



## Developmental Psychology: Infancy & Childhood

**Instructor:** Dr. Kathy Russell

**Office:** 121 Clough

**Hours:** Monday, Wednesday  
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Open hour: 10:30 – 11:30 am  
By appointment only.

**Email:** russellk@rhodes.edu

**Service Learning Fellow:** Megan Etz

**Class Time:** MWF 2:00-2:50, room 114

**Required Text:** Berk, L. E. (2006). Child Development. 7th Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

**Additional Reading:** Each of the additional readings and a copy of this syllabus can be found on the academic file server: \\Fileserver1\acad\_dept\_pgm\Psychology\Russell\_Kathryn\Public\PSYC\_229-01\_F07

### **Brief Course Description**

In this course we will examine child development from conception to the end of childhood. Generally, the focus will be on the “normal” or typical course of development and the material is organized around developmental content areas rather than by ages/stages. That is, following an introduction of the history of child psychology, issues and theories, and research strategies, we will discuss biological bases of development from conception through mid-adolescence (e.g., prenatal development, physical growth). Then we will discuss cognitive bases of development from infancy through mid-adolescence (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky, information processing, language). Finally, we will discuss social bases of development from infancy through mid-adolescence (e.g., social cognition, family interactions, peers).

In general we will spend two days covering each chapter. The first day I will highlight important points while we discuss the topic. The second day will be entirely discussion and you will influence the specific topics within the chapter that we cover. It is essential that you complete readings *before* coming to class. Discussion topics will be Three class projects and service journals are designed to provide the student with an opportunity to more directly use and apply the course material.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Following this class you should be able to:

- ◆ Demonstrate an understanding of current theoretical issues and research concerning the development of infants and children.
- ◆ Identify your own areas of interest among the issues presented in course materials and demonstrate an understanding of the facts and theories relevant to these issues.
- ◆ Become more aware of the needs of children in our own communities and recognize that our own efforts can make a difference in the lives of these children.

### **Student Skills Objectives:**

The assignments and the use of class time in this course focus on exercising and improving a set of skills used by professionals in developmental psychology and in many other related fields. Most notably, these will include:



- ◆ **Observation skills:** The ability to use the vocabulary and conceptual frameworks of the discipline to describe child behavior and the contexts in which children interact.
- ◆ **Application skills:** The ability to evaluate empirical evidence and assess its relevance to theoretical and applied problems.
- ◆ **Professional communication and collaboration skills:** The ability to contribute to conversations that encourage the thoughtful expression of different points of view and that deepen our mutual understanding of the material we cover.

## **Honor Code**

Explicit details concerning honor code violations are listed in your college handbook. Honor code violations will not be tolerated and will be reported immediately to the appropriate authority. Please review the Rhodes College academic dishonesty policies. Since you will be required to submit written reports for this course pay special attention to the section on plagiarism and pledge all of your work.

## **Exams**

There will be 3 essay exams, each worth 100 points. The questions will come from assigned readings and lectures. I will give you a 5 questions for a study guide to help you prepare for the exam. Three of these questions will appear on the exam, and you will choose two that you want to answer. The third question will be a new question that everyone will answer. I will provide the paper for your answers and set appropriate length restrictions.

## **Projects**

There are three projects throughout the semester that are worth a total of 100 points. During these projects you should apply the material covered assigned reasons and discussed during class. Late projects will be penalized one-half letter grade per day, accruing at 5 p.m. each day. All work in this course must be typed, double spaced, in a font no smaller than Times New Roman or Arial 12. Any assignment turned in without these specifications will be returned and will suffer a late penalty.

## **Discussion Questions**

There are 15 chapters and 4 additional readings assigned for this course. I want our discussions to be directed by your interests. For all 4 additional readings and for 8 of the 15 chapters, you should turn in a discussion question on the day the reading is due. These questions are worth a total of 60 points towards your final grade, 5 points a piece. A good discussion question is not one with a clear answer obvious in the text. A good question does not necessarily have a clear answer, but covers a topic we can debate and/or discuss in class. Your question should be more than one sentence and should include a little background information to clarify the actual question. In your questions you are encouraged to tie the material to your service learning experiences, to reports in the media, and to topics covered in earlier chapters or in other courses. You should have turned in at least 6 questions by midterm.

I will evaluate discussion questions according to two criteria:

- quality and originality of discussion question topic.
- appropriate background use of course concepts, vocabulary, and research when setting up the discussion question

Questions must be printed following the same specifications described above for the Projects. Questions should not be more than half a page, double spaced.



## **Service Journals**

You will be required to spend a minimum of 10 hours during the semester doing volunteer work with children - - at least an hour a week for ten weeks of the semester. We will participate in a variety of health-promoting programs in the Child Life area of the Hope and Healing Center. Hope and Healing is a facility that provides health care in Memphis to working families whose employment provides no medical coverage. The facility focuses on prevention, on identifying strengths and resources, and on holistic approaches to wellness.

You are encouraged to work with our service learning fellow, Megan Etz, to find a way to match your own talents and interests with the programs at Hope and Healing. She will also help coordinate scheduling and transportation needs. Jenny will check in with you and will be in regular communication with the staff at Hope and Healing over the course of the semester. If problems arise for you, she will be available to advise you and to help in seeking solutions. Please talk to her often. She is willing to discuss your journals with you and to make suggestions that may help you get more out of our service learning experience.

Entries in your journal should relate experiences at Hope and Healing to course readings, to in-class discussions, and to other material you collect relevant to this course. We will call on the experience of students in their service work in class discussions frequently. Journal entries should be made weekly (not all during the week before they are due), and students must indicate both the date of the site visit, and the date of writing each journal entry.

The first part of the journals will be turned in at midterm, and at that time students should have completed four or five of the ten entries. Late journals will be penalized one letter grade. At the end of the term, the entire journal must be turned in, including the entries that were graded at midterm. For the final journal, there will be an accumulating late penalty of one-half letter grade per day, accruing at 5 p.m. each day.

I will evaluate service journals according to two criteria:

- quality and insightfulness of the descriptive observations of child behavior.
- appropriate use of course concepts, vocabulary, and research to explain and elaborate on observations

Entries must be printed following the same specifications described above for the Projects. Before turning in the journals, both at midterm, and at the end of the term, students should select their best example of descriptive observation (label DO), their best use of course concepts (label CC), and their best discussion of relevant social policy (label SP). These entries, designated by students as examples of their best work, will be given greater weight in the journal evaluation. If a journal is turned in that does not meet all the specifications, it will be returned to the student and will suffer the late penalty.

## **Class Announcements**

The information on this syllabus is tentative and is subject to change. Announcements concerning the class will be made in class and/or via e-mail. Therefore, if you attend class and check your Rhodes e-mail account frequently, you will be sure to be up-to-date.



### **Course Schedule**

*The following schedule of topics is tentative. Exam and assignment dates will not change.*

Date	Chapter	Topic	Additional Readings/ Assignments Due *
<b>August</b>			
22		Introduction	
24	Chapter 2, p62-65	Ethics in Developmental Research & Service Learning Ethics	
27		Hope & Healing Orientation	
29, 31	Chapter 1	History, Theory, Applied Directions	
<b>September</b>			
3	<b>No Class</b>	Labor Day	
5, 7	Chapter 2	Research Strategies	
10, 12	Chapter 3	Biological Foundations	Project 1 Due
14, 17	Chapter 4	Infancy	
19		Video: Sesame Beginnings	Warren, 2003; Zimmerman, Christakis, & Meltzoff, 2007
21, 24	Chapter 5	Physical Growth	
26	<b>Exam 1</b>		
28		Service Learning Observations	
<b>October</b>			
1, 3	Chapter 6	Piaget & Vygotsky	
5, 8	Chapter 7	Information Processing	Project 2 Due
10, 12	Chapter 8	Intelligence	
12	Chapter 9	Language Development	Service Learning Journals Due
15	<b>No Class</b>	Fall Break	
17	Chapter 9	Language Development	
19	<b>Exam 2</b>		
22, 24	Chapter 10	Emotional Development	
26, 29, 31	Chapter 11	Self & Social Understanding	Crick & Dodge, 1994
<b>November</b>			
2		Service Learning Observations	
7, 9	Chapter 12	Moral Development	
12, 14	Chapter 13	Sex Differences & Gender Roles	
16, 19	Chapter 14	The Family	
21, 23	<b>No Class</b>	Thanksgiving Break	
26, 28, 30	Chapter 15	Peers, Media, & Schooling	Bushman & Anderson, 2001
<b>December</b>			
3		Discuss Project 3	Project 3 Due
5		Service Learning Observations	Service Learning Journals Due
6	Reading Day		
7, 1:00pm	<b>Exam 3</b>		

\* Readings and assignments are due on the first day for the topic.



### Project 1 – 25 points

#### Evaluating Child Development Issues

For this project, I want you to evaluate a popular press presentation of issues concerning children and families. Select a newspaper article from the Commercial Appeal, USA Today, or a weekly news magazine such as Time or Newsweek. (You must get approval from Kathy Walton to substitute an article from another source.) The article must be recent (published within the last 3 months) and about an *issue* concerning children (or families). It can either be 1) an article describing research on children (biological, cognitive, or social), **or** 2) an article describing some social/political/cultural issues for children. **If you have any questions about the suitability of an article, please ask me about it before you turn in your project.** Your job is to critique the article (no more than 3 pages, typed, double spaced, and 12 point font) using the material from the Berk text and material from lectures, considering the following questions:

1. Who is the audience for the articles (e.g., parents, teachers, children/adolescents)?
2. What is the topic? Briefly summarize the article.
3. Does the article emphasize heredity or environment?
4. What theoretical perspective from Chapter 1 does the author seem to use (psychoanalytic, behavioral, biological, cognitive, ecological etc.)?
5. Does the article rely on scientific findings, expert opinion, and/or case study examples?
6. What are the articles conclusion? Do the conclusions seem valid? Why?
7. What are the implications for children, families, and society?
8. What research would you like to see done to improve on or expand the conclusions of the article?

**Be sure to cut out (or photocopy) the article (with date of publication) and attach it at the end of your paper.**



## **Project 2 – 50 points**

### **Using Information about Prenatal, Birth, Infancy, and Physical-Motor Development**

**Pretend that you have 2 friends – one who is pregnant with her first child and one who has 2 daughters, ages 9 and 14. Write two letters (no more than 3 pages, typed and double spaced, for each letter) giving advice to each friend, based on what you learned from Chapters 3, 5, and 4. Each letter is worth 25 points. Specifically address the following issues (plus any others you find interesting):**

- For the pregnant friend, briefly tell her what she can generally expect between prenatal months 2 and 9. Give her advice about nutrition and birthing decisions. Tell her about the sensory and perceptual capacities of her newborn and what kinds of motor/physical milestones to look forward to during infancy. Give her some brief advice about structuring the environment for her baby to facilitate these milestones.
- Suppose the friend with daughters wants to know about physical and motor development. Give her some broad descriptions. Suppose her two daughters want to play competitive soccer on boy's teams. What's your advice for each daughter and why?

