Psychology 380
Proseminar: Developmental Section
Spring 2005

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**Course Description:** This graduate course is designed to introduce students to the major current issues, questions, methods, and active content areas within the discipline of Developmental Psychology. The seminar will examine the major strategies employed in developmental research to address questions in the field and how that relates to other areas of psychology, the public knowledge base and social policy. The seminar will examine current new theoretical and empirical directions and debated differences within the field by reading and discussing recent research and review articles. Major themes throughout the seminar will be:

- causes and processes involved in behavior change and development
- lifespan development
- models of development
- individual differences
- continuities and discontinuities in development
- contextual issues including historical cohorts
- ethnic, minority and cultural differences and developmental similarities

The seminar will examine professional issues and ethics of developmental psychology shaping public, social, and educational policies.

**Course Format:** This course is a seminar format and consists of group discussions of assigned readings and student presentation. In order for students to benefit from the class meetings and to be able to participate actively in them, a thorough and thoughtful reading and review of all assigned articles prior to class is essential and expected of all participants. Short, weekly, written assignments (one or two pages) are assigned to assist students to prepare to be active participants in the seminar discussions. A final take-home examination will be given at the end of the last seminar meeting. The content of the final exam will be determined in consultation with the seminar participants.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Class participation** – attendance of all classes and active participation is discussions of assigned articles and discussion questions.
2. **Preparation and formal 15-20 minute presentation** of one research article assigned by the instructor. Subsequent to (and during) the formal presentation, the presenter is responsible for class discussion of the article. Students will have some latitude in selecting the article. Articles will be assigned in order to supplement the information available to class members from the assigned readings.
Therefore, the presenter has the role of presenting the information clearly and in a manner which makes the material covered available to class members for inclusion in the general class discussion.

Formal presentation means that the student is prepared to present as they would a research article at a professional meeting, with overheads and/or handouts of the major points and results of the article. The presenter is also thoroughly familiar with the article in order to answer questions and can relate the material to the issues addressed by the group assigned readings and issues under discussion.

3. **Short written assignments** – will be given each week that relate to the readings or issues the group will be discussing. These will be due at the next class session, should be typewritten, and no longer than two pages. They should reflect thoughtful consideration of the questions based on careful examination of the reading assignment. The purpose of these assignments is to help prepare students to participate actively in the discussions and to better acquaint the instructor with student views and interests in the material.

4. **Final Exam – Take Home.** Content and format to be determined in conjunction with students. Typewritten – no more than 7-10 pages.

**Required Readings:** Readings will be available for copying in a hanging file by the copy machine next to the Psych 1 office. Optional readings will be available also in the hanging file in a separate folder. The instructor reserves the right to make minor alterations in reading assignments as presented in the course syllabus.

**Course Grading:**

1. Class participation = 30% of grade
2. 7 written 2-page assignments = 35% of grade
3. 1 oral presentation = 15% of grade
4. Final Exam = 20% of final grade

**Basis for Assigning Grades:**

90% + = A
80% + = B
70% + = C

**Progress Assignment:**

Written assignments will be returned weekly.
Participation: Students will receive a short narrative of “how well you are doing” after class session 4.
Oral: Students will receive a short written feedback form with grade.
Other: Students are welcome to meet with the instructor to discuss their Performance.
Since, upon reading the seminar description, it becomes apparent that we could not address all the issues/topics described, please underline or in some other way, indicate which are of most interest to you.

Below is a broad outline of the sessions we will have. I have also indicated a subset of topics under some of them. Please write in any topic(s) of special interest to you that could fit under any of the rubrics and/or circle those listed that especially interest you. In addition, if you have any articles which you think are very important and from which the class might benefit, please indicate the articles.

By completing the above assignment, I hope to design the course and readings around your needs and interests, while meeting some of the major course objectives as described in the Syllabus.
SESSIONS

1. Developmental Psychology: Foundations
   Questions, Issues and Applications

2. Mechanisms for Change and Development:
   How biology and context work (often together) to create stability & change

3. Infancy Studies, Neurodevelopmental and Evolutionary Psychology
   New Insights into Autism and Social Cognition

4. & 5. Contexts for Development:
   Families, Peers, Neighborhoods
   Ethnicity
   Cross Cultural
   Historical Events, Cohort Effects
   Adult Development

6. Applied Issues:
   Early Experience
   Effectiveness of Early Intervention? For Whom?
   Day Care Effects
   Risk and Resilience
   Development of Behavioral/Psychological Disabilities