

**University of California, Santa Cruz • Spring 2009**  
**PSYC 118: Children in Extreme Circumstances**

Population growth, resource depletion, economic destabilization, epidemic, urbanization and other sociocultural forces have created growing numbers (estimated at 500 million) of children who are living in extreme poverty and risk. These children live in the midst of the world's epidemic areas, slums, famine areas, and war zones. They are an urgent concern of the UN and international organizations, who variously refer to them as "children in extreme circumstances" (CECs), "children in dire circumstances" (CDCs), "children in adversity," "orphans and vulnerable children" (OVC), and "children in extremely difficult circumstances" (CEDCs). These terms refer to children who live in, or who are chronically and repeatedly exposed to, multiple threats to their well-being with limited or no protection (also included are children who are institutionalized due to these circumstances). CECs include many street children, orphans, runaways, children with mentally ill parents, children living in extreme poverty, enslaved and indentured children, war-affected children, abandoned children, exploited children, displaced children, children whose parents have HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses.

This is a large interdisciplinary topic area of local and international scope. There are also many careers addressing these concerns during this era of humanitarian aid. There are hundreds of field reports, books and journals on the topic, originating from new research centers and graduate programs concerned with child poverty, the HIV/AIDS and malaria pandemics, public health, social work, international education and developmental psychology.

Although CECs can be found all over the world, they are concentrated in the slums of Latin America, in the Indian subcontinent, in urban and southeast Asia, and particularly sub-Saharan Africa. This course will explore CECs in their environments, cultures, and risk contexts. The survival strategies, developmental capacity, vulnerability and resilience of CECs will be examined. Educational needs, health conditions, economic resources, psychosocial needs and care options will be reviewed. Students will make psychosocial assessments of specific child populations. Students will explore and develop methods for improving children's well-being.

Class Times and locations:

MWF 9:30-10:40 am

Soc Sci 2, room 071

Section Times and locations:

Tu 8:30AM-9:40AM Kresge rm 325

Wed 12:30PM-1:40PM Soc Sci 2 179

Film nights:

Monday evenings

Soc. Sci. 2 room 71

Instructor: David A. "Tony" Hoffman

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Office: room 378, Social Sciences 2

Office hours: Mon & Fri 1 PM

Texts, readings, films, and resources:

A book at the Bay Tree bookstore: Geoff Foster, Carol Levine, and John Williamson (eds.). (2005). *A Generation at Risk: The Global Impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. New York: Cambridge U. Press.

Readings, lecture outlines, and resources are available on Tony's instructional web site <http://www.proper.com/tonyhoffman/index.php> (username is "student" and the password is "extreme").

Movies include *Aging Out*, *Born in the Brothels*, *Children Underground*, *City of God*, *Favela Rising*, *Girlhood*, *Born in the Brothels*, *Recycled Life*, *Rough Aunties*, *Stolen Childhoods*, *Terror's Children*, *War Dance* and perhaps some others. Students may watch these on film nights, or obtain them on their own and view them individually.

Objectives:

It is hoped that each student will (1) complete all assignments, (2) engage in all the required activities above, (3) gain an introductory understanding of the contexts of child adversity, (4) understand the interdisciplinary aspects of these contexts, (5) understand the

basics of psychosocial intervention, (6) gain an awareness of current events and dilemmas creating or maintaining child adversity.

#### Assignments, evaluations and grades:

Students are to complete five movie reviews, sit for four in-class quizzes, attend sections, complete a group project, and participate in a community education project. These projects will involve collection and display of psychosocial intervention materials about CECs to the class and the larger UCSC community.

An optional paper can also be submitted (100 points). This paper is intended as a make-up for missed or incomplete work, including group projects. The paper assignment is posted on the class web site.

Evaluations and grades will be based on each student's performance on the movie reviews, quizzes, assignments, projects and attendance mentioned above. Evaluations of students will in part be based on timeliness. Quizzes cannot be taken late without proof of dire circumstances. Attendance is expected in class and sections, and may be a factor in grading and evaluations. Helpful and productive participation may be a factor in grading and evaluations.

Five of the film essays will be worth 10 points each. Attendance at five sections will be worth 10 points each. Three of four quiz grades will be counted (or the highest of four). Each quiz will be worth 100 points. The group project will be worth 100 points per participant. Participation in the community education project will be worth 100 points. There will be options for other "extras": the paper mentioned above and extra film essays (5 points per film). Helpful discussion and assistance will act as tiebreakers in grading, and will be noted in evaluations.

**A tentative** grading breakdown: A>570, A->560, B+>550, B>525, B->515, C+>505, C>475, D>460. 450 points or below will be graded according to Tony's discretion.

All grading and evaluation is criterion-based, which means that students are evaluated on objective criteria rather than on a curve. So all students have the opportunity to get an A. There is to be no competition; collaborative and cooperative learning is expected. Students are strongly encouraged to form study groups.

#### This class is located in an academic honor zone:

Students must recognize that the class is a community of learners. Students are asked to honor, respect, and facilitate the learning of all students. Students should come to class prepared with the assigned readings completed. Please help class routines and procedures run smoothly. It is expected that students will engage in activities that help others learn. This includes the use of constructive discussion and inquiry, sharing learning materials, assisting in research, cooperating and collaborating with others. Students are expected to do nothing to harm the educational experience of other students in the class. This expectation applies to appropriate behavior during class: arriving on time for class, avoiding unnecessary disruptions, etc. Cell phones, beepers and noisy electronics must be turned off in class. Students should facilitate instruction, help other students voice their knowledge, help in the expression of ideas, and avoid the use of irrelevant or tangential questions. Don't come to class to sleep (you will be awakened and asked to leave). Do not come to class to read a book or newspaper, nor to listen to your iPod or MP3 player. If you will be taking notes using your laptop, please do not use the laptop to answer email or to surf the web.

Collaborative and group learning is encouraged in this course. However, all work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. All work for submission needs to be in ink. Tony assumes all students are familiar with UCSC's policy on academic honesty and integrity (available at: [http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic\\_integrity/undergraduate\\_students/](http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students/)). This is a policy the class will strictly adhere to. Cheating on exams will result in failure and dismissal from the class. As in all UCSC classes, plagiarism is prohibited. The ideas and writings of others are shared contributions to our knowledge; the use of others' work (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly cited and documented. Students who have any questions about academic honesty issues as they pertain to this course should consult with Tony or a TA before completing any course requirements.

Save and back up your work in this class! As with all UCSC courses, students are responsible for keeping papers, exams, and other records documenting their progress in this course. It is expected that students will copy or back up all work on disk or hardcopy. If material is misplaced, students must be able to reproduce it if requested. Disk crashes and/or lost materials do not excuse a student from producing required work.