

Developmental Psychology
Psychology 260
TuTh 12:00 Gasson 301
Spring 1999

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Welcome to Developmental Psychology! In this class you will learn about the major views and research on the development of infants and children, including physical, social, emotional, cognitive and linguistic development. We will explore development from the time of conception through middle-childhood, and if there is time, we will consider aspects of adolescent development as well. Our discussion about children will emphasize the relation between the developing child and the contexts (e.g. family, school, community, etc) within which development takes place.

Children and their families' life circumstances are affected by social policies in significant ways. Because of this, we will consider policies and programs in the US and elsewhere, and the implications they have for children's healthy development.

You should remember, however, that Psychology 260 is an introductory course and is designed to comprehensively survey the major areas of development, rather than focusing in depth on any given topic. This means that you are introduced to lots of names, facts, findings, arguments, and so forth, within a relatively short period of time. However, effort is made to integrate the wealth of detail provided into a coherent picture of the developing child.

Readings and Supplemental Class Materials

Readings include assignments from books, and journal and chapter articles. Besides the readings outlined in the syllabus, you may be asked during the semester to read other material. Films and videos are used in addition to the readings to explore ideas and concepts relevant to the class. You are responsible for learning all of this material and information provided in lectures that are coordinated with the readings but in many cases do not overlap with them. Some of the required readings are on reserve in O'Neill Library (if you have problems obtaining these readings, you can use the reference information provided in the syllabus to locate them yourself); others readings are available on the Internet (I will provide you with website addresses for these readings). Some of these articles require Adobe Acrobat to download. This software program is available at no charge from the Internet.

Books and Magazines

- Berk, L.E. (1999). Infants, children, and adolescents, 3rd edition. Boston: Allen and Bacon. (Available at bookstore and on reserve)
- Kotlowitz, A. (1991). There are no children here. NY: Doubleday. (Available at bookstore)
- Stack, C. (1971). All our kin. NY: Harper & Row. (Available at bookstore)
- Newsweek (Spring, Summer, 1997). Your child. (On reserve)

Journals and Chapter Articles (on reserve):

- Aber, J. L., Gephart, M. A., Brooks-Gunn, J., Connell, J. P. (1997). Development in context: Implications for studying neighborhood effects. In J. Brooks-Gunn, G. J. Duncan, J. L. Aber (Eds.) Neighborhood Poverty, Vol. 1 Context and Consequences for Children. Russell Sage Foundation, N.Y.
- Boyden, J. (1996). Social and cultural meanings of childhood. Journal for International Development, 1, 18-22.
- Emery, R. W., Laumann-Billings, L. (1998). An overview of the natures, causes, and consequences of abusive family relationships. American Psychologist, 53 (2), 121-135.
- Limber, S. P., Grude Flekkøy. (1995). The UN convention on the rights of the child: Its relevance for social scientists. Social Policy Report, IX(2), 1-15.
- McKenzie, R. B. (1996). Revive the orphanage (. . .but don't expect help from the child-care professions). The American Enterprise, 7, 59-62.
- McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. American Psychologist, 53 (2), 185-204.
- Miller, P., Sperry, L. L. (1987). Socialization of Anger and Aggression. Merill-Palmer Quarterly, 33(1), pp. 1-6.
- National Research Council. (1994). Cultural diversity and early education. D. Phillips and N. A. Crowell (Eds.), National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., pp. 1-33.
<http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/earlyed/>
- Och, E. (1989). Introduction. In B. B. Scheffelin and E. Ochs (Eds.) Language Socialization Across Cultures, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA. pp. 1-13.
- Rogoff, B., & Morelli, G. (1992). Perspectives on children's development from cultural psychology. American Psychologist, 44, 343-348.
- Scarr, S. (1998). American child care today. American Psychologist, 53 (2), 95-108.
- Scheper-Huges, N. (1990). Mother love and child death in northeast Brazil. In J. Stigler, R. Shweder, G. Herdt (Eds.) Cultural Psychology, pp. 542-565. Cambridge University Press, N.Y.
- Shore, R. (1997). Rethinking the brain. In New Insights into Early Development, pp. ix-xiii. Families and Work Institute, N.Y.
- Suzuki, L.A., Valencia R., R., (1997). Race-ethnicity and measured intelligence. American Psychologist, 52(10), pp. 1103-1114.
- Toth, J. (1997). Orphans of the living. NY: Simon & Schuster. Pp. 30-75.
- UNICEF The state of the world's children 1999, chapter 1, pp. 5-19.
<http://www.unicef.org/sowc99>

Instructors

Dr. Pott will lecture the second, third and fourth week of the semester. Catya von Karolyi is a graduate student in Developmental Psychology. She will take primary responsibility for helping you with your public policy paper and panel presentation. She will also assist in preparing and grading examinations and mentoring you on course material.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Report of Current News Events

Several times during the semester, you are asked to report on current news events related to the issues and theories discussed in class the week of your presentation. The articles should be selected from popular magazines like Newsweek or from newspapers like the New York Times, Washington Post, or Boston Globe, and they should be published in 1998 or 1999. On the day of your presentation, you should submit a copy of your article along with 1-page double-spaced typed summary of it.

Your presentation should be informal and take no more than a few minutes. Please make sure to note in your report how the article relates to the topics under consideration in class. As there will be several of you presenting at one time, you are asked to coordinate the selection of articles so that no article is repeated.

In the second week of class, a sign-up sheet will be posted outside of McGuinn 325. The sheet will indicate the number of times you should sign-up and available dates. You might want to review the syllabus ahead of time if you are interested in signing-up for topics that are of interest to you. Presentations will begin the fourth week of class.

I suggest that you begin to read magazines and newspapers soon after classes begins, even if that means you find an article well in advance of the time you are scheduled to present.

Policy Position Paper and Panel Presentation

You are asked to write a research-based position paper on a topic related to public policy or programs that impact on the lives of children and their families. It does not matter if the position you take is in favor of, or against, the policy or program. However, you must support your views with information from journal articles, chapters, and/or material from the Internet (e.g., The Urban Institute, The Families and Work Institute, The Children's Defense Fund, National Center for Children in Poverty, and UNICEF are non-government organizations concerned with the well being of children and families). As a part of this project, you are asked to identify a member of the Senate or House of Representatives with whom you want to share your views. You may choose a Senator or Representative because of his or her committee assignment (e.g., House Ways and Means Sub-Committee) or because he or she represents a state whose policies you consider noteworthy.

You will be asked to join a panel based on the topic you've chosen for research. Panel members will work together during the semester to prepare their work for public presentation. The presentation should include a clear statement of: the issues considered by the panelists; how policies or programs relate to these issues; the position adopted by the panelists; and support for the position. Each panel is welcomed (in fact, encouraged) to consider different ways to make the presentation effective (e.g., create videos to illustrate an issue; interview individuals regarding a policy. If you decide on interviews or other approaches that involve individuals outside of this class, we may need to obtain approval from the Human Subject Committee.)

There are several policy-relevant issues we recommend you consider: child care for poor and near-poor women transitioning from welfare to work (including after-school care); foster care and adoption; children's health care; bilingual education; school-readiness programs like Head Start; child abuse and neglect; special education programs; the availability of equitable educational opportunities; and access to the Internet. You are welcome to select from this list, or to choose your own topic. When letting us know of your interests, we ask that you provide a list of 4 topics, indicating your first choice, second choice, and so on. We will choose one topic from your list that best fits with topics chosen by other students. We want to create just a few panels, and we want each panel to address topics that are thematically related.

Policy position paper. Your paper should be a well reasoned and researched argument for why the Congressperson to whom you are writing should take action to address the issues you've identified as noteworthy. Your paper should include as well: a summary or abstract; a cover letter to the representative to whom you are writing; and a reference list. Even though you will be sharing information and ideas with other panel members as you prepare for your panel presentation, you are each responsible for producing your own, individual position paper, executive summary and cover letter. The position paper should be no longer than 10-12 double-spaced typed pages (your cover letter, executive summary, and reference list are not a part of this page limitation).

Since writing is a process, you are asked to provide a draft of your paper for comment on March 23rd (this draft will be graded). The position paper is due one week before your panel is scheduled to present. (The paper you prepare is for this course only; you are not permitted to use a paper prepared for another course to meet this requirement!) Please be careful to cite the people whose work you refer to in your writing; failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.

Panel presentation. The task of the panelists is to present their arguments in a way that communicates clearly the issues under consideration to the audience and encourages their participation. The panel presentation should not take more than 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes devoted to class participation. The way panels organize the presentation of the material will vary depending on the issues of concern and the position taken by the panelists. One possibility is to present an argument for and against a position, with some one discussing the merits of each "side".

Preparing a coherent, well-delivered presentation takes time. As a result, you are asked to hand-in biweekly a progress report of your work (please see syllabus for due dates). The progress

report should include: who was present at the meeting; topics discussed; and decisions made. Catya will attend some of the meetings. The panelists are asked to distribute to the class a one- to two-page summary of their argument on the Tuesday or Thursday that precedes the day the presentation is scheduled.

Class Participation

Even though the class is taught primarily using a lecture-style format, there will be a lot of opportunity to talk about your views on and understanding of the material. In fact, some classes (e.g., particularly when most of the readings are journal and chapter articles) lend themselves well to discussion. Discussion can take many forms including critiquing the readings, summarizing the issues raised by them, asking questions, or commenting on another student's position. However, your contributions should demonstrate clearly that you have read and thought about the issues we are considering.

As we learn a lot from discussing ideas with peers and other people, participation in class is important -- and the quality of your participation will be reflected in your final grade. For example, if you regularly participate in class, and if your final grade borders on the next half grade 'B+/A-', you will receive an 'A'. This is unlikely to happen if you contribute a few sentences every so often. You are welcome to talk with me any time during the semester about your participation in class.

In-class Activities

During the semester, you may be asked to do some additional work outside of the classroom that is relevant to the course. I will let you know at least one week ahead of time when these activities will take place.

Examinations

There will be 2 examinations. The first examination will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions and will take place on March 18th. The final examination will be made up of multiple-choice questions, and will take place on Tuesday, May 11th at 9:00. Questions for the final examination will draw on the material covered since the last examination and on material from the rest of the course that most students had difficulty mastering (e.g., determined by the percentage of students who did not correctly answer examination questions on the material).

Grading of Examinations. Examination grades will be available within two weeks following the exam. If you do not agree with the way in which your exam answers were graded, you may request us to re-grade them. But you must prepare for us, in writing, why a higher grade should have been given. Requests for reconsideration must be presented within three days of the return of the exam.

Grades will not be based on a strict curve. The lowest possible passing grade will always be 50% of the average of the 3-4 highest scores achieved on a given examination (a more complete explanation of the grading procedure will be presented in class).

Final course grades are determined by calculating the percentage of points earned. Typically, students who earn 90% of total points receive an 'A'; 80% a 'B'; 70% a 'C'; and so on. (Letter grades are assigned using the definition of excellence in the Boston College Catalog (pg. 33): 'A' is excellent; 'B' is good; 'C' is satisfactory; 'D' is passing but unsatisfactory; and F is failure.)

Late Assignments and Make-up Examinations

Late work. No assignment will be accepted after the due date except in unusual circumstances, and with my permission. In these cases, assignments must be completed within 5 days of the due date.

Make-up examinations. If you miss the first in-class examination, you must contact one of us within 1 day of the missed exam so that we can schedule a make-up test. The make-up may consist of integrative short essays, and there may also be an oral component to it. The make-up must be taken within 3 days of the originally scheduled examination. Typically, no make-ups will be given after this time; instead you will receive NO credit for the missed examination.

There will be no make up examination for the final examination. As a result, I urge you to arrange your vacation plans accordingly.

Distribution of Points

1. Report of Current Events is worth 5% of your grade for a total of 25 points.
2. Policy Position Paper is worth 15% of your grade for a total of 75 points. (The first draft is worth 20% of this percent for a total of 15 points.)
3. The Panel Presentation is a group grade, and it is worth 10% of your grade for a total of 50 points.
4. The first examination is worth 30% of your grade for a total of 150 points; the final examination is worth 40 of your grade for a total of 200 points.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

(Scheduling of topics may change during the semester
Readings to be assigned are indicated by TBA)

Developing the context for understanding children and their development

- Week 1 Who are the children?
Berk C2, pg. 84. Boyden, J. (1996); Limber, S. P., Grude Flekkøy, (1995).
Kotlowitz, A. (1991)
- Jan. 19 Introduction to course
Jan. 21 Who are the children
- Week 2: Perspectives guiding research on children and their families
Berk, C1, pp. 6-32; C2, pp. 71-85 (provides an overview). Rogoff & Morelli,
(1992); Aber, J. L., Gephart, M. A., Brooks-Gunn, J., Connell, J. P. (1997).
- Jan. 26 Who are the children, continued (Kotlowitz's work discussed)
Perspectives guiding research
Jan. 28 Perspectives guiding research, continued
- Week 3
- Feb. 2 Questions asked by developmental psychologists and the
approaches they use to study children and families
Berk, C1, pp. 32-49. Newsweek, pp. 32, Rooting for Intelligence
- Feb. 4 Mechanisms of inheritance and the prenatal period
Berk, C 2, pp. 51-71 (a review); pp. 86-90. Chapter 3. Newsweek,
"Your baby has a problem?" pp. 46-47, 50.
- Week 4:
- Feb. 9 Deviations in prenatal development
- Feb. 11 Birth, starting life on the outside
Berk, C4

Current event reports begin this week

Infancy. The achievements of the first year of life

- Week 5
- Feb. 16 Biological, perceptual, and motor development
Berk, C5; C8, pp. 297-300. Shore, (1997)

Feb. 18 Thinking and problem solving
Berk, C6, pp. 211-231

Topics for public policy-panel/presentation due on Feb. 16th

Week 6

Feb. 23 Emotions and emotional development, Berk, C7, 253-269; C10,
370-374. Newsweek, pp. 60-63.

Feb. 25 Social development
Berk, C7, pp. 270-286. Stack, (1971). Scheper Hughes, N. (1990).

Panel assignments made by Feb. 23rd

Week 7 Spring vacation

Week 8

March 9 Social development, continued

March 11 Communication and language
Berk, C6, pp. 237-248; C 9, pp. 356-360; C12, pp. 462-464.
Newsweek, pp. 16-21; Miller, P., Sperry, L. L. (1987); Och, E.
(1989)

First biweekly panel report due March 11th; second report due March 25th; third report due April 8th

Week 9

March 16 Communication and language, continued
Review of material

March 18 Examination

The achievements of early childhood

Week 10

March 23 Physical development, and the development of thinking and
problem solving
Berk, C8, pp. 293-297; 311-318; and C9 323-349

March 25 Children's relationships with parents, siblings, and peers
Berk, C 10, pp. 365-369, 374-377; 388-402. C 13, pp. 514, 516.
Newsweek, pp. 81-84, TBA

Draft of public policy paper due on March 23rd

Week 11

March 30 Infants and children's formal care arrangements
Berk, C 6, pp. 235-237; C 9, pp. 351-354; C13, pp. 511-513.
Scarr, S. (1998)

April 1 Easter Break

Week 12

April 6 Growing up under difficult conditions
Berk, C 13, pp. 514-518. McLoyd, V. (1998); Emery, R. E.,
Laumann-Billings, L. (1998); Toth, (1997); McKenzie, (1996)

April 8 Growing up under difficult conditions, continued

The achievements of middle childhood

April 13 The measure and mismeasure of children: helpful and hurtful
practices
Berk, C6, pp. 232-234; C9, pp. 349-350; C12, pp. 453-461.
Suzuki, L.A., Valencia R., R., (1997). TBA

April 15 No classes

Student final public policy papers due on the 16th (Panel 4)

Week 14

April 20 Physical and motor development. The development of thinking and
problem solving
Berk, C11, pp. 409-413, 425-432; C12, pp. 437-452

April 23 Social and emotional development
Berk, C10, pp. 378-387; C13, pp. 481-511. Newsweek, 92-93.
TBA

Student final public policy papers due on the 20th (Panel 1) and 23rd (Panel 2)
Panel presentation on the 23rd (Panel 4)

Week 15

April 27 The contexts in which skills are learned. Opportunities to learn in schools
Berk, C9, 355; C12, pp. 465-476. National Research Council, (1994); UNICEF, (1999).

April 29 The contexts in which skills are learned, continued

Student final public policy papers due on the 27th (Panels 3)
Panel presentations on the 27th (Panel 1) and 29th (Panel 2)

Week 16

May 4 Children's health issues and health care
Berk, C8, 308-310. C11, 414-424

Panel presentations on the 4th (Panel 3)