Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this course is to critically examine contemporary issues and topics in the field of human development across the life span. The course will provide an overview of current theory and research related to development. Special emphasis will be placed on issues and debates that have dominated the field and continue to be a source of controversy and impetus for research. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we will explore social, cognitive, physical, and biological factors that can shape the course of human development. The course will be designed around answering and discussing the following four questions:

1) Are there general principles that guide development across individuals? For example, can development be characterized as continuous or discontinuous in nature? How important is it to understand individual differences in development? Are these rules stable or do they change with age?

2) What role does context play in shaping development? For example, how does culture, race/ethnicity, gender, and class influence social or cognitive development? How does early experience influence later development?

3) How do nature and nurture interact to shape development? Are there inborn capacities that we humans share or can development be characterized as primarily being influenced by environmental factors? What are the biological foundations of development? Does the interaction between nature and nurture change with age?

4) Do cascading effects of development exist within and across domains? Does development in one domain (e.g., attachment) impact development in another domain (i.e., perceptual development)? Are there domain-general learning capacities or rules that span domains (dynamic) or is some development domain-specific (modular)?

This class serves as the Psychology Department’s Developmental Graduate Program’s Core Course as well as the APA required Developmental Psychology Course for all APA accredited programs. The course has been structured in a way that meets the requirements of both.

Course Readings:
Assigned readings for the class will be available on CANVAS.
Course Requirements:
A major goal of this course is to sharpen your skills in critical reading, discussing, conceptualizing, presenting and writing. This course has been design to enable you to continually practice these skills. **High value will be placed on students who thoughtfully and actively contribute to discussions in class.** Due to the nature of this course, approximately 3-5 hours of reading per week is required. Reading times will vary by individual, but students should expect to spend at least 3 hours preparing for class each week and more on weeks when assignments are due. Students can display mastery of the material in five ways:

1. **Group-led Reading Summary and Discussion (16%)**
   Starting on Week 4, groups of 2-3 students will present a 20 minute integrative summary of the assigned readings, followed by a discussion. Presentations should include **no more than 15 power point slides.** The discussion leaders will give a brief overview of the topic including summary of each of the required readings, e.g., what are the major issues/points the reading is making, how is it connected to core developmental processes and course questions (see above), etc. Leaders may provide a brief overview on background material and slides should include figures, or brief film clips from classic studies (e.g., video of tasks used or examples) be useful depending on the topic. Grades will be based on clarity, depth, and ability to generate and facilitate discussion. Slides should not simply be text summaries of the readings.

2. **Participation and Response Posts (Due Weekly: 18%)**
   The course will be taught in seminar-discussion format, therefore, it is expected that class members will have completed the assigned readings prior to class, attend each session, and actively participate in discussions during class. Seminar members will be asked to submit short (1/2 page max) response posts on canvas by **12 noon** on the Monday prior to each class that addresses one or more of the following prompts:

   1) Does this reading suggest there are general principles that guide development across individuals? For example, can development be characterized as continuous or discontinuous in nature? Does this reading help us understand individual differences in development? Are these rules stable or do they change with age?
   2) Does this reading help us understand the role context plays in shaping development? For example, how does culture, race/ethnicity, gender, and class influence social or cognitive development? How does early experience influence later development?
   3) Does this reading give us information about how nature and nurture interact to shape development? Are there inborn capacities that we humans share or can development be characterized as primarily being influenced by environmental factors? What are the biological foundations of development? Does the interaction between nature and nurture change with age?
   4) Do cascading effects of development exist within and across domains? Does development in one domain (e.g., attachment) impact development in another domain (i.e., perceptual development)? Are there domain-general learning capacities or rules that span domains (dynamic) or is some development domain-specific (modular)?
Each student will be excused from 2 response posts during the semester. You may choose to answer one of these questions as they relate to all of the readings or go in more detail about one of the readings but you should come prepared to class to discuss ALL of the assigned readings. Your grade will be comprised of both the response posts themselves and your participation and discussion during class. You will not get credit for response posts if you don’t attend class. Please come prepared to discuss the contents of your post in class. There will be no response posts due on days when no readings are assigned and students do not need to submit response posts when it is their group’s turn to lead discussion.

3. **In-Class Activities (Due: Throughout Semester, 16%)** There will be several in-class activities throughout the semester that require group work and/or short presentations to the class. 8 out of 10 of these activities will contribute to your grade and each one will be worth 4 points. Therefore you can miss two of them or the lowest two grades will be dropped. These activities will often be based on the readings or on a current events topic related to developmental psychology.

4. **Press Release Project (Due: October 8th, 20%)**

It is important for researchers to summarize their work for the public. Although there are a variety of mechanisms through which this can be accomplished, one way to responsibly disseminate research findings is through writing a press release or a public abstract (e.g., something that is necessary for NSF funding). The purpose of these documents is to inform the public about research findings or proposed research that will be conducted and why it is important. Press releases and/or public abstracts should be written for a lay audience and it should use non-technical language. In particular, it should explain how the research will lead or has led to fundamental advancements of scientific knowledge, and it should describe how the research results may be relevant to societal concerns. For this assignment, you will write a press release about your own research findings in developmental psychology or research recently published in developmental psychology that is closely related to your own research (e.g., paper from your lab group, or developmental study on the same topic as your research).

Things to keep in mind for the Press Release Project:

1) Think about the public you are seeking to reach through the news story: what readership do you want to reach, and what would you like them to do as a consequence of receiving this information.
2) Think of 2 or 3 key messages that you want to convey (and you think the authors want to convey), write these down and practice how to communicate them in simple terms.
3) Be aware of the limitations of the data and overstepping what the data allow you say, but…It’s also okay to speculate: you can share a hunch, just be clear that it is a hunch or a hypothesis.
4) As one media specialist once said to have a story, you need a fact, a quote, and a comparison (you should quote yourself or another senior person working on the project or make up a quote if you are reviewing someone else’s research. You can make up a quote if you can’t get one.

Examples can be found on Canvas or at the UF media relations webpage: [https://news.ufl.edu/](https://news.ufl.edu/)
5. Take Home Exam (Due December 10\textsuperscript{th} at 12 noon on Canvas).
There will be a final take-home exam given out at the end of the semester and due during finals week. The exam will be essay format and will cover the “big issues” and questions we have covered throughout the course. Students will have question options (e.g., answer 2-3 of the following 4 questions) and each question can be answered in about 2-3 pages of single spaced text. You will be asked to integrate the themes and research that we have covered during the semester, provide examples from the course readings, and describe unanswered questions or propose new research. Answers should be written in APA format and references included. You will have 1 week to complete the exam and are expected to work independently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Grading Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Group Led Discussions</td>
<td>16% (32 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Class Participation and Response posts</td>
<td>18% (4 pts each; 9/12 completed, 36 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In-class Activities</td>
<td>16% (4 pts, 8/10 completed, 32 pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Press Release Project</td>
<td>20% (40 pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Take home Final Exam</td>
<td>30% (60 pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (200 Points)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scale Used for this Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%-94% (200-188 pts)</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>93.9%-90% (187-180 pts)</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89.9%-87% (179-174 pts)</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>86.9%-84% (173-168 pts)</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>83.9%-80% (167-160 pts)</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>79.9%-70% (159-140 pts)</td>
<td>C</td>
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This course follows graduate school and departmental guidelines for criteria for passing grades for graduate courses (i.e., a grade of C+ or below is considered unsatisfactory and requires retaking the course). No plus or minus grades are given for C or below.

Course Schedule

Week #1 (August 20\textsuperscript{th}): Important Questions Guiding Developmental Science I (no reaction post due).
\textit{Development and Psychopathology}, 9, 193-229. (this is an important paper)
Week #2 (August 27th): Important Questions Guiding Developmental Science II.

Nature and Nurture and Individual Differences


Continuity and Discontinuity


Lifespan Perceptive


Week #3 (September 3rd): Important Questions Guiding Developmental Science III.

Developmental Cascades


Dynamic Systems


Importance of Context: Bioecological Model of Human Development


In-class Activity: Theories driving your own research. Which of the theories we have learned about is mostly closely related to your own research and why? Think about this before class.

Week #4 (September 10th) Brain and Prenatal Development


Optional:

In-class Activity: Teratogens, bring laptop to class for online searches.

**Week #5 (September 17)**: Genes and Development (Press Release Assignment Distributed)
Szyf & Bick (2013) DNA methylation: A mechanism for embedding early life experience in the genome Child Development 84,1, 49-57


**Week #6 (September 24th)**: Physical and Motor Development

In-class Activity: “Babies”

**Week #7 (October 1st)**: Development of Attachment & Temperament

Optional:
Lobue, V. et al. (2011). Prefrontal asymmetry and parent-rated temperament in infants. *PLoS One, 6*, e22694 (issue 7 July) [https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0022694](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0022694)

**Week #8 (October 8th) Development of Emotion- and Self-Regulation (Press Release Assignment Due)**


Optional:


**Read for In-class Activity:** Why make-believe play is an important part of child development. [https://theconversation.com/why-make-believe-play-is-an-important-part-of-childhood-development-49693](https://theconversation.com/why-make-believe-play-is-an-important-part-of-childhood-development-49693)

**Week #9 (October 15th) Development of Perception and Attention (Press Release Assignment Due)**


**Read for In-Class Activity:** For baby’s brain to benefit, read the right books at the right time. [https://theconversation.com/for-babys-brain-to-benefit-read-the-right-books-at-the-right-time-83076](https://theconversation.com/for-babys-brain-to-benefit-read-the-right-books-at-the-right-time-83076)

Optional:


http://doi.org/10.1177/0963721410388801

**Week #10 (October 22nd): The Context of Development: Early Experience**


Optional:


**Week #11 (October 29th): The Development of Language and Cognition**


Optional:


Read for in-class activity:
Talking with children matters: Defending the 30 million word gap
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2018/05/21/defending-the-30-million-word-gap-disadvantaged-children-dont-hear-enough-child-directed-words/

Week #12 (November 5th): Adolescence, Guest Lecture: Julia Graber
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2015.07.008
http://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579410000556

Optional:

In-class Activity: Debunking Myths of Adolescence
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0MtQgS6IZU

Week #13 (November 12th): The Context of Development: Family and Peers

Read for in-class Activity:

Optional:

**Week #14 (November 19th): Aging: Brain and Behavior, Guest Lecture: Andreas Keil**

Optional:

**November 26th, No Class, Thanksgiving Break.**

**Week #15 (December 3rd): The Context of Development: Gender, Ethnicity, Race and Class**
Henrich, J. et al. (2010). Most people are not WEIRD. Nature, 466, 29. (1 July)

**Gender and Development**


**Race and Ethnicity**

**Poverty**


****FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT AT END OF CLASS and Due on CANVAS BY DECEMBER 10th at 12 Noon.****

**Course Policies**

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course, are consistent with university policies that can be found at: [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx)

**Attendance and Late Assignment Submissions:**
I do not monitor attendance but students will not receive credit for reaction posts unless they attend class. That said, the two worst reaction post grades are dropped so students may miss two classes without it impacting their grade. For late assignments 20% of the total available points are deducted per day late. An assignment is considered 1 day late if it is turned in after the CANVAS deadline even if it is turned in before class.

**Students Requiring Accommodations**
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Course Evaluation**
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals](https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/](https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/).

**University Honesty Policy**
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have
neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (https://www.dso.ufl.edu/scer/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**Student Privacy**
There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html

**Sexual Harassment**
Sexual Harassment is not tolerated in this class, in the Department of Psychology, or at the University of Florida. Sexual harassment includes: the inappropriate introduction of sexual activities or comments in a situation where sex would otherwise be irrelevant. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and a violation of state and federal laws as well as of the policies and regulations of the university. All UF employees and students must adhere to UF’s sexual harassment policy which can be found here: https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/. Please review this policy and contact a university official if you have any questions about the policy. As mandatory reporters, university employees (e.g., administrators, managers, supervisors, faculty, teaching assistants, staff) are required to report knowledge of sexual harassment to UF’s Title IX coordinator. You can also complete a Sexual Harassment Complaint Form (Title IX) here: https://titleix.ufl.edu/title-ix-complaint-form/

**Campus Resources**

**Health and Wellness**

**U Matter, We Care:** If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

**Counseling and Wellness Center:** http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc, and 352-392-1575; and the University Police Department: 352-392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

**Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS),** Student Health Care Center, 352-392-1161.

**Sexual Harassment Complaint Form (Title IX):** https://titleix.ufl.edu/title-ix-complaint-form/

**University Police Department** at 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or http://www.police.ufl.edu/.

**Academic Resources**

**E-learning technical support,** 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml.

Library Support, http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/.


****This syllabus is subject to change by the Instructor. Announcements of changes will be made in class and posted on Canvas. Please check CANVAS daily.