The following descriptions were gleaned from syllabi and paper guidelines for the course offered on Children and Communication by Dr. Thomas Socha, Associate Professor and University Professor, Department of Communication and Theatre Arts.

Comm427 is a course that provides a survey of communication processes in childhood. In particular, the course focuses on how children learn to communicate; the contemporary communication environments of children including interactions in family relationships, friendships, as well as media; and challenges concerning childhood communication and its affects on later communication development (e.g., aggression, violence, etc.).

One of the assignments in the class is to interact for 20 minutes with a person who is currently a caregiver for a child or children (e.g., parent, grandparent, nursery school teacher, preschool teacher, elementary school teacher, child social worker, pediatrician, etc.). The goal of the paper is to learn as much as you can about the “communication world of the caregiver”.

Students in the course have open conversations with caregivers with the overall objective to find out as much as they can about the “good” face-to-face interactions and media viewing experiences she or he has had with his/her children or charges as well as the not so good and how she/he seeks to manage these experiences.

Another assignment has a goal where the student is to interact for 20 minutes with a child, learn as much as you can about his or her “communication world,” and describe what you find in a paper.

This course is a unique opportunity where students in this course have the chance not only to meet and talk with professional caregivers of children but the also have the benefit of meeting with the children in residence at ODU Lions Club Child Study Center. The Center allows education instructors, graduate students in education and other educational personnel and professional caregiver the opportunity to observe and study the behavior of children interacting with one another as well as assessing their responses to specific pedagogy.

From written assignments rooted in discussions with caregivers and children to meetings and interactions with children in the classroom and at play Old Dominion University’s Lions Club Children Study Center.

The students in this course are fortunate in that they are able to put their skills to the test during classroom discussions, meeting and learning from child caregivers as well as through their in person interactions with children at our child study center.