



Introduction to Developmental Psychology: Lifespan

Psychology 111

Professor: Nancy Darling, Ph.D.
Office: 108 Preston Hall
e-mail: darling@bard.edu
Home phone: 876-3583
Please don't call before 8:00AM or after 11:00PM.

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:30 and by appointment. Or please drop by or drop me a note if you have a question or want to talk about the class.

Meeting times: Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:20

Required Texts: *The Developing Person Through the Life Span* (Fifth Edition). Kathleen Stassen Berger.
Notable Selections in Human Development (Second Edition). Rhett Diessner and Jacquelyne Tiegs

Course Description:

As you watch an infant struggle to grasp a toy or a young boy trying to sound out a simple word, it's easy to see how much you've changed. In the same way, glimpsing a young father balancing a baby and a bag of groceries or an old woman laughing with a friend reminds us of how far we have yet to go. *Lifespan Development* is an introductory course in developmental psychology that explores the processes that shape our lives between conception and death. Although each life unfolds in its own unique pattern, we will explore the ways biological, psychological, and sociological influences systematically combine to shape its course. This class will help you to develop an understanding of the concepts, methods, and research findings central to the study of developmental psychology.

Form at and Goals:

This course has five primary goals:

1. to learn the factual information that is the basis of our scientific understanding of developmental psychology
2. to begin to address the primary literature in developmental psychology
3. to understand the importance of theory in influencing empirical research and to learn to recognize the implications of theory for research
4. to encourage you to work with other students in the class to improve your understanding of the material
5. to recognize the diversity of life experiences that shape individual development

Although this is a 100 level class, this doesn't mean it is an *easy* class. In some ways, introductory classes require a lot more work on the part of students because there is a lot of information that will be new to you. This one is especially tough, because we are going to be covering a lot of ground.

A course designated at the 100 level means that you aren't expected to have any background in psychology to understand the material presented. If you become confused, or feel like I'm expecting you to understand a concept that I haven't introduced yet, PLEASE STOP ME AND ASK ME TO EXPLAIN! If you don't feel comfortable asking during class, drop by my office, send me an e-mail, or ask me after class. Remember, if you don't understand the material, other people in the class probably don't either, and they will be really grateful to you for asking.

Course Requirements:

It is your responsibility to attend all classes and learn material presented during lectures, class discussions, and in your assigned readings. You are also responsible for keeping yourselves informed of any changes that are announced in class or through the e-mail system regarding assignments and changes in schedule. Because much of class time will involve discussion of outside readings, it is *imperative* that you keep up with the reading and come prepared for class. The better prepared you are, the more you can contribute to all of our learning experiences. Reading assignments should be completed before class on the dates indicated on the syllabus.

Evaluation:

There are three major criteria on which you will be evaluated: your performance on Readiness Assessment Tests (RATs), life course essays, and short assignments.

Readiness Assessment Tests. Readiness Assessment Tests are short quizzes (around 20 multiple choice and true/false questions). There will be eight RATs given during the course of the semester. Their purpose is to save time reviewing material you were assigned to read outside of class and to ensure that everyone has the basics of the material down before we elaborate on that material during lecture and discussion. There are THREE parts to each RAT.

First, you will take the RAT individually. This is a closed-book quiz.

Second, you will take the same RAT with an assigned group of three other students. The group will turn in the group RAT for grading. This is also a closed-book quiz.

Third, after receiving your graded group RAT, your group will have 5 minutes to write an appeal to any question that was marked wrong on the group RAT. Your appeal must be based on a defense of the correctness of your answer. If your appeal is accepted, your grade (both individual and group) will be changed accordingly. The appeal is done open-book. There are no appeals on individual RATs.

Both the individual and group RAT will count toward your final grade. The relative weight of the two will be decided by the class on the first day of class. The total of the individual and group RAT scores will be worth 25% of your grade. Each part must count toward at least 10% of your grade. If your group grade is LOWER than your individual grade at the end of the semester, you will receive the higher of the two (in other words, your group can't drag you down, but they will probably help you up).

Short assignments. During the course of the semester you will be asked to do around 15 short assignments. Sometimes the goal of these assignments will be to help you prepare for in-class work by thinking about things ahead of times. Other times, the goal will be for you to summarize what

you've done in class and tie up loose ends. All short assignments must be turned in during class the day they are due. Assignments can be written either in prose or in a coherent outline form. They can also be neatly handwritten rather than typed. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Assignments will be graded 0 (not done), 1 (minimally completed), 2 (good job), or 3 (excellent). Your best 10 assignments will contribute towards your final grade

Lifecourse Essays: Two challenges of teaching and learning about lifespan development are that it is difficult to disentangle our own life experiences from those of people in general and it is difficult to tie together material learned about infancy with that of old age. One way that we will confront these difficulties is through a series of essays. At the beginning of the semester, each student in the class will be assigned a fictional 'baby' who they will follow through the life course. The 'baby' you are assigned will be born into particular circumstances and have specific characteristics. As we move through each phase in the life course, you will be asked to write about the major issues that this developing person must deal with in that phase of life and how the baby might react to those issues given his or her past 'life' experiences and temperament. At each life phase, you will also be dealt a 'wild card' - an unexpected or unique life event that will change what happens to the developing person.

For each life stage essay you will:

- 1) summarize major developmental tasks of the period
- 2) summarize the developmental significance of the 'wild card' you are dealt based on lectures, text, and material you have found in outside readings
- 3) discuss how you think your assigned 'child' would be affected by that event, based upon the developmental stage, what you have learned about the event, and the characteristics and past history of the 'child'.

Life stage essays should be typed and less than 3 pages long. You will be assigned six essays. The lowest essay grade FROM AMONG THE FIRST FIVE will be dropped. The final essay is required.

Your final grade will be calculated based on the following criteria:

- 25% 8 RATs
- 50% 5 life course essays
- 25% 10 short assignments

Missed RATs, late essays, and absences:

Because it is extremely difficult to evaluate the validity of excuses for missing a class, the general policy will be to permit make-up RATs only for confirmed emergencies or an illness that requires confinement to the Health Center. If you miss a RAT, your individual test score will count as both your individual and group score for that week. Please notify me as soon as it is apparent that a RAT will be missed. Failure to notify me promptly may result in refusal to administer a make-up, with a resultant 0 averaged into the final grade.

ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THE DAY INDICATED ON THE SYLLABUS. Long lines at the printer are not a legitimate excuse for a late paper, so **PLAN YOUR TIME ACCORDINGLY!** I expect you to turn in all written

assignments on time. It is unfair to classmates who push themselves to complete their work by the due date for you to turn your essay in late. *Everyone* could do a better job given a little more time. All late essays will be dropped 10 points the first day and will not be accepted more than two days late. If you know your essay will be late, you are responsible for informing me on or before the date it is due. Failure to do so may result in refusal to accept late work.

A note on academic integrity:

One important skill that you need to develop is the ability to distinguish between your own ideas and those of other people. Although most obvious in cases where text is copied word for word, plagiarism also includes copying ideas or arguments from one source and presenting them as your own. Plagiarism can involve as little as copying a key phrase or sentence without acknowledging the source. It is easy to avoid. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotes. If you are presenting an idea or an argument that you read somewhere else, give the person who first developed the idea credit for it. Remember, when in doubt, cite.

Cheating and plagiarism are very serious offenses governed by the Bard student code of conduct. Anyone found cheating on a RAT, purposefully miscorrecting work, or copying work from another source without proper acknowledgment will receive an F in this class and will be referred to the College Judicial System for further action.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Sept 3	Introduction RAT 0: Syllabus	Oct 17	Selections 1.4, 1.5, 7.1, 7.2
Sept 5	Babies assigned	Oct 24	Lifestage Essay 3 due
Sept 10	RAT 1: Prenatal Development: Chapters 1, 3 & 4	Oct 29	RAT 5: Adolescence
Sept 12	Selection 3.1	Oct 31	Selections 1.3, 8.2, 9.1
Sept 17	RAT 2: The First Two Years	Nov 7	Lifestage Essay 4 due
Sept 12	Selections 1.2, 4.1, 3.2, 4.2,	Nov 12	RAT 6: Early Adulthood
Sept. 26	Lifestage Essay 1 due	Nov 14	Selections 10.1, 10.2, 11.2
Oct 1	RAT 3: The Play Years	Nov 26	RAT 7: Middle Adulthood
Oct 3	Selections 6.1, 6.2, 5.4, 5.5	Dec 3	Selections 10.2, 11.1, 11.3
Oct 10	Lifestage Essay 2 due	Dec 10	RAT 8: Late Adulthood
Oct 15	RAT 4: The School Years	Dec 12	Selections 12.1, 12.2, 12.3
		Dec 19	Lifestage Essay 5 due

Revised Schedule

Sept 3	Introduction RAT 0: Syllabus
Sept 5	Babies assigned
Sept 10	RAT 1: Prenatal Development: Chapters 1, 3 & 4
Sept 12	Selection 3.1
Sept 17	RAT 2: The First Two Years
Sept 12	Selections 3.1, 4.2
Oct. 1	Lifestage Essay 1 due Piaget and cognitive development. Selections 1.2, 4.1, 5.1
Oct 3	RAT 3: Early and Middle Childhood Chapters 9, 10, 12, & 13
Oct 8	Language development Selections 5.2, 6.1, 6.2
Oct 10	Behaviorism and social development Selections 5.4, 7.1, 5.5
Oct 22	Gender Selections 7.3, 1.5
Oct 24	Lifestage Essay 2 due
Oct 29	RAT 4: Adolescence and Early Adulthood Chapters 15, 16 18, & 19
Oct 31	Cognitive Change Selections 8.1, 8.2
Nov 5	Morality Selections 7.2, 1.4, 8.2
Nov 12	Identity Selections 1.3, 9.1
Nov 19	Romantic Relationships (readings to be announced) Lifestage Essay 3 due
Nov 26	RAT 5: Middle and Late Adulthood Chapters 20, 21, 23, 24
Dec 3	Cognition Selections Selections 10.2, 12.1
Dec 10	Identity within the lifespan Selections 10.1, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 12.2
Dec 17	Death Epilogue from Berger, Selections 12.3, 12.4
Dec 19	Lifestage Essay 4 due