Course Objectives and Overview

The focus of this course is the examination of developmental change across several major areas of cognitive functioning. The course 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 course 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. Course objectives will be assessed through participation in and leadership of class discussions and completion of a written research proposal.

The course will follow a seminar format. 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 class, it is imperative that everyone completes the assigned readings in preparation for discussion. As described below, either a student or I will take responsibility for providing background and leading discussions.

Required Readings


Text readings are listed by chapter in the syllabus. (available at Barnes and Noble in BSC)

Assigned readings listed by author in the syllabus (available as a course packet at PIP Printing in BSC)

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on two requirements:

1. **Class participation.** Class participation will consist of two assignments. First, you are expected to attend class and participate in our discussions. Class participation will be worth 25% of the final grade. Second, you will be responsible for leading the discussion on two class meetings. Each discussion day will be worth 20% of the final grade. The particular topics and readings discussed will be those listed in the syllabus, but you will be expected to have additional expertise in that area (i.e., have read additional articles), and will be able to lead the discussion in a thoughtful manner. You will provide 3-4 discussion questions based on the assigned readings and an annotated bibliography that summarizes 3-5 additional articles on the topic. Each annotation should include the complete reference (in APA style) and one or two paragraphs summarizing the article. Discussion questions should deal with general issues rather than specific points about the readings outlined in the syllabus. In addition to clarifying the main ideas, your questions should help us analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and interpret the topics addressed in the readings. The annotated bibliography and discussion questions must be emailed to me and to the rest of the class at least 24 hours before the class period during which they will be discussed. All students are responsible for reading the article summaries and discussion questions before class. Please come see me a couple of weeks before your discussion day so that I can help you find appropriate outside readings.

2. **Research proposal.** You will write a research proposal on some aspect of cognitive development. The grant proposal will be worth 30% of the final grade. This proposal should be 10-15 double-spaced pages in length and should include a brief literature review outlining the problems and issues in the area and a proposal outlining 2 or 3 specific
experiments that would logically follow from the issues and problems reviewed. Students will be expected to turn in a brief summary of their proposal (1-2 pages, typed with double spacing), outlining theoretical background and experiment ideas, by the end of the 7th week of the semester. This summary will be worth 5% of the final grade. In addition, you will meet with me individually by the end of the 8th week to discuss your plans for your proposal. The research proposal is due by class time the last week of classes.

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).

Topics and Required Readings

Theories and Approaches to Cognitive Development
Week 1: January 18
Introduction
Chap. 1 (p. 1-25)
Horowitz (2000)

Week 2: January 25
Piagetian Theory
Chap. 2 (p. 26-64)
Brainerd (1996)
Flavell (1996)
Siegler & Ellis (1996)

Week 3: February 1
Information Processing Approach
Chap. 3 (p. 65-106)
Siegler (1994)
Bjorklund (1997)

Week 4: February 8
Core Knowledge Approach
Spelke & Newport (1998)
Baillargeon (2004)
Haith (1998)
Newcombe (2002)

Week 5: February 15
Dynamic Systems Theory
Thelen & Smith (1994) Chap. 3
Gershkoff-Stowe & Thelen (2004)

Perceptual Development and Attention
Week 6: February 22
Writing Workshop
Bem (2004) *available online
Vision and Audition
Chap. 5 (p. 141-182)
Kuhl (1991)
Werker & Tees (1984)
Week 7: March 1
Attention
Colombo (2002)
Colombo (2004)
Oakes, Kannass, & Shaddy (2002)

Summary of Proposal due by 4 pm Friday, March 4

Language Development
Week 8: March 8
Word Learning
Chap. 6 (p. 183-208)
Markman (1990)
Saffran, Newport, & Aslin (1996)
Landau, Smith, & Jones (1988)

Meetings regarding proposal completed by 4 pm Friday, March 11

Week 9: March 15
Spring Break: No Class

Week 10: March 22
Language Development
Chap. 6 (p. 208-225)
Tomasello & Akhtar (1995)
Fernald et al. (1989)
Demetras, Post, & Snow (1986)

Memory Development
Week 11: March 29
Memory Development in Infancy
Chap. 7 (p. 226-246)
Rovee-Collier (1995)
Pelphrey et al. (2004)

Week 12: April 5
Memory Development in Childhood
Chap. 7 (p. 246-267)
Miller, Haynes, DeMarie-Dreblow, & Woody-Ramsey (1986)

Conceptual Development
Week 13: April 12
Categorization
Chap. 8 (p. 268-286)
Oakes, Coppage, & Dingel (1997)
Gopnik & Meltzoff (1997) Chap. 5

Week 14: April 19
Symbolic and Spatial Understanding
DeLoache, Miller, & Rosengren (1997)
Chap. 8 (p. 286-292)
Huttenlocher, Newcombe, & Sandberg (1994)
Hund & Plumert (2005)

Week 15: April 26
Theory of Mind
Chap. 9 (p. 305-331)
Gopnik & Meltzoff (1997) Chap. 5
Wellman & Liu (2004)

Week 16: May 3
Conclusions
Chap. 12 (p. 422-456)

Research Proposal due by class time on Tuesday, May 3
References (organized by week)


Bjorklund, D. F. (1997). In search of a metatheory for cognitive development (or, Piaget is dead and I don’t feel so good myself). *Child Development, 68*, 144-148.


