PSYC 313-001: Child Development (Fall 2019)

MW 9-10:15 am; 3.0 credits; Location:

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| **Instructor:** Allison Jack, PhD (she/her) | **Email**: ajack@gmu.edu |
| **Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom | **Office:** David King Hall #2043 |

**Why study child development?**

Children are fascinating: so like us, and yet so different. We will all have at least some contact with children without our lives, and almost inevitably this will prompt us to ask questions, like: What do babies understand about the world? Is TV bad for children? Why do toddlers have so many tantrums?

In this course, you will come to better understand children through the scientific study of their development. To do this, you will think like a scientist and learn how we gather information about children, what constitutes good data, and how we draw conclusions from that data. Engaging with the course material will help you think more clearly about what constitutes good evidence generally, as well as specifically with reference to child development research. Learning this research-based information about children will help you be a better advocate for them, and hopefully have more fun with them, too.

**Goals & objectives**

As a class, we will:

* Describe key concepts in child development.
* Examine research related to child development and evaluate its claims.
* Gain an understanding of reasonable/unreasonable expectations for behavior at different ages.
* Learn to recognize developmental milestones and “red flags” for issues with development.
* Explore contemporary issues relevant to child development.

**Required Materials**

The text will reinforce key concepts from lecture and further your knowledge of the topics we discuss in class. The textbook is available at the bookstore and on Amazon, and should be available used.

**Siegler, R.S., Saffran, J., Eisenberg, N., DeLoache, J., & Gershoff, E. (2017). How Children Develop. (5th Edition).**

Like many textbooks, this one has a lot of information. I recommend you first review the chapter headings to get the gist of what it will cover. Then read it, making note of the keywords in the margins. Ask yourself the questions at the end of the chapter. A few days later, go back through the section headings, asking yourself what you learned in that part. Connect it to other things you learned, in lecture or the chapter or other courses. Think of your own examples. Ask yourself what the keywords mean. Know all the figures and why the information in them is important enough to put in a figure. Know what is in the boxes. Do this again a few days later. Review with a classmate and quiz each other, giving in-depth answers that tie together different aspects of the course and that tie it to other material from your lives. These are the ways one learns information well, in this class and beyond!

**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

**Recommended:** PSYC 100 or equivalent.

**What will you learn in this course?**

It's often hard to know what is a *reasonable expectation* for a child's behavior at a certain age. How should you interact with an infant vs. a preschooler vs. a 1st grader? By the end of this course, you should **understand what to expect, in terms of children's behavior and cognition, at different ages** (from infancy through middle childhood). It's can also be hard to know *when you should be concerned* about a child's development, especially when professionals say things like “every child is different” (which is true!) and “let's wait and see.” When should you seek a second opinion? In this course, you should gain **awareness of important indicators of developmental delay or disability**, and learn about what resources are available for children displaying those signs.

Finally, social media and popular media are *filled with conflicting messages about best practices in childrearing*. While we won't tackle every controversy, we will talk about how scientists learn about child development and evaluate evidence. **You will learn to critically assess the messages you receive about child development** so that you can make informed decisions about them.

**Grading & Course Requirements**

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| **Grade Components**  Your final grade is determined  as follows:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Participation | 5% | | Quizzes | 10% | | Group presentation | 15% | | Short responses | 15% | | Midterm exam | 25% | | Final exam | 30% | | **Grading Scale**  Your final grade will be calculated using the percentages to the left, with 100% as the highest possible total grade. Letter grades are assigned using the standard format (scores of 0.5 and above are rounded up, anything below 0.5 is rounded down):   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | A+ | 97-100% | B+ | 87-89% | C+ | 77-79% | D | 60-69% | | A | 93-96% | B | 83-86% | C | 73-76% | F | <60% | | A- | 90-92% | B- | 80-82% | C- | 70-72% |  |  | |

**Exams**

In this class, we will have one midterm and a final. The midterm exam will have a combination of short-essay and multiple-choice questions from the material up to the exam date (including material both from the textbook and the lecture). The cumulative final exam will also be comprised of short-essay and multiple-choice questions, about 75% from the last half of class and 25% from the first half.

**Missed Exams.** Students who miss exams as a consequence of their religious observance or for participation in a university activity will be provided a reasonable alternative opportunity to make it up. It is the obligation of students to provide me, **within the first two weeks of the semester**, with the dates of major religious holidays on which they will be absent, and the dates for which they are requesting an excused absence for participation in any university-sponsored activity scheduled prior to the start of the semester, and as soon as possible otherwise. Students requesting an excused absence for participation in a university- sponsored activity must provide me a letter from a university official stating the dates and times that participation in the activity would result in the student missing class.

*Students who miss the scheduled midterm for reasons other than religious observance or participation in a university activity, or who miss for these reasons without providing notice in the first two weeks of the semester, will receive an* ***essay exam*** *as their make-up option*. If an exam is missed without advance notice (except in the event of emergencies), 2 points will be deducted from the total exam grade. One additional point will be deducted for each day that I am not notified to reschedule. Once you contact me and arrange a make-up time, no further points will be deducted, provided you turn in the midterm by the agreed-upon deadline. Except in exceptional circumstances, the final exam cannot be rescheduled.

**Quizzes**

Short multiple-choice quizzes will be available each week on Blackboard and will be due on **Fridays at midnight.** These quizzes can be attempted up to three times and are open-book and open-note. The primary purpose of these quizzes is to encourage you to engage with the reading and help you prepare for the exams. Late quizzes will have one point deducted for each day past the due date.

**Group Presentation: Contemporary issues in child development**

In groups of four, you will develop an approximately 15-minute-long presentation about the science behind an important current issue in child development. You will be assigned to topics (and thus groups) based on your responses to an interest poll early in the semester. Potential topics may include: in-person versus remote schooling during the COVID pandemic, spanking, co-sleeping, vaccine safety, TV/ electronic media exposure, etc. You may incorporate multiple sources in your presentation, but *must* summarize at least one peer-reviewed empirical article on the topic (which you will share with me prior to your presentation). The purpose of this assignment is to give you experience in *evaluating evidence* that can inform real-life decision making on important topics in child development, as well as *sharing* that information with others.

**Short responses**

Prior to at least 10 meetings, you must post to the appropriate topic within the “short responses” forum/ discussions of Blackboard a short essay of ~200 words on the prompt listed for that meeting (the prompt is available in the far-right column in the course calendar below and in the “view full description” option within a topic in the forum). **Five need to be completed before the midterm and five after.** These should be thoughtful, polished, well-argued, and grammatically correct pieces, with a clear thesis backed up with evidence from the readings and/or material you track down. Using examples from your own experience is appropriate as long as you clearly link them to science and theory we have discussed in class. Stream-of-consciousness is not appropriate. These must be posted by 8 a.m. on the day of the relevant class. Late assignments will not be accepted and you must be in class to receive credit for your response.

**Participation**

Your participation grade consists of the following components:

* *Participation goals (1 pt.)* You will write a short paragraph describing your course goals for the semester. What can you do in terms of participation in order to achieve these goals? What types of participation typically work well for you? What types are challenging? (e.g., attending office hours, creating and participating in exam study groups, asking/answering questions in lecture, participating in in-class activities with small groups of peers). In particular, if you are someone who is socially anxious, shy, or neurodiverse, this is a good opportunity for us to figure out a participation plan that will work best for you. If you’re reading this, email me a picture of a cat to receive extra credit. Your initial participation goals and your final self-evaluation (described below) will be submitted to me via Blackboard. *You cannot receive credit for these two items after their due dates have passed*.
* *Final self-evaluation (1 pt.)* You will write 1-2 paragraphs evaluating your participation in the class. Did you meet the goals you initially set for yourself? Did your course goals change along the way? What steps did you take to respond to my midsemester feedback?
* *In-class participation (3 pts.)* I will observe and evaluate your participation throughout the semester, with reference to your individualized participation goals. I will provide you with specific written feedback after the fall recess, but you are also welcome to solicit feedback from me before that point.
* *\*Bonus attendance points!\** During six lectures spread randomly throughout the semester, I will take attendance at the start of class. For each lecture you're present, you will earn 0.25 extra points on your final grade, for a total possible attendance bonus of 1.5 points.

**Class expectations**

This class will include a mix of individuals from different backgrounds, with different abilities and experiences. **I expect that you will:**

* Listen and respond to your classmates' perspectives with respect.
* Ask me for what you need in order to maximize your learning, with the expectation that I will take your needs seriously while balancing fairness concerns.
* Consider how your background influences your perspective on the issues discussed in class. What privileges (and challenges) do you have that might impact your views?
* Share as much or as little about your identity as feels comfortable to you.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who are you?** I am an assistant professor in Applied Developmental Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Neuroscience. You are welcome to address me as either Allison or Prof. Jack. My research focuses mainly on how sex and gender relate to various features of autism. I have a 16-month-old child who you will no doubt hear about in this course. I believe that ongoing learning and listening are critical qualities for a good teacher, scientist, & human; I welcome frank feedback about the course.

**How can I get accommodations for a disability?** I encourage all students with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities, to discuss appropriate accommodations with me. [Mason Disability Services](http://ds.gmu.edu/) is also available to help: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2474 | SUB I, Suite 2500.

**I’m a student parent who needs accommodations.** I am committed to supporting student parents. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my class regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported.

**I’m neurodiverse. Do you have any special expectations for me?** Please feel no obligation to “camouflage”; you are welcome to stim. Feel free to come and go as necessary to self-regulate. If you are unsure about an academic or social expectation related to this class, feel free to ask for clarification.

**When can I expect a response to my email?** You can expect a response from me within 24-48 hours, Monday through Friday. I try to respond as promptly as possible, but must balance other obligations such as childcare.

**What if I miss a class?**

* *Unexcused absences.* You will not have the opportunity to earn bonus attendance points if you are absent. You do not need to notify me. You are responsible for the content that you miss. Your presentation group or study group (if you decide to create one) is a good resource in the event of your absence. Be aware that we cover significant content outside of the textbook in class, and you will be tested on this material on the midterm and final.
* *Excused absences.* If you have an appointment, or need to be away during one of our meetings, please let me know in advance/as soon as possible after.
* *Absences for COVID-19 or other communicable illness.* Please don’t come to class if you are sick or suspect you may be carrying a communicable illness. My infant is vulnerable, and I appreciate your help keeping him safe. Email me and we will arrange for you to participate remotely.

**Will you let me take this class all-online?** Per the Office of the Provost, I am not permitted to offer individual students in the class a fully online modality given that this is listed in the course catalog as an in-person experience. Students who anticipate needing to complete the entire semester online should transfer to online courses via the add-drop process. However, I am happy to work with you about accommodations for a portion of the semester (for example, due to quarantine needs); please reach out to me before the classes you will not be able to attend in person as I will need to set up some extra technology for you.

**I am looking for COVID-related resources.**

* *If you are looking for a well-fitting, high quality mask*, <https://www.projectn95.org/> is an excellent source for vetted/verified N95, KN95, KF94, and surgical masks. I bring extra masks to class with me every session; please reach out if you need one. You can also go to the Student Involvement Office in the HUB, Suite 2300, to get a mask.
* *If you have symptoms or think you may have been exposed,* call Student Health at 703-993-2831. Please stay home and let me know; I will arrange for you to participate remotely.
* *If you still need a booster shot,* Mason offers vaccine/booster appointments at <https://seerm.gmu.edu/gmu-covid-19-vaccine-clinics/schedule/>
* *If you’re struggling,* the [Student Support and Advocacy Center](http://ssac.gmu.edu/) ([ssac@gmu.edu](mailto:ssac@gmu.edu); 703-993-3686) and [Counseling and Psychological Services](http://caps.gmu.edu/) can provide you with resources. I’m also here to help you access services if you feel overwhelmed; just ask.

**Course Schedule**

This schedule is subject to change; I will announce changes in class and via Blackboard/email. A Blackboard reading quiz is due every **FRIDAY at midnight** throughout the semester (1/28 to 5/6).

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| Date | Topic | Textbook Chapters/Readings | Assignments & prompts |
| 1/24 | Introduction |  |  |
| 1/26 | Methods | 1: An Introduction to Child Development | Submit your participation goals |
| 1/31 | Prenatal Development |  |  |
| 2/2 | Birth; Neonates | 2: Prenatal Development & the Newborn Period |  |
| 2/7 | Nature & Nurture |  |  |
| 2/9 | Brain Development | 3: Biology & Behavior: pp. 92-126 | Complete poll on presentation topic preference |
| 2/14 | Motor development |  |  |
| 2/16 | Perception | 5: Seeing, thinking, & doing in infancy |  |
| 2/21 | Early learning |  |  |
| 2/23 | Cognitive development theories | 4: Theories of Cognitive Development | Article abstract due for group presentation |
| 2/28 | Communication foundations |  |  |
| 3/2 | Language development | 6: Development of Language & Symbol Use |  |
| 3/7 | TBD |  |  |
| 3/9 | Midterm |  | \*\*You must have completed 5 responses by this point.\*\* |
| 3/14 | **NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS** | | |
| 3/16 |
| 3/21 | Symbolic thought |  |  |
| 3/23 | Theory of mind | 7: Conceptual Development |  |
| 3/28 | SociaXl development theories |  |  |
| 3/30 | Discipline & parenting style | 9: Theories of Social Development |  |
| 4/4 | Group presentations 1-5 | **GROUP PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS** | |
| 4/6 | Group presentations 6-10 | (No prompts, readings, or quiz this week) | |
| 4/11 | Temperament & Emotion |  |  |
| 4/13 | Emotion Regulation & Executive function | 10: Emotional Development: pp. 418-451 |  |
| 4/18 | Attachment |  |  |
| 4/20 | Self-concept | 11: Attachment & Development of self |  |
| 4/25 | Peer relationships | 13: Peer relationships: pp. 550-563; 572-584 |  |
| 4/27 | Ethnic & racial identity development | Farago et al. (2019). Ethnic-racial socialization in early childhood: The implications of color-consciousness and colorblindness for prejudice development. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12228-7\_7 |  |
| 5/2 | Gender development | 15: Gender Development (skip “Adolescence” sections) |  |
| 5/4 | TBD |  | Participation self-evaluation due. Please complete course evaluation. |
| 5/16 | **FINAL EXAM DUE at 10:15 am** | | |

**University & Course Policy Details**

Policy details are provided in full below. I first describe key elements more simply, and at the end I include the verbatim language required by Mason.

**Simplified Policy Language**

**Enrollment, Add, Drop, & Withdrawal.** Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments, including add/drop and selective withdrawal, should be made by the deadlines published in the [Schedule of Classes](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall_2021/).

Important Dates

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| First day of Spring classes: Mon Jan 24 | Spring Recess (no classes): Mon Mar 14-Sun Mar 20 |
| Last day to add: Mon Jan 31 | Selective withdrawal: Wed Mar 2-Mon Apr 11 |
| Last day to drop: Mon Feb 14 | Last day of classes: Sat May 7 |
| Unrestricted withdrawal: Tues Feb 15-Tues Mar 1 | Reading days: Mon May 9-Tues May 10 |

**Regularly Check Blackboard & Mason Email.** You are responsible for regularly checking your official Mason email account and the Blackboard site for this class. I will send important messages about this class to your Mason email address and post announcements on Blackboard, including in the event of class cancellation or a change of location/modality for a particular session. If you’re *still* reading this, send me the name of your favorite children’s book for further extra credit.

**Use of Electronic Devices.** I will expect you to use your electronic devices (such as laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) as tools to further engage with the class. However, engaging in activites that are unrelated to class may be distracting to peers who can see your screen. Remember that everyone has different attentional and executive function capacities, and be courteous to those around you. While I generally expect all phones to be silenced during class, I understand that emergencies, illnesses, and family obligations may on occasion require you to receive messages. I appreciate you sitting near an exit and taking your call outside when you expect this may be the case.

**Academic Integrity.** George Mason University has an [Honor Code](http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2), which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. I do not deal with any potential issues “off the record.” In order to ensure that I respond to all cases in an unbiased fashion, I refer all potential instances of cheating, plagiarism, lying, or stealing to the Honor Committee for adjudication.

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.** The Psychology Department seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability.

**Sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, & interpersonal violence.** As your professor and as a person, know that I care about you and your well-being and stand ready to provide support and resources as I can. As a faculty member, I am a responsible employee, which means that I am required by University policy and federal law to report what you tell me to Mason’s [Title IX Coordinator](https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct) (703-993-8730; [cde@gmu.edu](mailto:cde@gmu.edu)). The Title IX Coordinator’s job is to ensure that the reporting student receives the resources and support that they need, while also reviewing the information presented to determine whether further action is necessary to ensure survivor safety and the safety of the University community. If you would rather keep this information confidential, there are Confidential Employees you can talk to on campus, including at the Student Support & Advocacy Center ([ssac.gmu.edu](http://ssac.gmu.edu/) | 703-380-1434), Counseling & Psychological Services ([caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu/) | 703-993-2380), and Student Health Services ([shs.gmu.edu](http://shs.gmu.edu/) | 703-993-2831). The worst possible situation would be for you or your friend to remain silent when there are so many here willing and able to help.

**Detailed Policy Language**

**Title IX Statement.** Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

**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. (http://mason.gmu.edu/ montecin/plagiarism.htm). Students are encouraged to study together as much as possible throughout the course, however, no assistance, sharing of information, or discussion of exam items or answers between students may take place. For all work, the name that appears on the paper must be the author. Violations of the Honor Code will not be tolerated in this course and will be immediately reported according to GMU procedures. The instructor reserves the right to use software to determine the extent to which the work is the student’s. The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.

**Disability Help.** Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit https://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

**Miscellaneous**

Mason uses electronic mail 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 email account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly. As a tip, please include your G-number and the course section in the subject of the email in all email correspondences with all instructors.

Recording of classroom lectures is not allowed without explicit permission by the instructor.

Students may not reproduce (including uploading to the Internet) any portion of the exam. Students who attempt to photograph or in any way capture information about the exam for others’ use will be reported for an honor violation.

Life is stressful and we all need a little support sometimes. Students are encouraged to contact Counseling & Psychological Services (3129 Student Union Building I, http://caps.gmu.edu/) at 993-2380 for assistance with any kind of psychological/life problem or crisis situation. I can help with referrals for students with particular counseling needs so please feel free to talk with me for help with anything.