

**School of Human Studies**

**Ambedkar University Delhi**

**Course Outline**

**Time Slot-**\_\_\_\_\_

**Course Code:** SHS201724

**Title:** Childhood, Identity and Society

**Type of Course:** Core course for MA Psychology (Psychosocial Clinical Studies)

**Cohort for which it is compulsory:** MA Psychology

**Cohort for which it is Elective:** None

**No. of credits:** 4

**Semester and Year Offered:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester (Monsoon Semester 2018)

**Course Co-ordinator and Team:** Anshumita Pandey, Deepti Sachdev, Vinod R

**Email of course co-ordinator:** anshumita@aud.ac.in

**Pre-requisites:** Student should have successfully made the transition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester of Master's programme in Psychology.

**Aim:** By the end of the course, the student is expected to:

1. come to have a critical appreciation of the life-world of the child and the entrenched nature of the discourse that surrounds childhood.
2. develop an empathic sense of an infant's mode of being-in-the-world, the complexity of processes of infancy and childhood and the role they play in shaping self-experience.
3. supplement theoretical gleanings and sensitive (self) reflection so as to come to have a 'sense of' what working with children entails.
4. have a deepening relationship with key ideas in the works of thinkers like Winnicott, Stern, Marcuse and Nandy.

**Brief description of modules/ Main modules:**

**Course Description:** As it traverses then through three words – Childhood, Identity and Society – and how they come to impact one another, the course offers the student a glimpse of the deeply political discourse that surrounds and constructs childhood, impacts the everyday of the child, on one hand and on the other takes one to a critical engagement with the psychological processes of infancy and childhood - 'the earliest' and 'the deepest' within. CIS marks a re-turn to one's 'foundations (in observation)' located in a psychosocial matrix that allows us to see each individual located within a culture and having a privately evolved but structured culture of his/her own. With a reading of Nieuwenhuys, Nandy, Marcuse to name a few, we begin by locating childhood within a confluence of discourses – historical, economic, legal, political. The social construction of childhood then marks the first entry into the world of the child and the themes that populate it. This is followed by a turn to Winnicott, Stern and Erikson who take the student to the 'bi-personal field' of the mother and child and the subjective processes of infancy and childhood. We get glimpses into the absoluteness of dependence, the pleasure – pain of separation, the arrival of 'I' and 'me' – the relational beginnings of psyche - 'mind' when it could at best 'sense' things.

We find ourselves wondering - What is the 'nature of the child's tie to the mother'? 'What is trauma for the child?' 'Why do children play?' 'Is there a relationship between playing and reality'? Through readings, film analyses and case discussions, we visit how a child, helped by the mother's formative response begins to make the world his own, how playing – at once precarious and robust – allows the child to consolidate his being, to find a way to exist as oneself and relate to the other as oneself, how in this space marked by a peculiar concentration that allows one to be lost, the child is creating a personal idiom that is alive and 'feels real'. Erikson detailing a similar process that enables experiences to be organized in an individual ego gives to us the basics of identity, its formation and sensitively makes us see how such consolidation is routed through a culture's collective behavior - historical memory, mythology, rituals or avoidance - that closely inform individual experience. Here one is not merely engaging with an oversimplified analogy of the relationship between the individual and the collective but making a case for how an individual, a child, is at all times an organism, an ego and a member of a society - each a crucial dimension of experience out of which identity is knitted. A special focus in the course becomes 'childhood at the margins' that we trace through individual life stories and their complex realities.

### **Brief Description of Modules:**

#### **Unit 1: What is this thing called the child?**

The opening unit of the course is meant to engage the student in a critical discussion around the constructed and deeply political nature of the discourse around childhood. An anasemic reading of 'development' – particularly as it is deployed in a structuration of 'children's lifeworlds' – informs this discussion. With a close reading of writings by Olga Nieuwenhuys, Herbert Marcuse and others, the attempt is to destabilize a naturalized single story of childhood.

#### **Reading List:**

~ *Global Childhood and the Politics of Contempt* Author(s): Olga Nieuwenhuys in *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (July-Sept. 1998), pp. 267-289, Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

~ *Toys, Mythologies*, Roland Barthes, Hill and Wang, New York, 2012

~ *The Historical Limits of the Established Reality Principle, Eros and Civilization*, Herbert Marcuse, Beacon Press, Boston, 1974

~ *Phantasy and Utopia, Eros and Civilization*, Herbert Marcuse, Beacon Press, Boston, 1974

~ *The Little Prince*, Antoine De Saint Exupery, Richard Howard, 2000

#### **Additional Reference:**

~ *From Useful to Useless: The Changing Social Value of Children; Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* by Viviana A. Zelizer; Review by: Nancy Tomes in *American History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Mar., 1986), pp. 50-54 Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

~ "Grow up!": *The devaluation and stigmatization of childhood as a threat to progress in contemporary social thought* Author(s): Roger Neustadter in *Sociological Focus*, vol. 26, no. 4 (October 1993), pp. 301-314, Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

~ *Development Phallacies: Psychology, Gender and Childhood* Author(s): Erica Burman in *Agenda*, No. 22, *Families in Question* (1994), pp. 11-20 Published by: Agenda Feminist Media

~ *Born into Brothels, Documentary, Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman, 2005*

## **Unit 2: The child in the Indian Tradition**

In continuation with the opening themes, the second unit too attempts to locate the attitudes and practices – the received ‘good sense’ – around childhood as we explore writings grounded within the Indian socio-cultural milieu. We attempt to locate the history of childhood in India and see childhood caught between traditional and modern scripts.

### **Reading List:**

~ *The child in Indian Tradition : Appendix, The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India, Sudhir Kakar, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1981*

~ *Baby Icons: Forms and Figures of a New Generation, Freedom and destiny: Gender, family and Popular Culture in India, Patricia Uberoi, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006*

~ *Reconstructing Childhood: A Critique of the Ideology of Adulthood, Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias, Ashis Nandy, oxford university Press, New Delhi, 1992*

## **Unit 3: The inner world**

Foregrounding the work of D.W. Winnicott and Daniel Stern, we take a closer look at the baby as a person and psychic accomplishments in this journey. We explore some critical themes as regards infantile experience:

- ~ The phenomenology of infancy
- ~ The nature of the child’s tie to its mother
- ~ “Me” and “Not Me”: Psyche’s relational beginnings
- ~ The significance of transitional spaces

### **Reading List:**

~ *Baby as a Person, The Child and the Outside World, D. W. Winnicott, Penguin, 2000*

~ *Further thoughts on Babies as Persons, The Child and the Outside World, D. W. Winnicott, Tavistock Publications, 1957*

~ *The Theory of Parent-Infant Relationship, Maturational Processes and The Facilitating Environment, D.W. Winnicott, International University Press, 1985*

~ *From Dependence to Independence in the Development of Individual, Maturational Processes and The Facilitating Environment, D.W. Winnicott, International University Press, 1985*

~ *Ego Integration in Child Development, Maturational Processes and The Facilitating Environment, D.W. Winnicott, International University Press, 1985*

~ *Primitive Emotional Development, Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis, D.W. Winnicott, Karnac Books, 1984*

~ *Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena, Playing and Reality, D.W. Winnicott, Tavistock Publications, 1971*

~ *The infant’s repertoire, The First Relationship, Daniel N. Stern, Harvard University Press, London 2002*

~ *Finding your own path, The First Relationship*, Daniel N. Stern, Harvard University Press, London 2002

~ *Exploring the Infant's Subjective Experience: A Central Role for the Sense of self*, Daniel N. Stern, Karnac Books, London, 1998

**Additional Reference:**

~ *Real Making*, Winnicott, Adam Phillips, Harvard University Press, 1988

~ *The Appearing Self*, Winnicott, Adam Phillips, Harvard University Press, 1988

**Unit 4: The Metaphor of Play**

The aliveness of self and identity is explored through playful and creative living. We shift from the use/content of play to the significance of playing in life: as creating a self idiom, as a space of working through, as communication, as actively setting up a relationship with reality and with social scripts that populate the everyday. A crucial emphasis of the unit is on a child not being able to play. What is the work of therapy at such a moment? What substitutes playing? What is the relationship of this moment to a therapist's own ability to play?

**Reading List:**

~ *Why children play?*, Child, Family and the Outside World, DW Winnicott, Penguin, 2000

~ *Playing: A Theoretical Statement, Playing and Reality*, D. W. Winnicott, Tavistock Publications, 1971

~ *Ego Distortion in terms of True Self and False Self, Maturational Processes and The Facilitating Environment*, D.W. Winnicott, International University Press, 1985

~ *New Light on Children's Thinking, Psychoanalytic Explorations*, D.W. Winnicott, Harvard University Press, 1989

**Additional Reference:**

~ *Playing: Creative activity and the search for the self, Playing and Reality*, D. W. Winnicott, Tavistock Publications, 1971

~ *Aggression in relation to emotional development, Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*, D.W. Winnicott, Karnac Books, 1984

~ *The Capacity to be Alone, Maturational Processes and The Facilitating Environment*, D.W. Winnicott, International University Press, 1985

~ *Play and Vision, Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience* by Erik H. Erikson, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1963

~ *String: A Technique of Communication, Maturational Processes and The Facilitating Environment*, D.W. Winnicott, International University Press, 1985

~ *The Squiggle Game, Collected Papers* by D.W. Winnicott

~ *Dibs in Search of Self*, Virginia M. Axline, Random House Publishing, New York, 1964

~ *The Play of Interpretation*, Winnicott, Adam Phillips, Harvard University Press, 1988

~ *Ponette*, 1996 (Film on the theme 'What happens when a child's mother dies?')

## **Unit 5: Steps In Identity Formation: Development in Erikson's Psychology**

A closer look at Erikson's Life cycle approach to appreciate further the complex interplay between self and society.

### ***Reading List:***

~ *Eight Ages of Man, Childhood, Identity and Society*, Erik H. Erikson, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1963

~ *The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity, Identity, Youth and Crisis*, Erik H. Erikson, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1968

~ *The Traditional Hindu View and the Psychology of Erik H. Erikson, Identity and Adulthood*, Sudhir Kakar, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993

### **Assessment Details with weights:**

- |                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Reflective writing   | 30% (mid September)                |
| 2. Group Presentations  | 30% (throughout semester)          |
| 3. In class examination | 40% (as per AUD academic calendar) |