Course Description: Through class discussion, guest speakers, role plays in class, videos, and readings, students will develop an understanding of what is involved in working with parents of young normal and exceptional children. We will examine the factors that are involved in this work and why it can be so exciting as well as frustrating. Reflective functioning, (‘the ability to reason about one’s own and others’ behavior in terms of mental states), will be an underlying theme that will run throughout the course and inform our discussions and thinking about the readings and assignments. Students will have an opportunity to reflect on their own personal and professional experiences as they relate to the topics being discussed. Different models of working with parents will be examined and students will be exposed to the various programs that presently exist in this work. Finally the course will focus on specific parent populations and the challenges that are involved. A major goal of the course will be to help students learn how to form partnerships with parents of different cultures through active listening and empathic inquiry. There will be an opportunity to discuss the differing roles of the teacher versus that of the social worker. Everyone in the course will be expected to participate in class discussions. The grade for the course will be based on both written work as well as active class participation.

Bank Street College has both a legal obligation and philosophical commitment to making “reasonable accommodations” in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Any student requiring specific accommodations should contact Olga Romero, Coordinator of the Office for Students with Disabilities, at 212-875-4468 in Room 636. If you have any particular learning needs that you would like me to know about, please inform me, Gail Gordon, as soon as possible.

Absences: If you are unable to attend class you can inform me through e-mail or a telephone call.

Required Texts:
Course Pack (available at village Copier)

The following books are not required, but are recommended as you build your own professional library:


**Course Requirements:**
Students are expected to attend class, do the required readings, and participate in class discussions. Please call the instructor ahead of time if you think you may be significantly late or absent from class.

1. For next week bring in a two or three page description of an encounter with a parent that caused you difficulty or that you feel you handled very well. It should be something that we can use for some role playing scenarios during the semester.

2. Reflection Papers: Please choose an article from the suggested readings in your syllabus from each of the following main topics and reflect on what you found most valuable in the article and how it has relevance to your present or future work with parents, The paper should be about 3 pages.
   - First paper due October 13, 2010—from transition to parenthood to ambivalence.
   - Second paper due November 3, 2010—early intervention/special needs children.
   - Third paper due December 1, 2010—intergenerational patterns to parenting against the odds.

3. Final paper due December 10th: An eight to ten page paper on a topic that interests you as it relates to working with parents, a case study of a family that you have been working with, or a group project from a list of ideas that will be handed out in class. More detailed instructions will be handed out in the next few weeks. Students will be expected to present their work to the class during the last two weeks.

**Course Syllabus:**

**Class #1: September 9,2009**

Introduction
Theme: Listening and talking with parents…..What is our role? How does the role of an educator in the early childhood field differ from the role of a social worker?

1. Introductions: Please print your first name in LARGE DARK letters so I can read your name and complete the questionnaire to the best of your ability. Each person will then introduce themselves and describe what kinds of experiences they have had in working with parents.
2. Break into groups of three or four and come up with a list of the ingredients that go into successful work with parents, taking into consideration the socio-economic group, ethnicity, and culture of the target population. List them in order of most to least important.

**Developing good listening skills: How important is this?**

**What is Active Listening?** (from “Look, Listen and Learn”)

Active listening means giving someone our undivided attention when they seek us out for a conversation. Rather than using just our ears, active listening requires us to use our intellect, feelings, and physical responses to give us information about the interaction. The four steps in listening actively include:

**Stop**-Stop what you are doing and pay attention. This tells speakers that you are focused on them, and they are important.

**Look**-Make eye contact (provided this is not culturally unacceptable) and face them directly. Look for nonverbal cues (facial expressions and body language) that may tell you something about the speaker’s thoughts and feelings.

**Listen**-Listen to what speakers are saying and pay attention to their words, tone, and body language. Realize that speakers may be communicating several messages (some unspoken.).

**Respond**-Respond in a way that tells speakers that you have not only been listening, but that you have understood them as well. Throughout the conversation, use eye contact, nods, “mmmmmmmm”, smiles, or even a touch to confirm you attentiveness (if appropriate). When the person is finished speaking, reflect back to her what she has shared in order to reinforce your understanding of the situation—ie: this is what I hear you saying.

4. Discussion: What often interferes with our ability to engage in active listening?

**Active Listening Exercise:**

Count off in twos, preferably with someone you do not know too well. You will take turns. One will be the active listener and the other will be the speaker. Choose an event from your childhood between one of your parents and yourself when you were young or if you are a parent, between you and your child. Describe it to the listener. Explain to them why the incident continues to resonate with you and maybe influence your work and/or parenting. The listener is to exercise active listening skills, but refrain from asking questions. After the first person has spoken, the second person is to describe what they heard. Take about 10 minutes and then change places. We will come back together and discuss what this experience was like.

**Class #2: September 22, 2010**

**Transition to Parenthood: Stages of development & psychic reorganization**

**Required Reading:**


Mayes, L. “Parental Preoccupation and Perinatal Mental Health”. Zero to three, 22 (6) 4-9.

Suggested Reading:


Class #3: September 29, 2010
Building an Alliance with Parents

Required Reading:

Pawl, Jeree H. “The Therapeutic Relationship as Human Connectedness: Being held in another’s mind”. Zero to Three, 15 (4) 1-5.


Dombro, Amy Laura and Claire Lerner. “Sharing the Care of Infants and Toddlers”. Spotlight on Young Children and Families. NAEYC. 2007, pp.16-19.
Suggested Reading:


Class #4: October 4, 2010
Reflective Functioning-Holding the Baby in Mind

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


Class #5: October 13, 2010
Ambivalence-its role in the parenting process

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


**Class #6: October 20, 2010**  
**Infant Assessment and Intervention**  
**Required Reading:**


Foley, Gilbert and Jane D. Hochman. “Programs, Parents and Practitioners: Perspectives on Integrating Early Intervention and Infant Mental Health”. *Zero to Three*. 18 (3) 13-18.

**Suggested Reading:**


Class #7: October 27, 2010
Birth of a Special Needs Child
Guest Speakers

Required Reading:


Weatherston, D. J. (1998). “She needed to talk and I needed to listen: an infant mental health intervention”. Zero to Three. 18 (3) 6-12.

Suggested Reading:


Class # 8: November 3, 2010
Special Needs Children and Parent Child Relationships

Required Reading

Suggested Reading:


Class # 9: November 10, 2010
Intergenerational Patterns
Guest Speaker

Required Reading:

Suggested Reading


Class #10: November 17, 2010
The Adult Side of Attachment

Required Reading:

Suggested Reading:

Class #11: December 1, 2010
Parenting Against the Odds
Guest Speaker

Required Reading:


Muzik, M., Cameron, H., Fezzey, A, & Rosenblum, K. “Motherhood in the Face of Trauma”.  Zero to Three. 29 (5) 28-33.

Suggested Reading:


Bromwich, R. (1985) “Vulnerable Infants and Risky Environments”. Zero to Three. 6 (2) 7-12.


Class #12: December 8, 2010
Understanding and Negotiating Cultural Difference

Guest Speaker

Required Reading:

McKenna, James. (2000). “Cultural influences on infant and childhood sleep biology and the science that studies it: toward a more inclusive paradigm. Zero to Three. 18 (3) 9-18.


Suggested Reading:


Class #13: December 15, 2010
Depression and Its Impact on Parenting

Required Reading:

Suggested Reading:


Class #14: December 22, 2010
Working with All Kinds of Families

Required Reading: Choose any three of these articles
