Final Exam Guidelines

As stated in the syllabus, your 3rd exam is a comprehensive take-home final. For 10 weeks now, you’ve been spending time in a school placement, applying course material to a real-world setting. You’ve been doing this because Psy 240 is a civic engagement class. In terms of Pacific’s goals for the civic engagement graduation requirement, this is what’s stated on the CCE website: Pacific University prepares students for lives as informed and active citizens… Civic engagement can facilitate learning, develop active citizens, and improve communities. Students can gain new insights on academic subjects, information for career exploration, and the opportunity to acquire new skills by serving the community. Working with others, you can experience the power of cooperating to create change. And, giving back to the community through a variety of programs and activities can be deeply rewarding.

Your final exam is designed to help organize your thinking about how you might continue to develop into active citizens who use their knowledge for good. As well, through this exam, you will show me how well you have met the goals of this course, as stated in the syllabus, in particular, the following: Satisfactory completion of this course suggests that you will:

- be familiar with the theoretical explanations of constancy and change in behavior over time
- be familiar with normative trends in cognitive, self-regulatory, social-emotional, and personality development from infancy through middle childhood
- be well versed in how nature and nurture work together to shape the growth of human cognition, self-regulation, social-emotional awareness, and personality
- understand some of the social and health issues families face today

Materials needed for this assignment are:

- Text book + reading annotations
- Class notes
- Observation reports
- The following two blog posts written by Dr. Peter Gray
  - Causes of students’ emotional fragility: five perspectives
  - The decline of play and rise in children’s mental disorders

These blog posts nicely capture an ongoing national discussion and debate about healthy child development and the role parents and schools play in the process. In class, you have spent several weeks now reading, thinking, and observing child development and discussing what causes positive versus negative outcomes therein, too. This assignment requires you to piece together what you have been learning and to write an “open letter” to a targeted audience of stakeholders (parents, teachers, politicians), in an attempt to steer the debate towards a positive resolution.

Step one: Choose your audience and make sure you understand the core of the debate

_____ Parents: “helicopter” on one side, “free-range” on the other. Whereas no one is directly telling parents to “helicopter,” aspects of society make it difficult for parents not to. On the other side, “free-range” parents are getting in trouble with the law, where in several cases, parents who deliberately gave their children some freedoms were charged with neglect. Write a letter to parents helping them understand the notion of autonomy and control and explain “best practice” as you understand it.

_____ Teachers/education philosophy: “High stakes testing and emphasis on outcomes” on one side, “unschooling or alternatives and charters” on the other. As teachers create their teaching philosophies, they also have to find a job that will let them act accordingly. Which side should they work for: the public or the charter/alternative/private side? Help teachers understand “best practice” and which route will best help them actualize it, as they seek thoughtful employment.

_____ Politicians: on one side, a push for common core standards and reduced electives; on the other…well, there isn’t another side in the politicians’ minds. They maintain an atmosphere of high stakes accountability that limits the freedom schools and teachers have in designing their own curricular emphases. The debate then is “the people” versus “the government,” as many US citizens feel that the government’s choices aren’t in the best interest of our youth. Explain how society can best nurture youths’ psychological growth and development, and write a letter to your local politicians explaining the perspective and how YOU would like to see them support the citizenry, therein.

*Note: you may need to do a little more research to build your understanding of the debate. A web-search of popular press resources is acceptable for this. Please reference what you find properly.
Step two: Gather your resources and outline an empirically based explanation of how to best nurture healthy psychological growth. Make material selections that best suit your target audience. Make sure you include material on the following aspects of our course:

a. Cognitive growth (cover at least two)
   i. Healthy “executive functions”
   ii. Establishment of and continued growth in the knowledge base
   iii. Use of memory in context (semantic, episodic, autobiographical)

b. Social-cognitive growth (cover at least two)
   i. Self concept and evaluation
   ii. Theory of Mind
   iii. Moral behavior

c. Social-emotional & Personality growth (cover at least three)
   i. Self regulation
   ii. Emotional awareness and control
   iii. Expression of empathy
   iv. Temperament
   v. Attachment

d. Other inclusions – we’ve discussed other information that might be relevant too; select from this list to further build up your case
   i. Ecological Systems Theory
   ii. Intelligence
   iii. Social learning theory
   iv. Media exposure
   v. Early Childhood Educational Curricula: Tools of the Mind, Montessori, Forest Kindergarten

Step 3: Write your letter.

The tone of your letter and some inclusions will differ depending on the chosen stakeholder, but the theme of the letter will be the same for each:

1. Explain what the **goal of healthy development** should be. **What IS healthy psychological development**, and what does a healthy positive trajectory look like (i.e., in terms of milestones) in the first 10 – 13 years of life?

2. Explain how nature and nurture work together to shape healthy psychological development, pointing out what caregivers should look for along the way, to ensure that they are indeed following “best practices”

3. Carefully present your work:
   a. Proofread
   b. Include a title page
   c. Properly cite your sources in either APA or MLA style
   d. Include a Reference page (APA) or Works Cited (MLA)

Papers are due in print form, in my office, on Thursday December 10th by 2:30. Later papers not accepted.