacted by the parent(s)/child relationship, this course will emphasize understanding the development and indices of attachment. We will also consider potential ethical dilemmas may arise for social workers working with vulnerable children and families. The impact of social conditions and social policy and the need for macro and micro intervention to improve the lives of children will also be addressed.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and Class Materials

Required Texts:

Ray, D. C. (2011). *Advanced Play Therapy*. Routledge. (ISBN: 041588604X)

I would advise the hard copy vs. the e-copy because there is a CD Rom with the hard copy that gives you helpful tools like a progress-tracking worksheet.

Axline, V. (1967). *Dibs in Search of Self*. Ballantine. (ISBN: 9780345339256)

In addition to weekly readings from the text, there will typically be at least one article that will be posted in Modules in Canvas. Please be sure to reference Modules weekly so that you are fully prepared for class. We will begin each week with a discussion of the readings and part of your participation grade will be dependent on your ability to contribute meaningfully to the small and large group discussion.

b. Expectations for student time.

The School of Social Work definition of a credit hour formalizes compliance with federal expectations and assists with consistency through the School of Social Work. As such, the School of Social Work utilizes a ratio of one hour of classroom instruction to two hours of out-of-class activity. Specifically: three credits is equal to approximately 135 hours of total work over the semester. Because of the critical nature of reflection, integration, understanding the use of self in practice, self-care, and praxis to social work education, it is expected that a portion of these total work hours will be devoted to activities that further these aims.

c. Class Schedule (subject to modifications based on the needs of the class)

Week	Topic	Required Reading or Assignment
CONCEPTS		
FOUNDATIONAL		
One	Course Introduction Course Requirements History and Purpose of Play Pre-Course Quiz	See Modules Ray, Preface & Chap. 1 UNCRC UNCRC Information Rothschild, A. (2017) Is America Holding Out on Protecting Children's Rights? <i>The Atlantic</i> , May 2, 2017

Two	Play and Child Development	See Modules Ray, Chap. 2 Bryan, N. (2020). Shaking the bad boys: troubling the criminalization of black boys' childhood play, hegemonic white masculinity and femininity, and the school playground-to-prison pipeline. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2018.1512483 Optional: Murray, J. (2018). The play's the thing. <i>International Journal of Early Years Education</i> , 26:4, 335-339, DOI: 10.1080/09669760.2018.1527278
Three	Philosophy of Working with Children Attitudes and Skills of the Play Therapist	See Modules
Four	Attachment and Emotion Regulation	See Modules
Methods Of Play Therapy		
Five	Child-Centered Play Therapy	See Modules
Six	Helping Children Create Narratives	See Modules
Seven	Finalize CCPT Consulting with Caregivers	See Modules
Eight	Aggression Off-Site Activity (Play partner day)	See Modules
Nine	Theraplay	See Modules
Ten	Child-Parent Psychotherapy	See Modules

Eleven	Adlerian Play Therapy	See Modules
Twelve	Supervision in Play Therapy Evidence Base for CCPT	See Modules
Thirteen	Course Review and Wrap-Up Post-Course Quiz	See Modules

b. Assignments

All assignments are to be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the due date as a Word document (not PDF), or the video link for the annotation (I will explain in class). In fairness to your peers, any extensions will result in a 5% grade reduction.

- Completion of two quizzes (pre and post) (5% of grade). The quizzes will be completed through Qualtrics.
- Completion of one video annotation of a segment of child-led play (30% of grade)
 - Video annotation will be discussed in class
 - You will be critically appraising your interaction with the child as well as linking your interaction to course readings and discussions
 - You will receive a Permission to Record Consent Form
- Completion of one Process Recording (30% of grade)
 - Students will write from one of your two interaction weeks.
 - Each note will have three components
 - A session summary in Process Recording Format (class handout)
 - An assessment of the “effectiveness” of your responses to the child
 - In addition to the actual observation note, you will add a reflection/processing section. That section should include your thoughts and feelings, interpretations, etc. about the play session.
 - Please use only first names and note the specific age of the child (if known, otherwise, approximate the age) in the notes.
- Completion of a final summary write up (15% of final grade)

- Attendance and participation (20% of final grade)

c. Attendance and class participation

To receive full credit, you are expected to attend every class session because:

- a. Some material considered essential to the objectives of the course will only be presented in class;
- b. The application of key concepts and student co-learning requires participation in class discussions and exercises;
- c. Predictability, reliability and consistency are core to any strong relationship... “being there” is incredibly important to children so it is important in this class;
- d. **Attendance means participating and attending to others.** Using computers or mobile devices to text, shop, Facebook, etc. will reduce your grade. Unless you have a family emergency, (and please speak to me about it ahead of time) please put your phones away. We will develop other “ground rules” as a class to create a civil, conducive-to-learning environment. Zoom requires a fair amount of flexibility! Pets or children who need a cuddle are welcome. However, do be aware that some of the content is not appropriate for tender ears and plan accordingly.
- e. Please see the UM-SSW Student Guide: [Policy on Class Attendance](#).

GRADING of annotation, notes and final summary will be based on:

Thoroughness and relevance of observations, noting child’s affect, themes in play, and play behavior.

Ability to suspend judgment of the child or family in description of observations (i.e., language is descriptive vs. evaluative).

Relevancy, detail, and accuracy of observations relative to the child, using developmental level and environmental context to understand the potential meanings of behaviors.

Evidence of capacity to follow the child’s lead, resist “teaching” and capacity to provide accurate mirroring and narration of child’s activities and feelings.

Reflective Capacity – evidence that you are noting and managing your own reactions and thinking about the internal world of the child; evidence of your awareness of your power and privilege, as well as how your own cultural view may shape your experience and interpretation of the child’s play.

Writing, grammar, clarity.

I attempt to return all work within 2 to 3 weeks. I provide extensive feedback designed to acknowledge your strengths and capacities, as well as to invite your attention to areas for growth or refinement. I appreciate your patience in the grading process! If I make a comment or observation that is unclear, please feel free to ask me for clarification! In the event that you receive a C or lower, I allow for revision. That option is NOT available if you receive a B- or better.

Grading scale:

Per UM standards grades of A are given for exceptional individual performance and mastery of the material. The use of A+, A, and A– distinguishes degrees of superior mastery. B grades are given to students who demonstrate mastery of the material: B+ is used for students who perform just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner; B– is used for students just below the mastery level. C grades are given when mastery of the material is minimal. My scale is:

A+	99 – 100	B+	87 - 89.9	C+	77 - 79.9
A	95 - 98.9	B	85 - 86.9	C	75 - 76.9
A-	90 - 94.9	B-	80 - 84.9	C-	70 - 74.9

As I calculate *final* grades, if you are within .5 of the next highest grade (e.g., 89.5), I will round up in order to account for the subjectivity naturally inherent in grading.

Please see [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#) and the [policy for grading in special circumstances](#).

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: <https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>. They include:

- *Safety and emergency preparedness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Teaching evaluations*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*
 - <https://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/understanding-plagiarism>