

---

# Psychology 216

## Developmental Psychology

Fall 2012 ~ MWF 1:30–2:20 p.m. ~ 132 Severance

---

**Professor:** Dr. Travis Wilson  
**Office:** 228a Severance  
**e-mail:** Travis.Wilson@Oberlin.edu  
**Office phone:** (440) 775-8365

**Office hours:** Monday 2:30-4:00, Wednesday 2:30-4:00, or by appointment

**Required text:** Lightfoot, C., Cole, M. & Cole, S. R. (2009). *The development of children (Seventh edition)*. New York: Worth.

**Reserve reading:** Supplemental reading will be accessible electronically.

### Course Description and Course Goals

From conception, human life unfolds into extraordinary complexity. Developmental psychology is the scientific study of continuity and change over the life span: in biology, relationships, emotion, and mind. This introductory course focuses on the period between conception and middle childhood. We will explore some of the myriad of ways biological, psychological, social, and cultural influences converge in shaping the course of life.

Broadly speaking, this course has five primary goals:

- to address classic and contemporary literature in developmental psychology
- to learn concepts that universally describe child development
- to recognize the diversity of life experiences that shape individual development
- to understand the interrelationship of physical, cognitive, and social development
- to appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of the study of development

What do these goals mean? When it comes right down to it, there are a few skills and mindsets embedded in the goals listed above that I would really like for you to develop this semester. If I were to meet you 10 years from now, here is what I hope will have stayed with you:

1. Read richly. This can mean any number of things. It might mean reading the classics: Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Eleanor Maccoby. Some days, I crave thoughtful and abstract prose on what makes children the delightful, frustrating, turbulent, creative, dependent, and independent creatures they are. Reading even just a few pages of Vygotsky can prompt deep and unanticipated thoughts about human development. “Reading richly” can also mean

savoring a particularly well designed and elegantly executed empirical article. I am sure you have your own ways of reading richly—I would like you to do this with content in Psychology 216 as well. [Note: Reading richly also means paying attention to *detail*.]

2. Honor the intrigues of human development. Developmental science, when done well, provides remarkable insight into human nature. But it has limits. Any given chapter in the text will take you down a new road and you will learn (I hope) interesting facts along the way. But then the road ends at a cliff; science can explain no more (at least it hasn't *yet*). When that happens, I hope you appreciate the grand vision before you: What lies beyond the current grasp of science? What are the next frontiers for developmental psychology?
3. Appreciate and contribute to meaningful discourse. Is any one person ever solely responsible for an idea? I don't think so. Ideas are developed and shared by participants in ongoing dialogues. When you share what's on your mind, you never know what your contribution might lead to in the minds of others. So please share and please listen carefully to others. As far as *what* we discuss together, I want us to value both 'looking at' and 'looking along' beams of light (a nod to C.S. Lewis). More on that later...
4. Develop empathy for children, for me as your teacher, and for your classmates, so that their lives—and your perspective—may be enriched.

Course content is divided into four sections organized chronologically: (1) Biological Foundations and Prenatal Development, (2) Infancy, (3) Early Childhood, and (4) Middle Childhood. Within each section, we will study empirical research, developmental theory, and central issues of human development as they relate to the respective age period. Interwoven throughout the course are four themes:

- *Sources of development*. The interplay between genetic heredity (Nature) and the environment (Nurture).
- *Plasticity*. The extent to which the course of development is malleable, subject to change as the result of life experience.
- *Continuity/discontinuity* (i.e., quantitative change vs. qualitative stages). Do children transform suddenly into more complex selves or does developmental change slowly accrete?
- *Individual differences*. Why do babies appear to be so similar to each other and adults so different? How stable are individual characteristics over time?

## Course Requirements and Evaluation

Attending all classes, participating in discussions, reading the text and supplementary readings, and reviewing lecture notes are your primary responsibilities. The better prepared you are for each class, the more you can contribute to our ongoing dialogues and the livelier our classes will be. That said, I understand that we all have different learning styles and different ways of engaging in large-group discussions. There will be no participation police counting the number of utterances you make throughout the semester. Please just be yourself and comment when you feel so inspired. Reading assignments should be completed before class as indicated on the syllabus. Please bring supplementary readings to class on days we plan to discuss them; this will facilitate discussion of particular study findings and details in the text.

**Evaluation** will be based on the following course requirements:

1. Four examinations covering material presented in lectures and readings corresponding to each section of the course (each 20% of final grade). Each exam will have two parts: (a) a 45-minute, in-class examination; and (b) a take-home essay (1 page or less, single-spaced), distributed at least 72 hours prior to the in-class exam and due at the beginning of the in-class exam. The purpose of the in-class exam is for you to demonstrate your knowledge of a *breadth* of topics covered in readings, lectures, and class discussions. The purpose of the take-home essay is for you to demonstrate the *depth* of your understanding of a particularly important concept. The course policy is to permit make-up exams only for an absence officially excused by the College. College policy prevents course instructors from granting extensions on final exams without prior approval of the Dean.

**\*\* Note.** If you believe that a personal commitment will make it unduly difficult for you to complete the take-home portion of an exam within the specified 72 hours, please notify me at least 10 days prior to the exam so that we can arrange an alternative schedule for you.

2. Eight brief response papers (150-250 words; each 1.25% of final grade). The purpose of these brief assignments is to have you reflect on supplemental readings. Each response paper is due in class on the assigned date; I will not accept late papers. More details forthcoming.

3. Child observation and reflection paper (4-5 pages; 10% of final grade). This paper will be based on your naturalistic observations of a child at a local child care facility. Details forthcoming.

### **Resources Available to You**

*Office hours and email.* My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. If these times are not convenient, please contact me to schedule an appointment. *I am open to fielding any questions you might have.* Brief questions regarding the nature of course assignments, course policies, etc., may be sent via email. As a general rule, I will respond to your emails within 24 hours. If you email me a question during the weekend (i.e., after 3 pm on a Friday), then I will make every effort to respond before the following Monday. Please restrict to office hours lengthier questions regarding course content.

*Students with disabilities.* If you have a disability, please check in with the Office of Disability Services. When I receive a letter from ODS on your behalf, I will be happy to provide all appropriate accommodations for you in this class.

*Student Academic Services.* If, for any reason, you have difficulties meeting course requirements or if you would like to have a tutor, personnel at Student Academic Services can assist you.

**Late work:** Work that is received after the deadline will be graded down 10% per day.

### **Honor Code**

All examinations and written work are covered by the Oberlin College Honor Code. Any questions about its application to this course may be directed to the instructor or to a member of the honor committee. Plagiarism is a particular concern, but is easy to avoid: When copying a passage verbatim, use quotation marks and cite the original source. When paraphrasing or referring to someone else's idea, provide an appropriate citation. When in doubt, cite.

## Course Schedule

Date		Topic	Reading/Assignments
Wed	9/5	Introduction	
Fri	9/7	Theories and methods of Dev. Psych.	Chapter 1
Mon	9/10	Piaget: On development and learning	Piaget (1964), <b>Response 1</b>
Wed	9/12	Biocultural Foundations	Chapter 2
Fri	9/14		
Mon	9/17	Prenatal Development	Chapter 3
Wed	9/19		Schetter (2009), <b>Response 2</b>
Fri	9/21	<i>Putting it all together (bring text to class)</i>	Hand out Assign. 1
Mon	9/24	<b>Exam 1</b>	
Wed	9/26	Yom Kippur--no class	
Fri	9/28	Infancy: First 3 months	Chapter 4
Mon	10/1	Infancy: First 3 months	
Wed	10/3	Infancy: Physical/Cognitive Development	Chapter 5
Fri	10/5		Gopnik (2010), <b>Response 3</b>
Mon	10/8	Infancy: Social/Emotional Development	Chapter 6
Wed	10/10		
Fri	10/12		Nelson (2007), <b>Response 4</b>
Mon	10/15	<i>Putting it all together (bring text to class)</i>	
Wed	10/17	<b>Exam 2</b>	
Fri	10/19	Film (on autism)	
**** FALL RECESS ****			
Mon	10/29	Early Childhood: Intro & Language	Chapter 7 (pages TBA) <b>Assignment 1 due</b>
Wed	10/31	Early Childhood: Phys/Cog Dev	Chapter 8 (pages TBA)
Fri	11/2		Chapter 8 (pages TBA)
Mon	11/5		Vygotsky (1933/1978), <b>Response 5</b>
Wed	11/7	Early Childhood: Soc/Emot Dev	Chapter 9
Fri	11/9		Maccoby (2002)
Mon	11/12	Early Childhood: Contexts of Dev	Chapter 10
Wed	11/14		Bronfenbrenner (1994), <b>Response 6</b>
Fri	11/16	<i>Putting it all together (bring text to class)</i>	
Mon	11/19	<b>Exam 3</b>	
Wed	11/21	Middle Childhood: Phys/Cog Dev	Chapter 11
Fri	11/23	Thanksgiving recess—no class	
Mon	11/26	Middle Childhood: Phys/Cog Dev (cont.)	
Wed	11/28	Middle Childhood: Schooling	Chapter 12
Fri	11/30	Film: <i>Age 7 in America</i>	
Mon	12/3	Middle Childhood: Soc/Emot Dev	Chapter 13
Wed	12/5		Juvonen, et al. (2006), <b>Response 7</b>
Fri	12/7	Guest panel: Schooling	
Mon	12/10	Visions of child development: Looking at and along beams of light	<b>Response 8 (film or panel)</b>
Wed	12/12	Film: TBA	
Fri	12/14	<i>Putting it ALL together (bring text to class)</i>	
**** READING PERIOD ****			
12/18 - 12/22		<b>Exam 4 (Thursday, December 20, 7 – 9 p.m.)</b>	

*Note:* Chapter numbers refer to Lightfoot, Cole, & Cole text.

### Supplementary Readings (available electronically)

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In M. Gauvain & M. Cole (Eds.), *Readings on the development of children* (pp. 14-19).
- Gopnik, A. (2010). How babies think. *Scientific American*, July, 2010, 76-87.
- Juvonen, J., Nishina, A., & Graham, S. (2006). Ethnic diversity and perceptions of safety in urban middle schools. *Psychological Science*, 17, 393-400.
- Maccoby, E. (2002). Gender and group process: A developmental perspective. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11, 54-58.
- Nelson, C. A. (2007). A neurobiological perspective on early human deprivation. *Child Development Perspectives*, 1, 13-18.
- Piaget, J. (1964). Development and learning. In R. E. Ripple and V. N. Rockcastle (Eds.), *Piaget rediscovered* (pp. 7-20).
- Schetter, C. D. (2009). Stress processes in pregnancy and preterm birth. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18, 205-209.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1933/1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Ch. 7, pp. 92-104).

### Recommended Readings (available electronically)

#### Theories of Development and Biocultural Foundations

- Ambady & Bharucha (2009). Culture and the brain. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18, 342-345.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. In *Mind in Society* (pp. 79-91). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

#### Prenatal Development

- Streissguth, et al. (1999). The long-term neurocognitive consequences of prenatal alcohol exposure: A 14-year study. *Psychological Science*, 10, 186-190.

#### Infancy

- Baillargeon, R. (2004). Infants' physical world. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13, 89-94.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss. Vol. 1: Attachment*. New York: Basic Books (Ch. 12, pp. 210-234).

#### Early Childhood

- Goldin-Meadow, S., & Mayberry, R. I. (2001). How do profoundly deaf children learn to read? *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 16, 222-229.
- Kagitcibasi, C., Sunar, D., & Bekman, S.. (2001). Long-term effects of early intervention: Turkish low-income mothers and children. *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 22, 333-361.

#### Middle Childhood

- Mintz, S. (2004). *Huck's raft: A history of American childhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (pp. 1-5).
- Stigler, J. W., & Stevenson, H. W. (1991). How Asian teachers polish each lesson to perfection. *American Educator*, 15, 12-42.