OVERVIEW:

Parenting is a universal experience. In the course of a year, tens of millions of women and men experience the joy and challenges of becoming new parents. The experience of parenting begins even before infants are born, continues throughout the life of the parent and child, and takes on different forms and functions over the course of the child and parent's development. Parents, children, practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and educators—and society at large—share a stake in parenting. Importantly, parenting is shaped by and a reflection of the broader cultural setting in which learning and development unfold. Using Italy as a case study, this course on culture and parenting examines parenting views and practices at different points in children's development, from various theoretical perspectives, and through a cultural lens. The goal is to highlight the diversity of ways that parents support children's integration into their unique cultural communities.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Students will learn about the ways that researchers have conceptualized and studied “parenting” and “culture”, and will be exposed to theories and common methods of study in both topic areas from a developmental perspective. Similarities and differences in parenting views and practices at different child ages and across different cultural groups around the globe are examined. Topics include: changes to parenting over the life course of the child; parenting influences on children’s development; and socio-cultural and economic influences on parenting.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of this class, the student will:

1) Critically read APA evidence-based empirical studies on parenting, culture, and child development;
2) Develop an understanding of theories and content areas (research findings and topics) in the areas of parenting, culture, and child development;
3) Appreciate the diversity of methods used to study parenting (e.g., interviews and observations) and be able to recognize the benefits and limitations of different methodological tools, particularly in different cultural settings;
4) Understand the balance that exists between cultural similarities in parenting (e.g., all parents share the task of preparing their children to be contributing members in their cultural communities) and cultural
differences (e.g., parents from different communities might selectively emphasize certain skills);
5) Reflect on how personal experiences have been shaped by cultural context, the ways that culture shapes peoples’ assumptions about parenting, and the ways that such assumptions shape parenting practices, and our theories around parenting and child development;
6) Identify topics of personal interest and present research and findings to the class;
7) Apply research and theory to everyday application; and
8) Strike a balance between (a) recognizing the unique beliefs, practices, and materials that characterize different cultural communities, and (b) appreciating the enormous heterogeneity of people who share a common culture.

These objectives are reflected in the reading and assignments that offer a combination of theoretical writings, essays, and empirical papers on parenting and culture. Readings, in-class discussions, lectures, and student presentations will highlight diversity in parenting practices around the world. Assignments, field observations, and visits to historical sites and museums will help students apply what they learn to observing parents and children, consider historical conceptions of parenting, and reflect on their personal experiences, all while embracing a unique cultural context.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Students will be responsible for the required readings and assignments. Topics for discussion will focus on theoretical and conceptual issues, methodological approaches to the study of parenting, and empirical findings from research studies. Students must be prepared to summarize and critique readings in class. Students will participate in small-group presentations and complete periodic assignments and in-class mini “quizzes” on readings. (Note that quizzes DO NOT require you to memorize small bits of information on readings, but rather, to get the main “take-home messages” based on the article key/central points. If you read the articles, and focus on “subheading” topics and main summaries and points you should do well on all quizzes; lowest quiz is dropped).

MEETING WITH PROFESSOR
Students will have ample opportunities to spend time with the professor in various planned excursions, informally, and through individual meetings (if requested).

ATTENDANCE
Students are expected to attend all classes and excursion, particularly in light of the short time frame of the course. Students who need to miss class unexpectedly must make every reasonable attempt to inform the Professor prior to the missed class. Students are responsible for any material that was missed. Additionally, students are expected to be to class on time, and to not leave early, unless there is a valid
excuse that has been cleared with the Professor. Unexcused absences and missing class will negatively affect a student's final grade.

**MOSES CENTER**
Students with disabilities must register with the Moses Center. If you require accommodations, please let the professor know via email and in person prior to the second week of class.

**GRADING AND EXAMS**
Mini quizzes will be given most classes (see syllabus). These largely multiple-choice, 10 item questions will target main take-homes of readings only.

The in-class presentations will be based on reading assignments that blend both research-based articles with theoretical readings. Flash-talks will be about 10 minutes (timed) and include: introduction to the topic and research questions around a specific population; overview of the types of methods used; main take-home messages about research knowledge on this population; and discussion and future directions. Non-presenting students will prepare questions for speakers during the class to stimulate discussion. This will ensure that everyone is a participant, not just those presenting papers. Student final presentations will be conducted in groups of ~3 students. Class time will be allotted for preparation and work on group presentations, with additional out of class meetings left to the discretion of students. Additional information on requirements for each of the presentation assignments will be provided during the semester.

| In-Class Flash Talk | 20% |
| Final Presentation   | 30% |
| Field Assignments    | 30% |
| Attendance & Participation | 20% |

Grading Scale:

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Friday July 6

Introduction to Parenting:

Conceptualizing Parenting & Influences on Child Development
Methodological Approaches to Studying Parenting

Topics of the Day:
• Introductions
• Discussion of Assignment #1: Personal Experiences (See description below)
• Lecture PT I: Why study parenting? What are the main functions or goals of parenting? What are the forms of parenting used to accomplish these goals? What are some general findings on parenting influences on children?
• Lecture PT II: How do we study parenting? What are some methods used?
• What are benefits and limitations to various methods of study including:
  o Surveys and self report
  o Child report
  o Observations
  o Qualitative methods
  o Twin and sibling studies

Reading Assignments:


Assignment: Personal Experiences

Prepare a journal entry of 2 paragraphs (this should hold possibilities for in-class discussion and sharing). Think about a specific experience you had as a child (before age 13) and how your parent(s) reacted to that experience. It could be something you did or something someone else did that affected you personally. How did your parents react? Did they give you advice? Did they behave a certain way? How did your parents’ views and/or practices affect your own thinking and behavior regarding this situation? Now think of a similar experience you had as an adolescent (13-18) (if possible). How did your parents react? Did they give you advice? Did they behave a certain way? How did your parents’ views and/or practices affect your
own thinking and behavior regarding this situation? What do you see as some differences between the earlier and later experience? Did your parents play a different role at these points in development? Did your parents’ cultural background play a role in how they reacted at either age?

Monday, July 9

Introduction to Culture
Conceptualizations and Links to Parenting
Methodological Approaches to the Study of Culture
Parenting in Context: Multiple Forces affect Parenting
[Afternoon visit to museum: Parents & children in art]

Topics of the Day:
• Lecture PT1: Conceptualizing Culture and Parenting
• Lecture PT2: Methods and Culture
• Lecture PT3: Parenting in Context
• Class Discussion: Based on readings for this week, what are some of the ways that culture is reflected in parenting? What are some key cultural differences in parenting across different societies?
• In-Class Discussion: Based on the reading, what are the challenges to using different methods discussed with families of different cultural backgrounds?
• In-Class Discussion of Assignment #2: Supports & Barriers (see below)

Assigned Readings:


**Assignment: Supports & Barriers to Parenting**
Interview a parent about the topic of supports and barriers to parenting. Ask the parent questions such as the following:

1) How do you think your **personal characteristics** and attributes (such as personality, education, gender, age, interests, views) have affected your parenting?

2) How do you think your **child’s characteristics** (temperament or personality, gender, interests, skills) have affected your parenting?

3) How do you think the **broader social context** – such as family, relative and friend supports, background ethnicity/culture, community resources such as childcare, employment opportunities, schools, religious institutions, and so forth -- have affected your parenting?

4) What do you see as challenges to being the type of parent you wish to be? In a perfect world, is there anything you would do differently about how you parent your child? What changes in your personal situation, child, or broader context might help you handle these challenges?

Bring notes to class to discuss what the parent responded to each of these questions.

**Begin preparing for Flash Talk Presentations: Parenting in different populations**
Prepare for individual presentations — research on your own during free time

**Example topics (but not limited to these):** Parenting of Preterm Infants; Parenting in Adoptive Families; Parenting in Foster Families; Parenting Children with Disabilities; Parenting Aggressive and Withdrawn Children; Child Temperament and Parenting; Parenting of LGBTQ children.

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**Tuesday, July 10**

**Developmental Approaches to Parenting: Infancy**

**Developmental Approaches to Parenting: Toddlerhood**

**Topics of the Day:**
• Lecture PT 1 & Discussion: What are the developmental needs of infants, and what role do parents play in these needs? What are the various methods used to study parenting in infancy? Which aspects of parenting are associated with which aspects of infant development?
• Lecture PT 2 & Discussion: What are the developmental needs of toddlers, and what role do parents play in these needs? What are the various methods used to study parenting of toddlers? Which aspects of parenting are associated with which aspects of toddler development?
• Full group discussion of assignment: Workshop for new parents (see below)

**Assigned Reading:**


**Assignment: Workshop for New Parents**
Imagine you are giving a workshop for two groups of parents. The first group is new parents who have just had their first child, and the child is 1 month of age. The second group is a group of parents who tell you they are struggling with the “terrible twos” and their newly independent toddlers. Write up a list of “5” lessons (1 sentence each lesson) for each group on what is known about parenting infants vs. toddlers based on your readings. (Select students will be asked to present their lessons to the class).

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**Wednesday, July 11**

**Developmental Approaches to Parenting: Childhood**

**Developmental Approaches to Parenting: Childhood & Adolescence**

**Developmental Approaches to Parenting: Adolescence & Monitoring**

**Topics of the Day:**
• Lecture PT 1: What are the developmental needs of young children, and what role do parents play in these needs? What are the various methods used to study parenting in the early childhood years? Which aspects of parenting are associated with which aspects of children’s development?
• Discussion of Workshop for parents of young children
• Discussion of Workshop for parents of adolescents
• Lecture PT 2: What are the developmental changes and skills that emerge in childhood, and what are the needs of children at this age? What role do parents play in supporting the needs of children in the middle years? What
are the various methods used to study parenting in childhood? Which aspects of parenting are associated with which aspects of child development?

- Lecture & Discussion: What are the developmental changes and skills that emerge in adolescence, and what role do parents play in adolescent development?

What are the various methods used to study parenting in adolescence?
Which aspects of parenting are associated with which aspects of adolescent development?

**Assigned Reading:**


**Assignment: Workshop for Parents of Elementary School Children**
Imagine you are giving a workshop for parents of children in elementary school. Write up a list of “5” lessons (1 sentence each lesson) about what is known about parenting children at this age based on your readings. (Select students will be asked to present their lessons to the class). Again, this should be no more than a 5-sentence assignment (to be handed in). Students may be asked to present their lessons to the class.

**Assignment: Workshop for Parents of Adolescents**
Imagine you are giving a workshop for parents of adolescents. Write up a list of “5” lessons (1 sentence each lesson) about what is known about parenting children at this age based on your readings. (Select students will be asked to present their lessons to the class).

**Afternoon Field Assignment: Observing Parenting**
Use observations to assess parenting on your own. Watch a parent-child interaction of your choice (in a park, a neighbor, a friend, on a subway). Think about what you observed and document some highlights of the interaction. What was the approximate age of child? Who was engaged with child? What were they doing? What did they talk about? How did the parent respond to child’s statements, questions, behaviors, etc.? Prepare a 1-page summary (font 12, double space, 1-inch margins).

Thursday July 12, Visit to Reggio Emilia
Assignment: Thoughts on visit and what you learned about parenting and child development from the observations

Friday July 13
Student 10-min Flash Talks: Parenting in Different Populations
[Afternoon: Students prepare final group presentations on own]

Topics of the Day:
- Student presentations
- Audience members should write down questions and be ready to be called upon to ask a question of the speaker
- Discussion of Reggio Emilia visit

Monday, July 16
Cultural Views and Practices: Focus on the United States
The Role of Culture: Values & Practices across the Globe

Topics of the Day:
- Lecture PT 1: How might we think about “culture” in such a diverse nation as the United States? Are there common underpinnings to parenting?
- Reflections in class (not formal assignment, but be ready to discuss): As a US child, or as an immigrant to the US, what do you personally think about parenting in the US?
- Lecture PT 2: Culturally valued practices: Focus on infant motor development

Assigned Reading:

Tuesday, July 17

Parenting in African-American Families
Parenting in U.S. Latino Families
Parenting in U.S. Chinese Families
[Afternoon: Students prepare final group presentations on own]

Topics of the Day:
• Quiz #9 on today’s readings
• Lecture PT 1: US African American Families with class discussion
• Lecture PT 2: US Latino Families with class discussion
• Lecture PT 3: US Chinese (and Chinese) Families with discussion

Assigned Reading:


**Assignment: Parenting in the popular press – Select and critique an article, media coverage, blog or artifact**

Select an article or artifact from newspapers, television, Youtube, social media, blogs or websites etc. that is geared to parents. It can be on a specific topic (ex. toilet training, feeding, curfews) or about principles of parenting in general. Post your article on the discussion board. Bring in a 1 page brief summary that addresses the following questions (and also be prepared to discuss in class):

- What are the basic premises of advice to parents (what are the general principles, even if you picked an article on a specific topic)?
- How do these fit (or not fit) with the points read in earlier research articles and chapters in Bornstein text?
- How does advice to parents emphasize the role of the child him/herself?
- Critique the advice that is given. Do you agree? Why or why not.

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**Wednesday, July 18**

**Site Visit to Bologna**

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**Thursday, July 19**

**Learning from Research: Policies & programs**

**Parenting in the Popular Press**

[Afternoon: Small groups practice for final presentations]

**Topics of the Day:**

- Full class discussion PT 1: Full class discussion of readings: Each student in class will be asked to make a 1 minute commentary on one of the 3 readings (no preparation required except notes)
- Full class discussion PT 2: Parenting in the press and social media
- Presentation by students on parenting in the popular press/media with individual critiques (see assignment description)
- Discussion of Bologna visit

**Assigned Readings:**

Teti et al. (2017). Supporting Parents: How six decades of parenting research can


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Friday, July 20

Final Presentations

*Topics of the Day:* 
- Final student presentations with lunch; class discussion & questions to speakers after each talk
- Reflections on what we learned and our experiences

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