

**CHLD 185.2 Course Outline as of Fall 2019****CATALOG INFORMATION**

Dept and Nbr: CHLD 185.2 Title: CREATIVE OUTDOOR ENVIRON

Full Title: Creative Outdoor Environments for Young Children

Last Reviewed: 9/8/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	1.50	Lecture Scheduled	1.50	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	26.25
Minimum	1.50	Lab Scheduled	0	4	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	1.50		Contact Total	26.25
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 52.50

Total Student Learning Hours: 78.75

Title 5 Category: AA Degree Applicable

Grading: Grade or P/NP

Repeatability: 00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

Also Listed As:

Formerly: CHLD 85.2

**Catalog Description:**

This course examines appropriate and creative outdoor learning environments for young children, infants through school-age. Planning and assessment methods for designing center, Family Child Care, and early elementary environments will be explored and applied. Environmental factors that enhance learning and development will be a focus.

**Prerequisites/Corequisites:****Recommended Preparation:**

Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

**Limits on Enrollment:****Schedule of Classes Information:**

Description: This course examines appropriate and creative outdoor learning environments for young children, infants through school-age. Planning and assessment methods for designing center, Family Child Care, and early elementary environments will be explored and applied. Environmental factors that enhance learning and development will be a focus. (Grade or P/NP)

Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:

Transfer Credit:

Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

## **ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:**

<b>AS Degree:</b>	<b>Area</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
<b>CSU GE:</b>	<b>Transfer Area</b>	Effective:	Inactive:

<b>IGETC:</b>	<b>Transfer Area</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
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<b>CSU Transfer:</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
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<b>UC Transfer:</b>	Effective:	Inactive:
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**CID:**

**Certificate/Major Applicable:**

Both Certificate and Major Applicable

## **COURSE CONTENT**

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Describe, justify, and evaluate elements of high quality outdoor learning/play environments for children birth through age eight.
2. Apply knowledge about the importance of outdoor play to the design of children's play spaces and outdoor curriculum.

**Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Understand the history and types of outdoor programs.
2. Explain the developmental benefits of outdoor play.
3. Describe elements of high quality outdoor play environments.
4. Plan and evaluate children's outdoor learning environments using current design and safety standards.
5. Identify ways to meet the developmental needs of different age groups (birth through age eight) and individual children through environmental design in early childhood settings.
6. Utilize parents and community stakeholders to effect changes in school and neighborhood outdoor environments.
7. Create age-appropriate curriculum in the outdoor environment.

**Topics and Scope:**

I. Importance of Outdoor Play

A. History of outdoor play in early childhood programs

1. Changes in outdoor play over time
2. Joe Frost's theory of playground design
3. Adventure playgrounds

B. Benefits of outdoor play

1. Meeting developmental needs

2. Promoting health and exercise
3. Connecting with the natural world
  - a. Nature Deficit Disorder
  - b. Environmentalism
4. Risk taking and social skills
- C. Outdoor school programs - Nature-based schools
  1. Nature-enhanced schools
  2. Forest schools
- II. Design of Outdoor Play Spaces
  - A. Current playground safety standards
    1. Consumer Product Safety Commission
    2. California Community Care Licensing (Title 22)
    3. Insurance considerations
    4. California Educational Code requirements
  - B. Age appropriate environment design
    1. Environments for Infants
    2. Environments for Toddlers and Twos
    3. Environments for Preschool
    4. Environments for School-Age Children
  - C. Universal Design elements for inclusion of children with special needs
  - D. Use of space that supports play
    1. Sociodramatic play
    2. Constructive play
    3. Exploratory play
    4. Sensory play
    5. Social play
    6. Games with rules
  - E. Appropriate and innovative equipment and materials
    1. Commercial
    2. Natural
  - F. Supportive environments for caregivers/teachers
  - G. Incorporating gardens and other natural elements
    1. Aesthetics
    2. Safety
    3. Maintenance
  - H. Supervision as a design consideration
- III. Planning for Environment Changes
  - A. Assessment of outdoor learning environments
    1. Choosing tools to address design and safety factors
    2. Using assessment tools
  - B. Layout of space and activity zones
  - C. Steps in planning for large scale playground building
  - D. Working with stakeholders
- IV. Curriculum in Outdoor Environments
  - A. Planning for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) curriculum
    1. Gardens
    2. Sensory Play
  - B. Planning for active play
    1. Games, equipment and loose parts
    2. Social and emotional development
  - C. Planning for arts, music and literacy outdoors
  - D. Planning for outdoor dramatic play

## Assignment:

1. Reading of assigned text and handouts (approximately 150 pages total)
2. Participation in discussion about outdoor environment theory and design
3. Choose and assess an outdoor environment using a standardized rating scale
4. Written evaluation based on the rating scale assessment (3-5 pages)
5. Create and document changes to the design of an outdoor environment (Written paper [approx. 3 pages] or presentation)
6. Plan for long-term changes to an outdoor environment, including design diagram, description (3-5 pages), and presentation
7. Written curriculum plan for an outdoor activity (3-4 pages)
8. Written reflection on readings (2-3 pages)
9. Written rationale for the importance of outdoor play (1-2 pages)

## Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

**Writing:** Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

Evaluation of a learning environment, curriculum plan, rationale for the importance of outdoor play, description of environment design

Writing  
50 - 60%

**Problem Solving:** Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

Create and document changes to outdoor environment

Problem solving  
10 - 15%

**Skill Demonstrations:** All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

Design an outdoor environment; assessment of an environment using standardized rating scale; presentations

Skill Demonstrations  
20 - 30%

**Exams:** All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

None

Exams  
0 - 0%

**Other:** Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

Class participation; discussions

Other Category  
10 - 20%

## Representative Textbooks and Materials:

Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments. 2nd ed. Curtis, Deb and Carter, Margie. Redleaf Press. 2014 (classic)

The Great Outdoors: Advocating for Natural Spaces for Young Children (Revised Edition).  
Rivkin, Mary and Schein, Deborah. NAEYC. 2014 (classic)

Instructor prepared materials