PSYCH 211-004: Developmental Psychology

⏰ Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1h30-2h45pm
📅 Vjosa Poshka | she/her (What's this?)
✉️ Email: vposhka@gmu.edu  📍 David King Hall, 2071A
📚 Meet with Vjosa

Course Overview

- Surveys basic concepts and principles of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development across the lifespan
- Fulfills Mason CORE - Social & Behavioral Sciences Learning Outcomes

Course Objectives

- Learn the basics of developmental psychology
- Delve into development and testing of hypotheses
- Apply in-class concepts to everyday situations

Required Text

- There is no required textbook for this course. Any papers, texts, or resources we use will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading Scale

- **Our classroom is a grade-free zone:** "Research shows three reliable effects when students are graded: they tend to think less deeply, avoid taking risks, and lose interest in learning itself [emphasis added]" (Alfie Kohn, *The Trouble with Rubrics*)

Add/Drop Deadlines

- Last day to add with no tuition liability: 8/30
- Last day to drop with no tuition liability: 9/7
Course Requirements

Meme/GIF/Blurb

- At the beginning of the semester, find a meme/GIF, or write a short blurb describing how you feel about the course based on what you know, so far. It has to be clean and appropriate. You're free to find memes/GIFs online and submit them as they are or tweak them, or make your own.
- At the end of the semester, your meme/GIF/blurb has to describe how you feel about the class at that point.
- Take the creative liberty and run with it!

Comm(unication) Tasks

- Communication is a key element to navigating the academic and social world
- You will complete a range of tasks that facilitate our communication skills, including email etiquette, paraphrasing, etc.
- Instructions will be provided on Blackboard, Slack

Reflections

- Throughout the semester, you will complete three oral reflections on topics of your choice by scheduling 5-minute virtual meetings with me
- Importantly, reflections are not summaries of the material; instead, they are meant to be informal, short and sweet demonstrations of your thought process
- Consider reflections an opportunity to:
  - Ask questions (e.g., "OK, I get that children like those who help, but can we really say they understand when someone is helping or not?")
  - Offer opinions (e.g., "we should keep pushing these interventions but maybe we should also look into how SES affects these things")
  - Make connections (e.g., "this reminds me of sociology class where we talked about the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism..."
- Reflections must be scheduled to occur before the end of the semester. No reflection meetings will be honored after 11/23.
- For Reflection #1, choose a topic that we discuss between 8/26 and 9/9
- For Reflection #2, choose a topic that we discuss between 9/16 and 9/28
- For Reflection #3, choose a topic that we discuss between 10/21 and 11/16
Participation

- Your involvement is key to the success of this course
- Engaging with others, understanding and appreciating individual contributions to the topics we discuss renders the course material—and in general, science—even more relatable and applicable

Interview

- You will demonstrate your understanding of developmental constructs by evaluating theoretical and empirical claims and relating them to information obtained through an interview

  **Step 1: Select interviewee and construct**
  - Choose who you would like to interview. Note: the age of the interviewee may determine what constructs you settle on.
  - You're free interview whomever you would like (e.g., friends, family members)—yet, in order to get as much out of this exercise as possible, it is valuable (and I highly encourage you) to interview individuals with lived experiences different from yours.

  **Step 2: Create interview questions**
  - Construct a list of at least 4 questions per construct of interest (totaling at least 8 questions).
  - The questions you decide upon should focus on the constructs, which mean they should be inspired by theory, research findings, and everyday examples that we touch upon in the course
  - You will want to create a list prior to the interview, and take notes during the interview
  - In creating your questions, make sure they are open-ended and provide sufficient context and explanation of theory/claims.

- Finally, you will write a summary on the main takeaways from the discussion between you and your interviewee.
Course Expectations

Deadlines and Extensions

- There are no hard deadlines (e.g., "submit X by 11h59pm on 8/23").
- Instead, you have a week to submit activities. For example, if an assignment is due "A week from 9/14", you can work it, rework it, anytime in that week (Tuesday, 9/14-Tuesday, 9/21).
- Consider my feedback, as well as that of your peers as you rework your activities.
- Any messages regarding upcoming assignments must be sent at least 48 hours prior to the due date to ensure an in-time response from me.
- Extensions will be reserved only for:
  - Serious hospitalization or illness that has been documented and judged by me as preventing you from completing assignments;
  - Death or serious illness in your family;
  - Religious holidays that you may recognize.
  - Documentation must be provided by health officials (e.g., a physician or member of the Student Health Services staff) in the case of illness; an immediate family member in the case of death or serious illness in the family; and official paperwork in the case of court dates. Decisions regarding extensions/makeups under these circumstances will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- There will be no additional work assigned, nor will there be any extra credit.

Classroom Etiquette

Our classroom is a safe space, and there are ground rules that apply to everyone. We commit to upholding fairness, equity, and celebrating diversity. We will make this class welcoming and open for everyone; be aware of our prejudices and how our words affect others; and give others room to explore, define, embrace and express their identities.

Accommodations

Disability Services at Mason is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Please reach out if you require accommodations.
Communication

Mason requires all students to use their official @gmu.edu email address to communicate with faculty. I will do my best to respond to emails within 1-3 days. Direct all emails to me with the subject line "PSYCH 211-004-Your Name"; otherwise, I will not respond. We will use Slack to engage with one another in this class; it's easier to reach me and it serves as an easy platform for participation.

Ungrading (Rebranding Grading)

- Being graded is something most us find comfortable. We're increasingly expected to conform to a system that emphasizes "objective" measures of performance, ranking and quantitative evaluations. We need to recognize that these systems have been formed to privilege certain kinds of students.
- We also need to extend grace to ourselves and others as learners by focusing on the process. Self-reflection, or metacognition, is a functional, practical skill that cuts across disciplines and virtually every facet of life.
- Your learning and how it happens should be a space of dialogue with no ambiguity or mystery that is "resolved" by mathematical formulas (e.g., 86.998% = B+). To that end, you will have my support and that of your peers.
- At the end of the semester, Mason is going to ask me to give you a grade. Through semester-long self-reflections on your learning process, you will determine your own grade. Note: I reserve the right to change grades as appropriate.

Honor Code

Mason’s Honor Code requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

Title IX

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. As a designated “Responsible Employee”, I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking.
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>What is due?</th>
<th>It is due..</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/24</td>
<td>Syllabus Day</td>
<td>Meme/GIF/Blurb 1</td>
<td>A week from 8/24</td>
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<td>8/26</td>
<td>The Life-Span Perspective</td>
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<td>8/31</td>
<td>Physical Development</td>
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<td>9/2</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Comm Task #1</td>
<td>A week from 9/2</td>
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<td>9/7</td>
<td>Motor &amp; Sensory Development</td>
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<td>9/9</td>
<td>Cognitive Development</td>
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<td>9/14</td>
<td>Reflection #1</td>
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<td>A week from 9/14</td>
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<td>9/16</td>
<td>Information Processing</td>
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<td>9/21</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Comm Task #2</td>
<td>A week from 9/20</td>
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<td>9/23</td>
<td>Language Development</td>
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<td>9/28</td>
<td>Emotional Development</td>
<td>Comm Task #3</td>
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<td>10/5</td>
<td>Reflection #2</td>
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<td>A week from 10/5</td>
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<td>10/7</td>
<td>Interview Project Review</td>
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<td><strong>Fall Break</strong></td>
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<td>10/19</td>
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<td>Comm Task #4</td>
<td>A week from 10/18</td>
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<td>10/21</td>
<td>The Self, Identity, Personality</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
<td>Gender, Sexuality</td>
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<td>10/28</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity, Intersectionality</td>
<td>Read 'MRP papers'</td>
<td>Anytime before 11/2</td>
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<td>Race, Ethnicity, Intersectionality</td>
<td>Comm Task #5</td>
<td>A week from 11/2</td>
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<td>11/4</td>
<td>Normative Development</td>
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<td>11/9</td>
<td>Families, Lifestyles, Parenting</td>
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<td>11/11</td>
<td>Schools, Work</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>Death, Dying, Grieving</td>
<td>Reflection #3</td>
<td>A week from 11/15</td>
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<td>11/18</td>
<td>Interview Peer Review</td>
<td>Comm Task #6</td>
<td>A week from 11/15</td>
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<td>11/23</td>
<td>Catch-up</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td>Interview</td>
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