

PSYC 313 – Child Development
Asynchronous/virtual

Instructor: Sabine Doebel, Ph.D.

Email: sdoebel@gmu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

Note: I aim to respond to emails within 24 hours, but please allow more time for a response on weekends/holidays.

What's this course about?

Each and every one of us was once an embryo, a newborn, an infant, a toddler, a young child, a middle schooler, and an adolescent before, finally, becoming an adult. How did we develop into the people we are today? How different are children from us? Are children basically the same across cultures or are there differences? Can learning about development tell us about the nature of our minds or the right way to parent or educate children? We will consider these questions and more as we journey through the science of child development, from conception to adolescence. Along the way, we'll learn about a variety of theories, methods, and empirical findings that will help us make sense of various aspects of typical development, including learning to perceive, walk, talk, think, feel, relate to others, and more. This course should help you better understand and relate to children (as a teacher, parent, etc.) and better evaluate claims about them.

What will I learn in this class?

At the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Describe and apply key themes, concepts, methods, and theories in the study of child development;
2. Understand what a typical infant, toddler, preschooler, etc. is capable of;
3. Understand strengths/limitations of different common methods used to study and draw conclusions about development;
4. Evaluate research and popular articles related to child development.

What text do I need for this class?

Berger, K. S. (2020). *The developing person through childhood and adolescence*. Macmillan.

When and where does the course “meet”?

The class meets weekly at our Perusall site, which you access from Blackboard. This is an asynchronous course, so we don't have a specific meeting time during the week; however, you are expected to participate every week. Keep in mind that one week's work in this online class is equivalent to two in-person class meetings.

How do I log into the course to access the week's content and complete in-class assignments?

To get to the Perusall site, you need to log in to the course on Blackboard and go to 'course content' and find the link to Perusall. Do not go directly to Perusall from your browser because this can result in more than one account and related problems. There you will find weekly content (aside from textbook readings, which will not be posted there) and assignments. We will also use the site for announcements, chats, and potentially other uses.

How/where do I complete weekly assignments?

Weekly assignments are completed in Perusall and will be uploaded each week. Grades for these assignments are calculated and shown in Perusall.

How/where do I complete weekly quizzes?

These are completed in Blackboard each week, before Friday at 5pm.

What are the deadlines for completing work and quizzes?

Weekly in-class activities/assignments are due **each week, by Friday at 5pm**. There will also be a final 'cumulative' exam at the end of the semester that covers content from the whole semester. So it is very much in your interest to keep up with weekly work. Spaced learning is better than cramming!

What will my final grade be based on?**Weekly quizzes (40% of grade)**

Weekly graded quizzes (10 items) are completed and submitted via Blackboard by 5pm on Friday of each week. These quizzes are based on the content covered that week and includes all material in lecture videos, textbook, and additional assigned readings and videos. Quizzes are open book and untimed (no retakes). Questions will require applying what you have learned.

Weekly class assignments (30% of grade)

Each week you will complete 2-3 short assignments on Perusall. You need to log in to see what these assignments are. Please give yourself time to complete these – i.e., time to complete course readings and view lectures for the week, and to read the material pertaining to the assignment. Some assignments will involve applying a concept discussed in class, and others will involve reading and “annotating” (commenting on) relevant blog posts, short news articles, or videos. 10 points are available to earn each week. There will be some opportunities to earn additional points, so do not worry about the grading of these activities beyond doing your best to engage early and thoughtfully, and write good questions, responses, and comments in the activities. You will read and annotate the Perusall rubric in the first week of class.

Final exam (30%)

Will consist of a mix of multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions that cover content from the whole semester. All content is fair game, but the exam will emphasize what was discussed in class.

Assessment	Points per week	Max points per term (14 weeks)	Percent of grade	How to scale in calculating grade:
Quizzes	10	140	40%	Your total points/140 x .40
Activities	10	140	30%	Your total points/140 x .30
Exam	--	50	30%	Your total points/50 x .30
Total	--	--	100%	Sum above results

How do I calculate my own grade?

Part of your grade will be shown on Perusall (activities completed and graded there) and part of your grade will be shown on Blackboard (quizzes and final exam). Given the above information, you should be able to compute your grade. If you want to compute your grade as you go, you need to add total points per assessment category (i.e., quizzes, activities, exam), divide by total points possible to date, to get your percentage of points earned per category to date. Then scale that percentage to its proportion of your final grade (i.e., multiply by the relevant proportion in bold on the right).

General Class Policies**Inclusivity**

Everyone is welcome in my class! I value individuals and their differences including but not limited to race, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, economic status, first language, religion, values, political orientation, age, and disability. Discrimination of any kind will not be endorsed or tolerated. I will do my best to conduct the course in a way that acknowledges and embraces diverse experiences and perspectives.

Gender identity and pronoun use

Please feel free to share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. I use she/her for myself and you may address me as “Prof. Doebel”.

Interacting with peers and with the professor in an online environment

In commenting, asking questions, or replying to your classmates or the professor, please always strive to be respectful and courteous.

Email policy

As noted, I try to respond to messages within 24 hours during the week. Please allow a longer timeframe for messages sent on or just before weekends and holidays. You are also encouraged to post questions on the course site so that peers may be able to help and benefit from responses. If a question requires a response that is longer than a couple of sentences I will ask you to meet with me.

Schedule

The class schedule, topics, and textbook readings for each week is below. Topics may be added or removed. Major changes will be communicated to students in advance.

Late Work

Assignments submitted after the due date will not be graded or will be subject to penalty. Exceptions may be made under extraordinary circumstances and/or if the student communicates with me *in advance*. Class activities cannot be made up after the date.

Regrading

I rarely change a grade on an assessment, under circumstances where there is a grading error or a test item is deemed problematic. This is my policy because changing grades introduces bias into grades since only some individuals feel comfortable asking for a grade change. I also want to help you by not contributing to grade inflation and the devaluation of your degree.

Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows: > 93% = A, 90 – 92 = A-, 87 – 89 = B+, 83 – 86 = B, 80 – 82 = B-, 70 – 79 = C-, 60 – 69 = D, < 60 = F

Class Cancellation Policy

If class is cancelled, I will notify you by email/blackboard.

The Honor Code

Students in this course are expected to behave at all times in a manner consistent with the GMU Honor System and Code. <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 709-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking.

I am a designated a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-993-2380). You may seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730.

Official Communications via GMU Email

Mason uses email to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Deadlines for adding and dropping this class

See the academic calendar: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/>

Information about Student Privacy and Student Rights under FERPA

<http://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

Student Services

- Distance Education Services, University Libraries (<http://library.gmu.edu/distance>)
- Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>)
- Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>)

Schedule and Textbook readings (Other “in-class” readings/videos shared on Perusall weekly.)

Mtg #	Week of:	Topics	Textbook reading
1	Jan 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 truths about development • How do we study child development scientifically? The scientific method; key developmental methods 	Chapter 1 (generally whole chap unless otherwise noted)
2	Feb 1	Theories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piaget • Vygotsky • Social learning, evolutionary accounts 	Ch. 2 (skip: Freud, Erikson, box on p. 45-46, box on p. 57) Also: ‘How to Learn’ on p. 151-152 in Ch. 6)
3	Feb 8	Genetic contributions to development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature and nurture • Genotypes and phenotypes • Methods • Causality 	Ch. 3 (until p. 81) Also: p. 5 in Ch. 3 And p. 343-344 in Ch. 13
4	Feb 15	Prenatal (before birth): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain and physical development • Teratogens • Prenatal experience 	Ch. 4
5	Feb 22	Infant to toddler, 0-2y: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain development • Perceptual development • Scale errors • Motor development 	Ch. 5
6	March 1	Infant to toddler, 0-2y: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory development: searching, a not b • Core knowledge (number, physics, morality) • Early language development 	Ch. 6
7	March 8	Psychosocial development 0-2y <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosociality • Emergence of self • Temperament • Attachment 	Ch. 7
8	March 15	Early childhood 3-5y: biosocial and cognitive development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm and risk • Maltreatment • Executive function • Infantile amnesia 	Ch. 8 (skip box on p. 219) Ch. 9 (section on EF, pp. 228-230)
9	March 22	Early childhood 3-5y: cognitive development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preoperational thought 	Ch. 9 (up to p. 240)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animism • Theory of mind (desire task, fb task) • Lying/deception • Overimitation 	
10	March 29	<p>Early childhood 3-5y: cognitive, language and social development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Preschooling • Emotion understanding • Emotion regulation • The Marshmallow test 	<p>Ch. 9 (language and schooling, pp. 240-end) Ch. 10 (pp. 256-264)</p>
11	April 5	<p>Early childhood 3-5y: psychosocial development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play • Pretense • Imagination and imaginary friends • Parenting styles • Praise/motivation • Gender 	<p>Ch. 10 (pp. 265-end; skip psychoanalytic theory)</p>
12	April 12	<p>Middle childhood cognitive development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info processing, EF • math • bilingualism • SES and language • Schooling and testing • Moral development 	<p>Ch 12</p>
13	April 19	<p>Middle childhood psychosocial development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self and social comparison • Peers • Bullying, relational aggression • Family • Resilience 	<p>Ch 13</p>
14	April 26	<p>Adolescence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical development • Moral development • Delay discounting/sensation seeking • Risk and reward and peers; delinquency • Identity • Emotions 	<p>Ch 15, 16</p>