Seminar in Psychology: Cognitive Development (PSY 480.02)
Spring 2008, Mondays and Wednesdays 9-10:15 am, DeGarmo 48
Welcome to our seminar!

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Office Hours: Mondays 10:15-11:15 am, Wednesdays 10:15-11:15 am, and by appointment
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Course Website: http://www.psychology.ilstu.edu/amhund/cogdev.htm

Course Objectives and Overview
The focus of this seminar is the examination of developmental change across several major areas of cognitive functioning during infancy and childhood. The seminar is divided into five major sections. The first section will outline theoretical perspectives on cognitive development. The second section will explore the development of perceptual abilities and attention. The third and fourth sections will examine the development of language and memory. The final section will describe several aspects of children’s conceptual development and offer conclusions about the nature of development. The goals of this seminar are (1) to understand the processes by which cognitive development occurs during infancy and childhood and the factors that influence developmental change and (2) to articulate, critique, and defend theoretical and empirical positions concerning the nature of cognitive development. These objectives will be assessed through participation in and leadership of class discussions and completion of a written research proposal.

For each topic, part of class time will be devoted to presentation of background information, and part will be devoted to discussion of readings. Because active participation is crucial to the success of the seminar, it is imperative that everyone completes the assigned readings in preparation for discussion. It is also critical that everyone is an active participant in our discussions during class. As described below, we will take turns providing background details and leading discussions during class time.

Required Readings

Text readings are listed by chapter in the syllabus. (available at campus bookstores)
Assigned readings listed in the syllabus (available electronically)

Course Requirements
This seminar seeks to foster preparedness, participation, and professionalism. Toward that end, grades will be based on the following requirements:

1. **Class participation.** You are expected to read the required readings for each session and to attend and contribute to class through questions and discussions. Everyone must bring the assigned readings to class to facilitate careful discussion. In addition, everyone must pose questions, make observations, and provide insights regarding the readings and their implications. Please be prepared to share your thoughts, as well as to respond to those made by colleagues, during class time. Regular participation is essential for our learning together as a community of scholars. Participation also will include writing a 2-page reflection paper, due during finals week. Class participation will be worth 25% of the course grade.

2. **Discussion leadership.** You will be responsible for leading the discussion during four class meetings (three times with a partner and once by yourself). Each discussion leadership day will be worth 10% of your course grade. The particular topics and readings discussed will be those listed in the syllabus, but you will be expected to have additional expertise in the area (i.e., have read additional articles) that will enable you to lead the discussion in a thoughtful manner. You will provide 4-5 discussion questions based on the assigned readings and an annotated bibliography that summarizes 3-4 additional articles on the topic. Each annotation should include the complete reference (in APA style) and one paragraph summarizing the article. In addition to clarifying the main ideas, your discussion questions should help us analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and interpret the topics addressed in the readings. The annotated bibliography and discussion questions must be posted in WebCT at least 24 hours before the class period during which they will be
discussed. Everyone is responsible for reading the article summaries and discussion questions before class to be prepared for our discussion. You must come see me (in person) at least 7 days before your discussion day so that we can discuss your plans. Please bring preliminary reading ideas and discussion topics to that meeting.

3. Research proposal. You will write a research proposal on an aspect of cognitive development during infancy and childhood. Research proposals should focus on theoretical and empirical issues addressed in this course. The NRSA-style grant proposal will be worth 30% of the course grade. This proposal should be 10-12 double-spaced pages in length and should include a brief literature review (i.e., background and significance) outlining the problems and issues in the area (persuasively asserting that your project will fill an important “gap”), a method section outlining 1 or 2 specific experiment(s) that would logically follow from the issues and problems reviewed, and a brief description of the analysis plan, predicted results, and conclusions resulting from your proposal. You will be expected to turn in a brief summary of your proposal (2 pages, typed with double spacing), outlining theoretical background and experiment details, by Wed. of the 8th week of the semester. This summary will be worth 5% of your course grade. In addition, you will meet with me individually (in person) by the end of the 10th week to discuss your plans for your proposal. I am happy to meet with you during your writing and editing process to discuss ideas and make sure you are on the right track with the project. These meetings must happen at least one week before the due date. The research proposal is due by the last Wed. of class.

Policies

Late Assignments. Late assignments will be graded down in accordance with the degree of lateness (unless there is a university-mandated and officially documented excuse). You will lose 10% of the possible points for each hour the discussion questions and annotated bibliography are late and each day the summary or research proposal is late.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and Cheating. Please consult the Code of Student Conduct for details regarding University academic integrity policies. Unless otherwise specified in the syllabus, assignments in this course should be completed by you alone and should represent your best effort. Plagiarism and cheating in any form will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action and failure of this course.

Students with Disabilities. Any student in need of special accommodation should contact 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

Schedule of Topics and Required Readings

Theories and Approaches to Cognitive Development

Week 1

Monday, January 14
Introduction and Organization
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 1 (pp. 1-25)

Wednesday, January 16
Piagetian Theory
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 2 (pp. 26-64)


Week 2

Monday, January 21
No Class — Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 23
Piagetian Theory, cont.

Week 3

Monday, January 28

Information Processing Approach

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 3 (pp. 65-106)


Wednesday, January 30

Information Processing Approach, cont.


Week 4

Monday, February 4

Core Knowledge Approach


Wednesday, February 6

The Nativism-Empiricism Debate


Week 5

Monday, February 11

Dynamic Systems Theory


Wednesday, February 13

Dynamic Approaches to Development


**Week 6**

**Monday, February 18**  
Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience


**Wednesday, February 20**  
Neural and Behavioral Plasticity


**Perceptual Development and Attention**

**Week 7**

**Monday, February 25**  
Vision

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 5 (pp. 141-164)


**Wednesday, February 27**  
Audition

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 5 (pp. 164-176)


**Week 8**

**Monday, March 3**

Perception/Action

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 6 (pp. 176-182)


**Wednesday, March 5**

Attention


**Summary of Proposal due by class time today**

**Week 9**

No Class — Spring Break

**Language Development**

**Week 10**

**Monday, March 17**

Statistical Learning

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 6 (pp. 183-195)


Wednesday, March 19

Word Learning

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 6 (pp. 195-208)


Meetings regarding proposal completed by the end of the week

Week 11

Monday, March 24

Language Development

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 6 (pp. 208-225)


Memory Development

Wednesday, March 26

Memory Development in Infancy

Siegler & Alibali Chap. 7 (pp. 226-246)


Week 12

Monday, March 31

Narrative/Event Memory

Bauer, P. J. (2006). *Remembering the times of our lives: Memory in infancy and beyond*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum (Chapter 4, Declarative Memory in the First Years of Life, pp. 87-120)


Wednesday, April 2  
Memory Development in Childhood
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 7 (pp. 246-267)

Week 13
Monday, April 7  
Memory Development in Childhood, cont.

Conceptual Development
Wednesday, April 9  
Conceptual Understanding
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 8 (pp. 268-286, 297-304)

Week 14
Monday, April 14  
Categorization Processes

Wednesday, April 16  
Spatial Understanding
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 8 (pp. 286-292)
Week 15

Monday, April 21
Numerical Understanding
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 6 (pp. 292-297)

Wednesday, April 23
Problem Solving and Symbolic Understanding
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 10 (pp. 341-380)

Week 16

Monday, April 28
Theory of Mind
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 9 (pp. 305-331)

Wednesday, April 30
Conclusions
Siegler & Alibali Chap. 12 (pp. 422-456)
Research Proposal due by class time today

Week 17

Thursday, May 8, 7:50 am
Roundtable Discussion of Research Proposals and Course Themes
Reflection Paper due

Thanks for a great semester! Enjoy the summer and the rest of your life journey...