Course Description and Goals

In this section of proseminar, we focus on key issues and methods in the sub-discipline of developmental psychology, emphasizing theoretical and empirical matters of current concern. Consistent with its seminar label, the course is organized around discussions of reading and oral presentations by students. I assign readings, present brief lectures, and facilitate discussions.

The goals of the course are to foster your understanding of basic concepts, current issues, and methodologies in developmental psychology to prepare you for further, in-depth study of development and to encourage collaboration across the subdisciplines of psychology.

Course Expectations

**Class participation and discussion questions.** Your active and thoughtful participation is critical to the success of the course, in terms of your own learning and that of others. Therefore, I expect you to attend all classes and to participate in offering comments, raising questions, and responding to others. To encourage this process, come to class with at least one written question, based on the readings, designed to stimulate class discussion. 30% of the course grade is based on your participation and preparation, as reflected in your questions.

**Leading class discussion.** Each student is responsible for presenting and leading a discussion about one of the assigned readings and for serving as a consultant for another student’s presentation. As everyone will have read the study, the emphasis is on the discussion. These presentation/discussions constitute 30% of the course grade.

**Take-home final.** You will complete a “take-home” essay question(s), designed to encourage integration of the material addressed throughout this section of the semester. I will give you the question(s) on February 20th, due date of March 12th, to allow enough time for you to respond thoughtfully and to clarify issues that arise as you organize your thoughts.

**January 16th: Critical Issues in Developmental Psychology**


**Lecture/discussion:** Introduction to Developmental Psychology: Behavioral and Molecular Genetics: Methods for Understanding how Nature and Nurture Influence Development


**January 23rd: Nature: Genetic Influences on Development**

**Readings:**


**Student presentation/discussion:** Either Jaffe et al or Mills-Koonce et al.

**Discussion:** All assigned articles

**Lecture/discussion:** Parenting Practices Linked to Adaptive and Maladaptive Developmental Outcomes at Different Ages and Methods Used to Test Associations

**January 30th: Nurture: Parents as a Source of Environmental Influence**

**Readings:**


**Student presentation:** One of the above articles.

**Discussion:** Both assigned articles

**Lecture/discussion:** Non-Parental Influences on Development

**February 6th: Other/Indirect Environmental Influences: Siblings, Neighborhoods, Poverty**

**Readings:**


**Student presentation:** One of the above articles

**Discussion:** All assigned articles

**February 13th: Race and Ethnicity as Influences on Development**


**Student presentation:** One of the above articles.

**Discussion:** All assigned articles

**February 20th: The Neurobiology of Development**


**Discussion:** All readings. Neural development affected by experience/affects behavioral development

**Student presentation/discussion:**

**Lecture:** Early Experience Influences Later Development: Issues, Methods, and Processes

**Receive take-home final exam question(s).**
March 5th: Evidence that Early Experience Affects Subsequent Development


**Student presentation**: One of the above articles.

**Discussion**: All assigned articles