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 these phenomena and to encourage collaboration across the sub-disciplines 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 every class 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) two weeks prior to its due date of March 7th to allow enough time for you to respond thoughtfully and to clarify issues that arise as you organize your thoughts.

January 17th: Critical Issues in Developmental Psychology


Lecture/discussion: Behavioral Genetics as a Method for Understanding Nature and Nurture as Influences on Development
January 24th: Nature: Genetic Influences on Development


Student presentation/discussion: Either Roisman & Fraley or Jaffe et al

Discussion: Both assigned articles

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

January 31st: Nurture: Parents as a Source of Environmental Influence


Student presentation: One of the above articles (If 2 students present, each presents 1 article)

Discussion: Both assigned articles

Lecture/discussion: Non-family Influences on Development

February 7th: Other sources of Environmental Influence: Peers, Neighborhoods, Schools


Student presentation: One of the above articles (If 2 students present, each presents 1 article)
**Discussion:** Both assigned articles

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

**February 14th: The Neurobiology of Development**


**Discussion:** Neural development is affected by experience and affects behavioral development

**Student presentation/discussion:** One of the above articles (If 2 present, each presents 1 article)

**February 21st: Evidence that Early Experience Affects Subsequent Development**


**Student presentation:** One of the above articles (If 2 students present, each presents 1 article)

**Discussion:** Both assigned articles

**Receive take-home final exam question(s).**

**February 28th: Race and Ethnicity as Influences on Development**


**Student presentation:** One of the above articles (If 2 students present, each presents 1 article)

**Discussion:** Both assigned articles
The goals of this course are to

- promote understanding and knowledge related to social influences on cognition, affect and behavior as they are investigated by the discipline of social psychology
- identify social psychological principles and analytical tools used in research on social psychology
- improve the quality of students’ research by making them aware of relevant research and theory in areas outside their own discipline.

Class discussion is a key part of this course; students and faculty are expected to participate actively.

Readings for March 21 (1st class meeting)


Readings for March 28

Construal of Self and Others – Attribution processes


Readings for April 4

Situationism


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**Readings for April 11**

**Tension Systems - Prejudice**


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**Readings for April 18**

**Questions about the Tripod on which Social Psychology Rests**


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**Readings for April 25 or May 2**

**Psychology – A summary**

May 3

Writing assignment: (DUE May 4) Maximum length 10 pages

The “tripod” of social psychology includes (1) emphasis on effects of situations on behavior, cognition and affect, (2) emphasis on the importance of how people construe their social world, and (3) the concept that social situations frequently can be characterized as tension systems in which forces that facilitate and forces that inhibit social behavior achieve an equilibrium that can be surprisingly difficult or surprisingly easy to change depending on how the opposing forces align. Write a paper in which you examine these three themes in an area of social psychology that interests you giving examples of relevant research that illustrates these themes. Alternatively, you could apply social psychological research that illustrates these themes to some area of research outside of social psychology that interests you. Either way, your paper should show that you have read social psychological literature that informs your current understanding.