Course Objectives

This course will provide an overview of the field of developmental psychopathology. We will explore theoretical perspectives, methodological and analytic approaches, and other key themes within the field. In addition, this course is designed to promote professional development by exposing students to the many roles they will assume within an academic context.

This course is intended for graduate students in Psychology and related fields. In addition, this course is required for psychology graduate students completing the Developmental Ph.D. program or the Developmental Psychopathology Concentration at UVM.

Required Readings

There is no textbook for this course. The readings will be a mixture of “contemporary classics” or seminal works in the field, review articles/chapters, and recent empirical articles. Readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Class Format

This class will follow a seminar format, with an emphasis on discussion and active learning. Each week I will provide a brief lecture to begin our class meeting. I will also occasionally bring videos or other materials to illustrate concepts from the readings for that week.

Course Evaluation

1. Class Participation (20%)

   Critiquing and engaging in intellectual discussions of theory and research is a critical component of a career as a psychologist. Students must come to class alert and ready to engage with the material for that week; that means completing all readings before class. Active participation is essential for the success of this course. This includes listening attentively and responding to others as well as making contributions regarding your own thoughts and ideas. If you aren’t comfortable in discussions yet, our class meetings will provide you with the opportunity to practice. Remember that the purpose of our class meetings is to develop skills as well as
knowledge. Bring whatever you need to bring in order to be alert and engaged – snacks and/or coffee are encouraged!

2. Reflection journal (20%)

Each week, I will provide you with a reflection question at the end of our class meeting. (Some reflection questions already appear in the syllabus; please do NOT start writing until AFTER our class meeting!) The reflection questions are intended to help you digest and synthesize the concepts we discuss, as well as apply them to your own research. Responses should be between 400-500 words (and can be longer if you wish). Please make sure to address each aspect of the reflection question and not wander too far away from the topic.

We will use the journal section of the class Blackboard site; I will provide you with comments there. Journal entries are due on Blackboard by 5PM on Wednesdays; I highly recommend doing them as soon as possible after our class meetings on Tuesdays. Journals will be private in that classmates will not be able to view them, but I may refer to things you write in our class meetings if I think it will be helpful to our discussion or if you raise a question that I think we should discuss as a group. However, if there is anything included in your journal that you would NOT like me to share with the group, please clearly indicate that within the journal entry.

Twelve journal entries total are required; that means you get two “freebie” weeks of your choice in which you do not need to write a journal entry. (Choose them wisely). Failing to thoughtfully complete twelve journal entries will result in a significant grade reduction.

3. Data Analysis Assignments and Presentations (40%)

You will complete two data analysis assignments (each worth 20% of your grade) that are intended to help you apply concepts in developmental psychopathology to your own research. For each assignment, you will also be required to give a brief (15-20 minute) in-class presentation on the analyses you ran. Additional information on these assignments is forthcoming.

4. Take-home Final Exam (20%)

On Tuesday 12/2, I will distribute a list of essay questions, from which you will select two. These questions are intended to assess your ability to synthesize research, integrate course materials with your own ideas, and present clear, articulate arguments. These questions are designed to help you engage with ideas in developmental psychopathology at a similar level to what will be required for Developmental Cluster’s prelim. Each response should be approximately 4 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font) not including references. Your answers are due to my mailbox at 3:00 PM on Wednesday 12/10 (printed copies only).
Schedule & Reading List

8/26: Introduction and Overview

No readings this week.

Reflection question: At this point in your graduate career, how do you define developmental psychopathology? How has the DP perspective, as you define it here, influenced your research thus far?

9/2: Defining Developmental Psychopathology


Reflection question: Look back at your definition of developmental psychopathology from last week. What changes do you think you need to make after this week’s readings and discussion? How you can you use this updated definition to better apply the DP perspective to your own research?

9/9: Equifinality and Multifinality

Assignment #1 will be handed out today.


Consider the work your research group is currently doing in your lab. Are any of your research group’s recent findings consistent with equifinality or multifinality? Explain how and why (or why not).

9/16: Understanding Atypical Development by Studying Typical Development (and vice versa)

9/23: Defining and Studying Change


9/30: Presentations for Assignment #1

Assignment #1 due today.

10/7: Methods & Multiple Levels of Analysis


10/14: Multiple Informants

Assignment #2 will be handed out today.


10/21: Person Centered vs. Variable Centered Approaches

Note: Readings for this week focus on person-centered approaches, as we are all already very familiar with the variable-centered approach!


**10/28: Interdisciplinary and Translational Research**


**11/4: Presentations for Assignment #2**

**11/11: Special Topic: Models of Life Stress in Developmental Psychopathology**


**11/18: Catch-up day**

**12/2: Final Synthesis**

No readings this week.

Take-home final exam will be made available today.

**12/10 (Wednesday):** Final exams due to Jamie’s mailbox by 3:00 PM