FULLY ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

**Course Identifier:** ISS 318  
**Course Name:** Lifespan Development across Cultures  
**Department:** Center for Integrative Studies  
**College:** Social Science

**Primary contact name, phone number, and email**

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**Faculty and Staff Involved in Developing and Offering the Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>MSU Affiliation</th>
<th>Project Role</th>
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<tbody>
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* [position when activity was developed]

**SEMESTER**  
**NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED:**  
Summer 2009  
Session I, May 18-July 2, 2009  
60 students enrolled

**I. Course Description (400 word limit)**

ISS 318 covers aspects of human development from prenatal development until death. Students explore how culture impacts human behavior. Many aspects of biopsychosocial development are covered such as physical development and health, cognition, language socialization, views of self, gender, family, and social relationships. Students analyze major theories and become familiar with the work of key researchers. ISS 318 was a new addition to the ISS curriculum in the Fall of 2007 when it was taught for the first time as a blended/enriched course. The restricted enrollment of 25 students meant that many interested students could not enroll; therefore, development began for this fully online course with approximately double the number of students.

Palloff and Pratt (2009) note the importance of creative assessment practice if you want to “reduce the gap between what was taught and what was learned.” Students are particularly enthusiastic about the “Virtual Field Trip” assignment. In this assignment students participate in an instructor-designed web-based field trip to London to visit an operating theatre that was in use over a century ago. But then the table is turned and each student designs a virtual field trip that supplements our course material. Finally, the students go on one another’s field trips. Each step of the assignment is scaffolded to ensure

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San Francisco: Jossey-Bass — A Wiley Imprint. Quote is from page xii. Discussion of creative assessment practices is on page x.
student understanding of the assignment and detailed grading rubrics are provided in ANGEL. As Robin Smith (2008) points out, the challenge in an online course should be the course content, not the navigation or the directions for assignments.²

Many low-stakes methods are used to assess learning. Students complete “cross-cultural explorations” which focus on topics such as the cultural basis of cleanliness or humor. Attention-getting “cultural dialogue” questions are vivid FLASH illustrations that encourage students to make “educated guesses” before reading each chapter. Although these questions are worth only one point each, few students skip them. Curiosity leads students to follow up on their hunches by reading the text and listening to the online lectures! The Custom Media website provides detailed examples of course concepts through short video and audio clips. Students complete one-page reaction papers analyzing media materials; they integrate media with personal experiences and with theoretical concepts from Adobe Presenter lectures and from the textbook. Additional resources include videos with key cross-cultural researchers and video field trips recorded by vuDAT. Students complete seven online surveys throughout the semester in order to give feedback on their course experiences.

II. Learning and Interaction Goals of the Fully-Online Course

A. Students feel as warm and welcome online as they do face-to-face through an integrated website design

When students enter the course I want them to know that they have “walked through the right door” and that they are welcome. Conrad and Donaldson point out that students may be more passive until they feel comfortable in a course and in an online course building trust is even more important given the uncertainty involved when they don’t meet instructors face-to-face.³

The cultural theme of the style sheet designed by vuDAT expresses warmth.


The title page of the Adobe Presenter slides has a photo of a buggy driver that I took at the Gap of Dunloe in Ireland. They will learn of his story later in the semester. His livelihood depends on an intergenerational business, but today’s Irish youth have different plans. He isn’t just a “picture”. His story is part of the class, too. I’ve included my own photo in each lecture to encourage a personal connection with online students.

The students will find the photo of our buggy driver at our Custom Media Site along with other familiar photos as welcoming symbols.

In order to build rapport from the first day I also greet the students in an online video greeting. A transcript of the greeting is provided as a means of accessibility.

We also made sure that students got to know Nidal (and her baby daughter, Zaila!).

Welcome to Lifespan Development across Cultures

Meet Nidal Karim

Hi! I’m Nidal Karim and I will be your Instructor for ISS 318 this semester. I can be contacted by email at nkarim@msu.edu, and I am always happy to chat during online office hours (Mondays 6-7pm, Tuesdays 8-9pm). I am currently working on my dissertation project which is an exploration of help seeking behavior among domestic violence survivors with children.

My husband, Paul, and I are the parents of Zaila Isadora. She was born at home on March 20 (the spring equinox).
B. Learning goals are explained before the semester begins and interwoven throughout the semester through diverse activities

During spring semester I emailed students and invited them to attend an optional face-to-face orientation to answer any questions about taking an online course, using ANGEL, and completing assignments online once they are far from MSU. Basic ANGEL tasks were demonstrated. A copy of the textbook was available for students to review in order to see if the content matches their expectations and to make sure that they buy the correct textbook at the bookstore. Students could ask specific questions about the course because in the invitation email students received the syllabus containing all assignments, deadlines and the following learning goals of ISS 318:

- To identify key themes of the cultural context of human development, including major theories and concepts of development in different cultural/historical contexts as well as influential researchers and theorists.
- To examine how theories of development reflect the cultures from which they arise, thus evaluating how theories from one culture may lead to misinterpretations when applied to the developmental experiences of individuals in another culture.
- To understand the research methods used in lifespan developmental psychology, anthropology and sociology (how we know what we know!) and to think critically when analyzing/generalizing developmental research across cultures (what we know!).
- To demonstrate how individuals stay the same over time (continuities) and how individuals change (discontinuities) over the lifespan and across cultures.
- To analyze developmental issues of global concern (i.e., “globesity” epidemic among children in many nations).
- To integrate course concepts into your own life experiences.

Students, therefore, had a good sense of the learning goals and whether an online course was a good fit for their learning styles. For students unable to attend, a copy of the orientation presentation was posted in an ANGEL group site that all students could access, ensuring that students unable to attend the face-to-face session could review details later. In this way, all students had the opportunity to make informed choices about their personal learning styles and the course. They could decide whether ISS 318 best met their needs for meeting the ISS requirement. These points were emphasized again through the Day One Orientation when the class opened. Examples of how learning goals were woven through activities and assessments throughout the semester are illustrated in the following sections.

III. Points of Interest and Innovation

A. Cultural Dialogues requiring active engagement introduce each unit

“The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion –these are the most valuable coins of the thinker at work. But in most schools guessing is heavily penalized and is associated somehow with laziness.”  

This colorful FLASH activity starts the unit off with an engaging active learning exercise that requires reflection. Before the students read the chapters they make their courageous leaps and dig into their existing knowledge! After all, they haven’t done the reading and they haven’t viewed any material thus reducing performance anxiety. Plus, they get one point for hazarding a guess. The C-DIALS as they came to be called (the nickname fits easily in the ANGEL Gradebook and rolls off the tongue, too!) are the first assignments of the week. Their answers only have to be the length of a “thought bubble” and once submitted students see the dialogue of two individuals as well as a preview of coming attractions!

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This is especially important in an online class that lasts half a regular semester. The cultural dialogues are like the trailer of a movie but better – each student has made a personal investment by guessing what lies ahead. It piques the interest a bit and motivates the students to open that textbook, click that lecture and start exploring that cross cultural exploration!

Week One: C-DIAL1

Soon students are comfortable making the courageous leaps mentioned by Jerome Bruner in his quote. They are willing to bring forth their ideas knowing that uncertainty is part of the scientific method. When the course begins, they know that the CDIAL is worth one point and that leads them to seek out this activity. But they quickly realize that they enjoy the FLASH activity and curiosity leads them into the chapter.

“The horse and I were moving about. That DOES sound different than the way I describe riding a horse. What IS this Whorf-Sapir hypothesis anyway?”

Later in the semester when we discuss culture and sexuality the students notice that this hypothesis shows up in everyday life – for example, on the MSU Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender Resource Center Website!
B. Cross Cultural Exploration activities provide insights into different cultural perspectives

In the blended format of ISS 318, the Cross Cultural Explorations were tear-out sections of our custom book. These had been effective in meeting the learning outcomes face-to-face but they would need to be completely redesigned for an online class. The ANGEL assessment feature was used to deliver the activities, replacing the print format. Students were able to discuss their reactions in discussion forums following explorations. An example of a question from the Cross Cultural Exploration on Socialization which deals with cleanliness is shown. Should one wash one’s body before entering a bathtub of clean water? The discussions following these activities proved to be quite interesting and to reduce ethnocentrism. vuDAT added the winsome illustrations.

C. Virtual Field Trip assignment takes advantage of the online environment and the ANGEL rubric feature to meet learning outcomes

Among the goals identified in the syllabus was to identify key themes of the cultural context of human development, including major concepts of development in different cultural/historical contexts. Aldrich\(^5\) notes that we still don’t know all the reasons why highly interactive virtual environments are so effective in terms of long term retention among students. But he suggests that emotional involvement involving fantasy, and cognitive aspects involving curiosity may play a role. Much of the research in this area has involved games. But it is likely that assignments that involve the same components may lead to similar positive student outcomes. The virtual field trip assignment is designed as a student-driven assignment. Students learn of Vygotsky’s theory and the concepts of scaffolding earlier in the course; the assignment itself is presented as an example of scaffolding. Students are given a partially completed example of a virtual field trip that meets all the necessary criteria for the assignment. Then they design a virtual field trip to any part of the world that they desire. The Grading Rubric is provided in ANGEL.

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One student decided to take us to Tokyo, Japan. What would we find relating to the course when we went to the Japan Folk Crafts Museum? He noted that, “This site displayed Japanese traditional folk crafts in its gallery … which were made by anonymous craft people and used by the masses. … For example, through the lifespan, every Japanese girl should have at least three suits of formal Kimono: the first one was prepared for child-ceremony from 1-year-old to 3-year-old; the second one was for the rite of passage at twenty; and the third one was for marriage which should be the best one in life.” He went on to explain aspects of gender that had been discussed in the course.

Another student led us on a journey to Berlin, Germany where we entered the Jewish Museum. The student mentions different exhibits that would be highlights to visit:

“The first one would be the “Matters of Faith” exhibit: http://www.jmberlin.de/site/EN/01-Exhibitions/01-Permanent-Exhibition/new-in-the-permanentexhibition.php This exhibit uses multi-media devices to compare and contrast the worlds of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The reason I find this important to visit would be because it provides a perfect example of how cross-cultural perspective works and expands our awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the similarities and differences of each religion.”

The land around Slemish, Ireland speaks to our students as they listen to Legends in the Landscapes. “Does landscape shape our imaginations?” “Do legends spring from the rocks like water?” They do when you go on a virtual field trip to Ireland! Irish music began as soon as we reached the website and an Irish voice drew us across the pond! As I read the students’ papers and traveled on their virtual field trips it became clear that the students had made thoughtful choices based on personal interests.
During the grading process, students get detailed feedback through the ANGEL rubric as well as comments in the drop box comment area. Students see the rubric ahead of time. When it is graded the appropriate box turns BLUE in ANGEL. A score is automatically placed in the corresponding row box; scores can be manually changed to a higher or lower score in the range for that cell.

Rubric Scores for Virtual Field Trip Drop Box
5 points possible (overall score will be calculated as follows):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Exceptional/Peer-Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part One: Virtual Field Trip</td>
<td>8 points</td>
<td>3.8/4.0</td>
<td>Information has little or nothing to do with the assigned topic. Information may not be accurate.</td>
<td>3.5/4.0</td>
<td>3.0/4.0</td>
<td>2.5/4.0</td>
<td>2.0/4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Two: Geographic Area</td>
<td>4.0 points</td>
<td>3.5/4.0</td>
<td>Information has little or nothing to do with the assigned topic. Information may not be accurate.</td>
<td>3.2/4.0</td>
<td>2.8/4.0</td>
<td>2.4/4.0</td>
<td>2.0/4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Three: Through the Kildare Window</td>
<td>4.0 points</td>
<td>3.5/4.0</td>
<td>Information has little or nothing to do with the assigned topic. Information may not be accurate.</td>
<td>3.2/4.0</td>
<td>2.8/4.0</td>
<td>2.4/4.0</td>
<td>2.0/4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Four: Virtual Field Trip</td>
<td>8 points</td>
<td>3.8/4.0</td>
<td>Information has little or nothing to do with the assigned topic. Information may not be accurate.</td>
<td>3.5/4.0</td>
<td>3.0/4.0</td>
<td>2.5/4.0</td>
<td>2.0/4.0</td>
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22.5 Total Points (24 points max)

After all virtual field trips were graded, the assignments were opened up so that the students could go on one another's field trips. They were not able to see the graded rubrics and were not aware of the grades that had been assigned to the virtual field trips of their classmates. Students were aware from the beginning of the semester that they would travel on one another’s virtual field trips and I believe this added to the high quality of many of the assignments. Below is the shortened version of the assignment that was posted in ANGEL (the more detailed version was posted there as well):

Choose one of the Virtual Field Trips and visit that site. Take a look at the Must See Exhibit and other highlights mentioned in the paper. Then back and tell us about your experience on the field trip - think of this as an academic

(1) Make the subject line clear - we should know which virtual field trip you are exploring and what aspect of the site you focused on - did it highlight an aspect of the course? Do you see additional links with the course? With your own life experiences? Look for a field trip that has not been explored yet!

(2) Reply to another student’s post - read about another student’s experience on a virtual field trip and see if you are able to add to the insights and relate it to the course (in other words, "Great site" would not be an appropriate post. Pointing out that a children’s museum in Ireland offers tour brochures in ten languages could possibly have significance in terms of how the children saw the exhibits according to Whorf’s hypothesis, on the other hand, would be a thoughtful post. [Brochures in many languages are provided, by the way, at the museum at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland].

Note: If you are one of the first students to post you will want to come back at a later time to reply. In fact, you will want to come back and see if anyone has gone on your field trip, yet.
Students had made personal investments in their own virtual field trips and their posts reflected respect for the contributions made by their classmates. Yuliya suggested that her classmates listen to an NPR story and then go to the Ukraine and visit specific sites:

“Remembering Chernobyl- The value of family and coping with health and healing (Chapters 9 and 10) This trip to the NPR Chernobyl remembrance was very informative and touched upon several course topics. There were many links to choose from, including debates on multiple issues surrounding the disaster, the effects on the land and people, and how the area has attempted to recover. The most informative and thought provoking section was the link to the survivors’ stories. The issues the survivors spoke about dealt directly with many concepts covered in chapters 9 and 10. For example, the values of family and culture in the cultural context is discussed in chapter 9. I learned that many cultures looked upon their families and continuing their culture through children. However, one of the many health consequences people in the area around the disaster faced was infertility. Now they were forced to deal with the emotional and physical consequences this fact brought about. In chapter 10, issues of health and healing were discussed. There are many ways to approach health and healing from different cultural perspectives. The people whose health was severely compromised during this disaster were forced to look at their options when it came to treatment. In many cases, the disease they dealt with was cancer.

Though I do not have any life experiences that could compare with this type of tragedy, I understand how important cultural understanding is when it comes to health, healing and matters of the family. Just experiencing some kind of first hand information, from a survivor’s story, made me realize the vast effects this event had on the people involved.”

Ariana leads on this field trip to gain perspective on the school culture within other countries. This field trip is focused in Sumut Rakan City, Thailand at the Sriwittayapaknam School and gives us a perspective on how the Thai culture educates their youth in comparison to other cultures. This website also gives a picture of how cognition and religion are entwined within a learning environment. The removal of the shoes upon entering the building and the bowing towards their instructors are both good examples. Class schedules are scheduled around Buddhist holidays. I can definitely correlate Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development theory to this website as there are many systems that are influential to their child’s learning.

V. Evidence of Effectiveness with Students

Student comments are positive in regard to the online version of ISS 318. For some it gives them the freedom of enjoying what they are learning:

“By not having the usual distractions of a classroom the online environment allows me to engage the course material as much as I like without feeling “nerdy” or “out of place.”
Others seem surprised that a 4-credit class in a half-semester format isn’t as painful as they anticipated!

“To be honest, the set up of the course and the weekly checklists make the fast pace not as bad as I would have thought.”

Different students tend to comment on different aspects of the course, indicating that it is meeting the needs of various learning styles:

“I like that we can watch the lectures online, and that I can pause the lecture whenever I want to catch up on writing, so that I jot down everything I hear that isn’t on a slide. I also like that our grade isn’t solely based on exams alone. I’m not a great test-taker, and I appreciate there being other aspects involved in the calculation of our overall grade. I also think that, while dense and sometime a lot to take in, our book is well written and an interesting read, which keeps my attention (for the most part anyway), making it easier to learn information in this class.”

“I enjoy the Cross-Cultural Explorations because they help me relate the course material to what I think. They also help me to explore how I feel about different things, such as cleanliness [sic], compared to other people in other cultures.”

“I really like looking at media resources because it helps connect what I’m learning to my own personal opinions about topics and issues. This is a good learning style for me because I’m very opinionated and love thinking about things without having terms and ideas shoved down my throat!”

“I really like the checklists. Because the class is faster-paced, it is nice to have a master-list from the professor that shows everything that is due that week. That way, we know that we aren’t missing anything. I also like that although there are things due every week, we can still take all of the assignments according to our own pace. This makes it less stressful but still forces us to be smart with our time management.”

“I like that I can do several different assignments to learn this course because this reduces my pressure for the exam and also it’s easier way to absorb what I’m studying.”

“Having media to relate the course readings to really helps me to learn how the material is relevant in real-life situations.”

“I enjoy the cultural dialogue assignments because they allow me to assess what I already know about the topic. I also think the media reaction papers are good because I learn better by reflecting on the material after I have read and listened to the lectures.”

“I'm an experienced learner who's taken a lot of online courses. This one is definitely one of the best designed one's I've ever taken.”

Since this was the first semester that I introduced the Virtual Field Trip as an assignment, I was curious about the value of going on one another’s field trips. I asked the students in a survey question to tell me what they had learned that they didn’t know before they had gone on another classmate’s trip. Fifty-four of the sixty enrolled students responded. I am including the first 10 responses as a sample.
There were several cultural points that I did not know. The virtual field trip was quite educational for me. It definitely helped me to become more culturally diverse.

I never really realized how discriminated against that immigrants are. I have seen it in movies, but actually seeing an apartment that many of them were forced to live in was very surprising.

I learned about the different aspects of child health that are focused on in children’s hospitals. I’ve personally never had to go to a children’s hospital (for myself, or to visit) and did not know much about what they have to offer. Since I’m from Seattle, I loved seeing the Pacific Northwest’s touch on the children’s hospital that made it extra special to our culture in the Pacific Northwest.

I never really thought of children hospitals having to be designed differently then an adults one. It’s important to ease the fear and stress of being in a hospital and the seattle children's hospital did a good job with features to help the kids.

I didn’t realize the relevance that MSU’s own museum has on the material we covered in class. I also learned that you can learn so much from different cultures all over the world without ever traveling there in person. The internet has so much to offer.

I would have never visited some of the sites that people used as their virtual trip. By reading what they thought was a must see exhibit, enabled me to think about my idea of the most interesting or important segment of something in comparison to theirs.

That religion, in other cultures, is incorporated into their education system. That patriotism is reinforced into the children at a young age, depending on the culture.

I learned more about the individual impacts that Chernobyl had on the people around the area. I become more empathetic and learned more about what happened during the nuclear accident.

I didn’t truly understand the struggle of those who resided in South Africa during their civil war. South African citizens emerged as a stronger more enriched culture due to it all.

I learned that there are many places I would be very interested in visiting that would relate to this class and show many different cultural norms and beliefs.

I was surprised that we did have virtual field trips to locations such as Auschwitz and Chernobyl because the instructions suggested finding field trips to “exciting” locations that tied in with course concepts. However, I learned that students had reasons why they were drawn to these sites. For example, Katie went to Auschwitz because she had relatives who swept through Poland and Germany at the close of World War II as part of the American forces. But her family also had relatives fighting in the German military during the Second World War. She needed to “go to” Auschwitz.

The effectiveness of the assignment is seen in the response of one student who wrote about this assignment almost as if she had really been abroad over the summer. Note the word, “before” in this quote:

I haven’t gotten to travel around the world before [emphasis added], so by looking at other virtual field trips I learned a lot about cultures around the world. I actually learned a lot more about history and inventors then I thought I would. The first virtual field trip I took I learned a lot about the history of surgical tools and procedures because that interested me with my background in nursing. When searching for a site to pick for my own virtual field trip I never knew there were that many options out there!
SIRS summary report for:

ISS 318 730  (Term: US09)
Instructor: CATHLEEN E MCGREAL

Although taking four credits in 7 weeks is a challenging workload, the SIRs scores indicate that the demand was perceived as reasonable (between average and above average) while the student-instructor interaction and instructor involvement was above average.

VI. Plans for Sustainability

When I proposed ISS 318 as a new course it was accepted as one of the 300-level courses with a limited enrollment of 25 students. It proved to be an effective course taught in a blended/enriched format and so I decided to develop an online version to accommodate student interest. The online version also has a restricted (although higher) enrollment. Student interest remains high and both classes close soon after registration opens. Plans are to continue to offer a course each fall (blended/enriched) and each summer (online).

As the Coordinator of Online Programs in the Department of Psychology I have the ability to maintain and improve the web components of the course. I am actively involved (co-facilitator) in the Faculty Learning Community Quality Issues in Online Learning working with supportive colleagues with whom I can brainstorm different ideas when I encounter challenging issues.