	THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO **College of Education- Department of Teacher Education**

Title of Course: ECED 3345 CRN 14670 and 14682 Design of Learning Environments in Early Care & Education	**Credits:** 3
Semester: Fall 2025	**Instructor Information:** Name: Bryn Birdwell, ME.D. Email: bibirdwell@miners.utep.edu Office hours: Email for an appointment
Day/Time: Fully Online Runs: Monday-Sunday Schedule	

Course Description:

This course addresses the design of Early Childhood learning environments, including classrooms, areas for caregiving routines, play spaces, outdoor areas and playgrounds. It looks at the linkages between physical organization, Universal Design, aesthetics (beauty), material/toy availability and developmentally responsive and culturally sustaining rituals and routines, along with how these shape infants, toddlers, and preschoolers' behaviors and engagement as learners. Students will explore strategies for creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging and promote competence in all children.

Course Format Information:

This course will be conducted ***fully online*** [there are no in-person/campus- based class meetings]. It runs on a Monday to Sunday schedule; course work throughout the week is due at specific days/times, however, you are ***not*** required to be online at any specific time. The standard recommendation across the board by American universities is to plan for approximately three hours of study time for every one credit hour taken. Therefore, for this course, you can expect each week to spend 3 hours of class time + 9 hours of study and prep time, which equals approximately 12 hours per week devoted to this course. Please read the syllabus and information in our course site very carefully, understand what you need to do and when you need to do it, and then plan course study time in your week accordingly. If at any time you do not understand what to do or when to do it, you should contact Prof. Birdwell immediately (bibirdwell@miners.utep.edu).

For Technical Assistance: For technical problems with our online course site or related computer/Internet applications, please contact the UTEP Helpdesk: M - F: 7AM - 8PM, Sat: 9AM - 1PM, Sundays 11-4 pm. On campus phone: 915.747.5257. Off campus: 915.747.4357. If you

are on campus, you may also visit the ATLAS lab located within the Undergraduate Learning Center (UGLC building) or the Technology Support Center in Room 300, Library.

Required Reading:
Dirsken, J. (2016). Design for How People Learn (2nd Edition). New Riders.

Additional required readings and video/audio files for the course are provided in Blackboard via our course site, either as an attached PDF which can be downloaded or through a clickable Internet link. You are allowed access to *one* copy of any PDFs within the courses site-- per copyright law, they are not intended for further mass distribution. Readings/video/auto files that are assigned by linking to the Internet are also subject to copyright law, but these links may be shared as they are open to the public.

Our online course site is copyrighted and is the property of UTEP and ECED faculty. Content from the course site, in part or whole, may *not* be shared or distributed without direct written permission. For questions or issues related to this, please contact Lead ECED Faculty, Dr. Alyse C. Hachey at ahachey@utep.edu.

UTEP Learning Resources:
(UTEP provides a variety of student services and support, including the resources below.)

- UTEP Library: You can access to a wide range of resources, including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- The University Writing Center (UWC): Virtually everyone needs help with writing academic English. There's no shame in it. The UWC [Library Building, Rm.227; phone: 915.747.5112] provides online consultations to all UTEP students at no cost. They also have walk-in services, if you are local. It is a terrific resource. If I suggest you attend the Writing Center, it's because I think you will benefit from it. It's not a punishment – it's intended to help you. Check the website for more information: http://uwc.utep.edu

Standards of academic integrity: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, collusion [making plans to cheat with another], the submission for credit of any work or materials that are not attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) and available in the Office of the Dean of Students, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing grades on the work in question, to failing grades in the course, to suspension or dismissal among others.

Students with Disabilities statement: If you have or believe you have a disability, you may wish to self-identify. You can do so by providing documentation to the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) located in Union E Room 106. Students who have been designated as having a disability must reactivate their standing with CASS on a yearly basis. Failure to report to this office will place a student on the inactive list and nullify benefits received. If you have a condition which may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or which may cause an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of CASS. You may call 919-747-5148 for general information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Student Conduct and Discipline: All students are expected and required to obey the law and to comply with Regent, Rules, and Regulations (http://www.utsystem.edu/bor/rules) with system and University rules, with directives issued by an administrative official in the course of his or her authorized duties and to observe the standards of conduct appropriate for the university.

Equal Opportunity: All students regardless of gender, age, class, race, religion, physical disability, sexual orientation, etc., shall have equal opportunity without harassment in this course. Any problems with or questions related to this can be discussed confidentially with Prof. Birdwell [email bibirdwell@miners.utep.edu to set up a phone meeting].

Guide to Online Etiquette:
As a member of the learning community of this class, the following is a list of specific expectations (Note that this list is not exhaustive and that it may be added to as needed throughout the semester):

1. *You are expected to actively engage in the learning community of this class.*
This includes completing the coursework tasks as outlined in each week's session, actively contributing to discussions, seeking guidance if you have questions (note that if you have a question, it is likely that everyone will benefit if ask your question) and exhibiting professional courtesy during interactions with classmates/ your instructor. Class participation includes but is not limited to engaging in in-class activities and writing, volunteering inputs in class discussions, answering questions, defending personal viewpoints, and presenting completed assignments to your classmates.

2. *You are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior for a higher learning environment.*
Even though we will not meet face-to-face, logging on to our online course site is the equivalent of walking on to the UTEP campus. Therefore, the rules of conduct that apply on campus also apply in our course site. Our course site is a place to engage in social learning; it is meant to be a safe space for all. Our ideas and beliefs shape who we are and will differ from our peers; sharing these within class allows us to learn different perspectives and points of view, but this can only happen successfully if everyone in our learning community is respectful of individual ideas. You are encouraged to participate in all activities to the fullest extent possible, with an open mind to new experiences. In particular, the following are general guidelines for online interactions:

- All the information discussed between peers and/or with your instructor should be kept confidential, thus providing a safe atmosphere for creative expression, free of judgment.

- You are encouraged to participate to the depth that you feel comfortable sharing with the class (Note: An electronic record will remain, so be thoughtful in how much personal information you share. The general rule is: share only that which you would be comfortable seeing printed in a newspaper/ public Internet page.).
- Do not use inappropriate language, all capital letters, or language short cuts (i.e. texting shorthand). Online entries should reflect academic writing standards, with edited spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- When reacting to someone else's message, whether in agreement or disagreement, please address the ideas, not the person. (Note: Harassing, flaming and/or inappropriate postings will not be tolerated.)
- Be sure to read everyone's responses before posting. Avoid repetition of what someone else has already said. Add something new to the discussion!
- Please refrain from posting yes/no or I agree/disagree answers (this will NOT earn you participation points). The point of our online interactions is to create a rich and meaningful sharing of ideas; therefore, posts should: justify positions, provide specific examples, and demonstrate that you have read the required readings and your classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

3. *You are expected to exhibit high level time management skills and turn your work in on time.* As previously mentioned, this is a fast-paced, intensive course that requires you to devote significant time to complete the required readings, discussions and various additional assignments that are due each week. Although there is no mandatory time that you must be online, the research shows that those with the best success in online courses create a set schedule for coursework and stick to it (whether you do your work at 3am or 10am on whatever day does not matter, what matters is just that you allow a sufficient, set time each week of the semester to focus on coursework). Timely completion of all coursework is essential for this class to run smoothly (i.e., your classmates rely on you to do your readings early in the week and contribute to the discussion on time in order for them to be able to post feedback later in the week). Therefore, late work will *not* be accepted. All online assignments are due by the due date and time listed in the task directions (see each weekly session in our course site for specific details). Please ensure that you carefully read all instructions for each assignment, particularly the due dates and times, and then schedule the time you devote to this class accordingly.

Missing two weeks of discussion and/or failure to turn in three assignments will result in your automatically failing this course, regardless of any points earned.

Note: Exceptions may be made in the case of *extreme emergency* with supporting documentation. Late coursework will not be accepted after one week from the originally scheduled due date during the semester or after the last scheduled coursework due date at the end of the semester. If you anticipate your assignment will be late due to unusual circumstances, please contact me and explain your situation prior to the due date of the assignment. Without prior notice, late assignments will *not* receive any credit.

If Blackboard is down and you cannot get into our course site to post work by the required due date:

All coursework should be posted in our online course site. If you find that you are unable to log into Blackboard to access our course site at the time that you are trying to post your work by the due date, you must email me (through regular e-mail at bibirdwell@miners.utep.edu) immediately with an attachment of your work. When you do this, I will know that you have completed the work in a timely manner and it will be accepted, even though it was not posted in our course site as is generally required. I will then check with the Technology staff at UTEP to determine when Blackboard was out. If you email me indicating that you did not post your coursework because Blackboard is down, but you do not send me your work as an attachment in the message, you will not receive credit for your work.

4. *You work is expected to be your own.*
Everything you turn in for this course must be your own work. The purpose of coursework is to know what *you* think, not how clever you are at getting around the rules…. So, use your brilliance in a productive way. Any student caught engaging in instances of cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. It's serious! Don't do it.

5. You are expected to contact me for help if needed throughout the semester.
My office hours for this spring are by appointment. Please email me (bibirdwell@miners.utep.edu) to set up a day/time for a phone or Zoom meeting.

My email is bibirdwell@miners.utep.edu. Please include your first and last name and the title of the course you are taking with me in the body of your message. **Please note:** I answer email Monday-Friday from 9am-4pm. If you send me an email after 4pm on Friday afternoon, you will not receive a response from me until the following Monday. Therefore, if you need to reach me on a Friday, email early! You can expect a response from me within 24 hours (usually sooner) for any email communication you send during the week.

If at any time, you have difficulty understanding my expectations or the course material or completing course work for any reason—be proactive!!! I am here for you (email, phone, Zoom). I *strongly* encourage you to reach out to me as soon as possible (do not wait until the day before something is due or the end of the semester) and we will work together to make this class a success for you!

NAEYC Standards Addressed in this Course:

STANDARD 1-- Child Development and Learning in Context
1b: Understand and value each child as an individual with unique developmental variations, experiences, strengths, interests, abilities, challenges, approaches to learning, and with the capacity to make choices.
1c: Understand the ways that child development and the learning process occur in multiple contexts, including family, culture, language, community, and early learning setting, as well as in a larger societal context that includes structural inequities.
1d: Use this multidimensional knowledge—that is, knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts—to make evidence-based decisions that support each child.
STANDARD 2-- Family–Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections
2a: Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families.
STANDARD 3-- Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment
3a: Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings.
3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.
STANDARD 4--Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices
4a: Understand and demonstrate positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions as the foundation of early childhood educator' work with young children.
4b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills are critical for young children.
4c: Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.
STANDARD 6-- Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator
6a: Identify and involve themselves with the early childhood field and serve as informed advocates for young children, families, and the profession.
6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.
6d: Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice.
6e: Develop and sustain the habit of reflective and intentional practice in their daily work with young children and as members of the early childhood profession.

Student Learning Outcomes:

ECED 4335 students will be able to:	Measurements (means of assessment for student learning outcomes listed in first column)
1. Outline how physical organization and aesthetics influence how young children and adults act, and interact, with materials and others;	Knowledge Gain Quizzes; Class Participation Work
2. Identify the key components of Universal Design for Learning [UDL] inclusive environments;	Knowledge Gain Quizzes; Class Participation Work
3. Examine types of materials/toys in relation to developmentally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching practices with young children;	Knowledge Gain Quizzes; Class Participation Work
4. Discuss developmentally and culturally sustaining rituals and routines, aesthetics, space design and materials/toys for building new knowledge, skills, motivation and habits;	Knowledge Gain Quizzes; Class Participation Work
5. Compare and contrast conceptions of developmentally and culturally sustaining aesthetics, space design and materials/toys from the perspectives of Reggio-Emilio (Reggio-Inspired), Waldorf, Montessori and Head Start classrooms;	Knowledge Gain Quizzes; Class Participation Work
6. Analyze the environmental design of Early Childhood classrooms using widely accepted in the field environmental assessment scales	Class Participation Work; Classroom Evaluation Presentation

Evaluation & Coursework Requirements of Students:

Coursework Requirements	
Syllabus Quiz	15 Points
Knowledge Gain Quizzes (13)	195 Points
Class Participation (12)	600 Points
Classroom Environment Presentation	190 Points
Total	**1000 Points**

How Grades are Determined

Grade	Earned Points
A	900 -1000
B	800- 890
C	700- 790
D	600- 690
F	Below 600

General Criteria for Grading Assignments:

Does not meet expectations (Loss of many points)	Meets expectations (Loss of few points)	Exceeds expectations (Loss of no points)
The information provided is not organized and detailed or conclusions drawn from the information is not supported or accurate. The assignment is incomplete/does not include all required sections according to the directions. All written portions include repeated grammatical and spelling errors; no or improper citations.	The information provided is somewhat organized and detailed and conclusions drawn from the information is somewhat supported and accurate. The assignment is mostly complete/ includes most required sections according to the directions. All written portions include few or no grammatical and spelling errors; proper citations with few errors.	The information provided is organized and detailed and conclusions drawn from the information are supported and accurate. The assignment is complete/includes all required sections according to the directions. All written portions include no grammatical and spelling errors; proper citations with no errors.

Individual grading rubrics are found in the directions for each coursework task, which are located in our online course site.

This course runs on a weekly schedule, Monday through Sunday. Detailed instructions for all of the coursework tasks to be completed each week of the semester are arranged by class session (i.e., each class session covers one week of the semester). The class sessions for each week are labeled by week number and start date in the main left-hand navigation in our course site. In each of the weekly class sessions, you will find: the topic(s) and objectives for the week, the required reading (with embedded links to download/access articles), a summary of what tasks are due (and when) that week and detailed directions and related links for completing and posting your coursework that is due for that class session (i.e. during that week).

All weekly tasks MUST be submitted by the given deadline as outlined in our course site.

The following is a summary overview of the required coursework for the entire semester and related points possible. For *detailed instructions*, you should access the weekly class sessions in our online course site in Blackboard.

Syllabus Quiz (15 Points Total)

You will need to review the syllabus carefully and complete a short syllabus quiz to check your knowledge of the information in the document.

Knowledge Gain Quizzes (195 Points total)

Most weeks of the course, there will be assigned readings/videos to watch related to that week's topic. As a basic check of your new knowledge gain, you will complete a mini-quiz consisting of 3 questions. Questions will be multiple choice and you will have access to the course materials to select your answers. Your responses to the Knowledge Gain Quizzes are due by **11:45 pm MT on**

Sunday of the weeks they are assigned [each mini-quiz will be unavailable after this time and there are ***no make-ups***]. [5 Points x 3 questions = 15 Points per Knowledge Gain Quiz x 13 Weeks= 195 Points Total]

Class Participation Work (600 points total)

Since we do not actually meet in person, participation in this course occurs through online postings and interactions in our course site. The point of each discussion posting is for you to show the knowledge you have gained and to make critical connections to the content topic of the week. Participation Postings are due by **12pm (Noon) Saturday** of the weeks they are assigned.

In addition to your initial posting, you will be required to read your classmates' work and provide feedback on TWO of your classmates' postings. Feedback to Classmates are due by **11:45 pm MT on Sunday** of the weeks they are assigned.

[40 Points for each Initial Posting x 10 Points for Feedback to TWO classmates (5 points for each feedback) = 50 Points Total for each Participation Task. There will be 12 Class Participations assigned x 50 Points possible = 600 Points Total.]

Classroom Evaluation Presentation (190 Points total)

One way to assess learning environments is through widely accepted assessment scales, such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (commonly known as ECERS) and other pre-made and available environment checklists. As an early childhood professional, you should be able to conduct an assessment, evaluate the results and make suggestions for environmental improvement using such formal assessment scales. Over the course of this class, you will conduct observations (in-doors and outdoors) in an early childhood classroom setting (it can be any setting- home daycare, childcare center or school-- that serves children from infancy to first grade). You will conduct assessments using the evaluation scales provided. For your Final Project, you will create a presentation that shares your evaluation findings and recommendations based on your observations and the knowledge you have gained in this class.

A detailed breakdown of the required components for your evaluation observation, the assessment scales needed and what to include in your Final Project presentation is found in the Week 14-15 session of our online course site. Your Final Presentation is due by **11:45pm MT on Sunday, December 7th.**

Note: Although Weeks 14 and 15 are reserved for you to work on your Classroom Evaluation Presentation, the scope of this assignment is such that we will begin working on it earlier in the course.

Class Schedule: Please note that the schedule below is subject to change.

Week	Topic	Tasks to Complete	DUE
Week 1 (8/25-8/31)	Course Orientation and Introduction to Whole Child Approaches to Environments	Syllabus Quiz	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Knowledge Gain Quiz #1	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 2 (9/1-9/7)	Knowing your Learners and Culturally Responsive/ Sustaining Pedagogy	Knowledge Gain Quiz #2	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #1	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 3 (9/8-9/14)	Design for the Learner's Journey & Your Learning Goals	Knowledge Gain Quiz #3	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #2	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 4 (9/15-9/21)	Universal Design for Learning [UDL]	Knowledge Gain Quiz #4	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #3	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 5 (9/22-9/28)	Memory and Designs for the Physical Environment	Knowledge Gain Quiz #5	ay @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #4	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 6 (9/29-10/5)	Memory and Designs for the Physical Environment	Knowledge Gain Quiz #6	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #5	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 7 (10/6-10/12)	Design for Getting and Keeping Attention	Knowledge Gain Quiz #7	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #6	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 8 (10/13-10/19)	Design for Knowledge Gain	Knowledge Gain Quiz #8	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #7	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT

Week 9 (10/20-10/26)	Design for Skill Gain (practice makes, if not perfect, then better)	Knowledge Gain Quiz #9	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #8	Initial Post: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT No Feedback to Classmates this week! ***Extra week if needed to complete CIRLE Environmental Checklist…**must have it posted under Week 9 by 9am on Monday of Week 11.
Week 10 (10/27-11/2)	Design for Motivation	Knowledge Gain Quiz #10	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #9	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 11 (11/3-11/9)	Design for Habits (Rituals and Routines)	Knowledge Gain Quiz #11	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #10	Initial Post: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT No Feedback to Classmates this week! ***Extra week if needed to complete LISC Child Care Environment Checklist…**must have it posted under Week 11 by 9am on Monday of Week 13.
Week 12 (11/10-11/16)	Design for the Social Environment	Knowledge Gain Quiz #12	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #11	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT Feedback to classmates: Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
Week 13 (11/17-11/23)	Design for Outdoors	Knowledge Gain Quiz #13	Sunday @ 11:45pm MT
		Class Participation #12	Initial Post: Saturday @ 12pm (noon) MT No Feedback to Classmates this week!
Week 14 (11/24-11/30) And **Week 15** (12/1-12/7)	Final Project	Observation/Evaluation Findings Presentation	Due by the Last Day of Class – **Dec 7th**-- at 11:45pm MT