



ECE 537: CREATIVE EXPRESSION IN THE ARTS (3 HRS)

Course syllabus: Online Fall 2026

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

Professor: Josh Thompson, Ph.D. (he, him) (I prefer to be called Dr. Thompson)

Office Location: Ed South 201

Office Hours: M/W/F 9am-12noon <https://etamu-edu.zoom.us/j/9757769627?pwd=NW84b0pJZ0NCaFVhQ3hIQWFHaUtKQT09> by appointment, before and after class

Office Phone: 903-886-5537

University Email Address: Josh.Thompson@etamu.edu preferred – type 537 in the subject line

Professor's Webpage: <http://faculty.etamu.edu/jthompson>

Course Webpage: <http://faculty.etamu.edu/jthompson/537>

Preferred Form of Communication: For general questions, I prefer you to post questions in D2L Virtual Office. That way others may see our communication and they may benefit.

Please email me anytime to ask a question about your particular work. **Always type 537 in the subject line so we know which class you are writing about.** You may call or text my cell phone anytime between 9am-9pm, Mon-Fri, or up until 3pm on Saturdays. Communication Response Time: Expect to hear back from me within the next working day or two. Please ask again anytime I don't answer promptly or completely.

COURSE INFORMATION

This course will require four online synchronous video conference meetings:

Tuesday, September 8 (7:00–8:00 PM)

Tuesday, October 13 (7:00–8:00 PM)

Tuesday, November 10 (7:00–8:00 PM)

Tuesday, December 1 (7:00–8:00 PM)

OER Digital Textbooks Required:

Goldhawk, S. (1998). *Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections*, C. Bruce (Ed.). The Task Force on Children's Learning and the Arts: Birth to Age Eight.

Virtual Lab School. (2025). Creative Expression. Virtual Lab

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

School. <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/tcs/creative-expression>

Literature Circle Book Club (Required: choose one):

Brown, B. (2021) *Atlas of the heart: Mapping meaningful connections and the language of human experience*. Random House.

Cameron, J. (1992). *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*. TarcherPerigee.

Dombrink-Green, M. (Ed.). (2015). *Expressing creativity in preschool*. NAEYC.

Duncan, S., Martin, J., & Haughey, S. (2019). *Through a Child's Eyes: How Classroom Design Inspires Learning and Wonder*. Gryphon House.

Isbell, R., & Yoshizawa, S.A. (2016). *Nurturing creativity: An essential mindset for young children's learning*. NAEYC.

Resnick, M. (2017). *Lifelong kindergarten: Cultivating creativity through projects, passion, peers, and play*. MIT Press.

Required eTexts:

CCIE. (2016). *Exchange Everyday*. Redmond, WA: Childcare Information Exchange. Delivered five days a week containing news, success stories, solutions, trend reports, and much more. Enroll in *ExchangeEveryDay*, a daily electronic newsletter all about early childhood education. This will help you keep up-to-date with all things topical and pertinent in early childhood education. *ExchangeEveryDay* is the official electronic newsletter for ChildCareExchange.com. It will be delivered to you five days a week bringing news stories, success stories, solutions, trend reports, and much more. To subscribe to *ExchangeEveryDay* go to www.childcareexchange.com/eed.

NAEYC. (2020). *Developmentally appropriate practice (4th ed.)*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Texas Education Agency. (2009). *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)*.

Required Readings, as provided by the professor. For example:

Eisner, E. W. (2003). Artistry in Education. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 47(3), 373–384. doi:10.1080/00313830308603

Recommended Resources:

DeVinney, J., Duncan, S., Harris, S., Rody, M.A., & Rosenberry, L. (2010). *Inspiring Spaces for Young Children*. Lewisville, NC: Gryphon House.

Greenman, J. (2017). *Caring spaces, learning places: Children's environments that work*. Lincoln, NE: Exchange Press.

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Catalog Course Description

Study of the theory, content, and practice of integrating the performing arts into the curriculum design and the learning environments. Emphasis is placed on aesthetic development of young children through play, movement, music, visual art and creative dramatics." Emergent curriculum design is also explored, in which explorations and activities of the children arise from their own questions. The curriculum and practices of the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy will be examined as an exemplary model of inquiry-based learning. 3 semester hours

Course Goal: To design early childhood learning environments and curricula that foster creative expression in the arts.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

This early childhood education course will enable students:

1. To understand the rationale and content of the fine arts in early childhood education
2. To review research literature associated with childhood play, art, music & drama
3. To assess outdoor play environments
4. To develop dramatic play opportunities for young children
5. To promote music and movement exploration in early childhood classrooms
6. To create diverse avenues for artist expression during the early years

The successful learner will be an active and engaged participant in discussion forums by analyzing, constructing/creating, and evaluating information presented within the textbook, external readings/resources, student research, and class activities.

The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the arts by observing, participating and creating developmentally appropriate activities.

The learner will also demonstrate understanding of the course materials through objective examinations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Professional Behaviors: This is a wholly online course. Attendance online is expected; regular, consistent participation is important. We do important things every week of class – don't miss it. Excessive absences (less than 5 hours a week logged in to course materials, or 10 days without logging into eCollege) may prompt an administrative withdrawal.

- Read textbook assignments, supplemental reading assignments, lecture notes, and PowerPoint presentations.
- Check Leo eMail frequently, at least twice a week.
- Discussions: Participate in frequent online class discussions, whole class or small groups. Most are asynchronous – not live. Occasional synchronous (real-time, live) ZOOM sessions require your participation when scheduled. Occasional opportunity, optional, to go onsite to schools and centers for guided observation.
- Quizzes: Read all assigned readings. Participate in frequent chapter quizzes as

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posted in D2L modules.

You will self-evaluate your professional behaviors TWICE, once at the beginning, and again at the end of the course.

Technical Skills Needed:

- Check LeoMail frequently, at least twice a week.
- Use AdobeReader to access required digital files.
- Create papers and presentations in MS Office, or Open Office, or Pages.
- Communicate regularly and robustly with colleagues and peers through Discussion. Participate in occasional Zoom sessions.

Instructional Methods

Class meets online in D2L. Assigned readings must be completed before class. Lectures include powerpoint, videos of children and adults talking, hands-on materials, and handouts. Active participation in class discussion is expected from everyone. Class leadership is welcomed and encouraged; bring a song, a book or story, a game to play, or insights from the readings or field work with your case study participant. Upload work in D2L, such as pictures of inspiring spaces, materials you are making for Gallery Walk and for your future classroom, and questions about designing Learning Environments for young children. Regular quizzes over the chapters in the textbook help deepen your knowledge of the course content. Timely completion of online discussions is required.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Successful students come to class prepared, on-time, and ready to engage and participate in active learning. Online work frequently requires extensive reading beyond the textbook.

Plan to work in D2L about two to three hours per week, with regular textbook reading assignments about two-hours every week. Time making materials will vary, but expect to spend around 10 hours total over the course of this semester.

GRADING

A holistic grading approach is sought. Rather than a scorecard with points, students must account for their mastery of the course objectives, and thus their grade in the course. This is done through the use of the Professional Behavior Survey. You will **self-evaluate your professional behaviors** TWICE, once at the beginning, and again at the end of the course.

Assessments (each worth 10 points, 10% final grade)

1. Readings, Discussions, Quizzes, & Participation (whole class, small group, & Literature Circle Book Club)
Aligns with Student Learning Outcomes: 1-6
2. Compile a digital notebook of 'Arts for Children in My Community' (and their teachers and families). Include a review of 'Arts for Children' events.
Aligns with Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 3-6

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3. Write five reviews of journal articles (academic, scholarly, peer-reviewed) regarding Arts Education.
Aligns with Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 2

Identify topic of interest for young children. Create an integrated, cross-discipline, unit, with emphases from at least three Arts Disciplines (dance, music, theater, visual). Present it in our class in three stages.

4. Unit: Introduction (by September 30)
5. Unit: Engaging Activities (by October 31)
6. Unit: Documentation (by November 30) – what are children doing? How do their activities connect their mastery of the unit objectives? What fails as you try to implement your unit? What else happens? Documentation could be anecdotal, video/audio recordings, artifacts, pictures, student feedback on what they learned, or other.

Aligns with Student Learning Outcomes: 1-6

Survey of Children's Literature

7. Annotate 50 children's books, categorized by arts disciplines
8. Participate in Literature Circle Book Club

Aligns with Student Learning Outcomes: 1-6

9. Final Summative Reflection

Aligns with Student Learning Outcomes: 1-6

10. Create, make, do, craft, compose, choreograph, write, sing, sculpt, paint an original project.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

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Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Preferred Form of Communication: For general questions, I prefer you to post your question in Virtual Office. That way others may see our communication and they may benefit. Please email me anytime to ask a question about your particular work. You may call or text my cell phone anytime between 9am-9pm, Mon-Fri, or up until 3pm on Saturdays.

Communication Response Time: Expect to hear back from me within the next working day or two. Please ask again anytime I don't answer promptly or completely.

Communicate with me as needed. Use Josh.Thompson@etamu.edu or C&I department office phone 903-886-5537 or cell phone (preferred).

Feedback on student work: Quizzes and online exams are auto-graded. Short answer questions require manual grading, as do all objects uploaded in assignments or online Gallery Walks. Generally, I catch up reviewing your work around the end of the month – please permit me two to three weeks to respond to your work with my feedback. If you don't hear from me within a month, please ask me to review your work again.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Attendance

Attendance online is expected; regular, consistent participation is important. We do important things every week of class – don't miss it. Excessive absences (less than 3 hours a week logged in to D2L, or 10 days without logging into D2L, or missing more than 20% of face to face classes) may prompt an administrative withdrawal.

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Participation

This course builds cumulative knowledge and insight; you cannot pass the class by just completing assignments all at one time. You must follow along and contribute as chapters, units, discussions, and projects unfold throughout the semester.

Grading

A holistic grading approach is sought. Rather than a scorecard with points, students must account for their mastery of the course objectives, and thus their grade in the course. This is done through the use of the Professional Behavior Survey. You will **self-evaluate your professional behaviors** TWICE, once at the beginning, and again at the end of the course.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.etamu.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University

Waters Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](http://www.etamu.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/)

www.etamu.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031 et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and ETAMU Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedure/s/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all ETAMU campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

ECE 537 Creative Expression in the Arts COURSE OUTLINE

This course will require four online synchronous video conference meetings:
Tuesday, September 8, October 13, November 10, and Tuesday, December 1
7:00–8:00 PM.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Unit 1 August	Arts Education Creativity Play Nature	Eisner article Virtual Lab 1: Creativity Lit Circle	Unit 1: Discussions, Quizzes Virtual Lab 1: Creativity
Unit 2 September	Guiding Principles Cultivating Creativity: Experiences and Activities	Goldhawk, pp. 1-23 3 Journal articles Virtual Lab 2 Lit Circle	Unit 2: Discussions, Quizzes Lit circle Children's Lit Book List, report 1 Arts for children digital notebook – report 1 Journal article reviews 1 & 2 Arts Education Unit: Introduction Virtual Lab 2: Experiences & Activities
Unit 3 October	Cultivating Creativity: Environments and Materials	Virtual Lab 3 Finish reading Lit Circle	Unit 3: Discussions, Quizzes Lit circle Children's Lit Book List, report 2 Arts for children digital notebook – report 2 Journal article reviews 3 & 4 Arts Education Unit: Engaging Activities Virtual Lab 3: Environments and Materials
Unit 4 November	Fostering a Creative Workplace	Virtual Lab 4	Unit 4: Discussions, Quizzes Lit circle Children's Lit Book List, report 3 Arts for children digital notebook – report 3 Journal article reviews 5 Arts Education Unit: Documentation

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Unit 5 December	Reflection	Becoming a reflexive practitioner	Unit 5: Discussions, Quizzes Reflections: Lit circle, Arts for children, Journal articles, Arts Education Unit Complete Professional Behavior Survey
All materials, assignments, discussions, and reflections due Wednesday, December 9, 2026 @ 8pm			