PSYCHOLOGY 153
LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT

Summer 2019
Monday - Friday 3:15 – 4:50pm
TBD

Professor Rebecca Ryan
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Office Hours: T/TH 3:30 – 5:00 am or by appointment
Course web page: Access via Blackboard
(https://campus.georgetown.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp)

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Course Description

In this course, we will explore the biological, cognitive, emotional and social changes that humans experience across the lifespan from birth through old age. We will address questions such as: “Is development continuous or discontinuous?” “Are we the product of our nature or our nurture?” “Do all people follow a similar trajectory or is human development marked by diversity?” The broad aim of the course is to answer, in different ways, the fundamental question: “How do we become who we are?” We will draw broadly on the bioecological model, which conceptualizes development as a dynamic interplay between a person’s biological dispositions and the system of relationships in his or her environment, and specific theories from developmental, social, and cognitive psychology. Using these frameworks, and an understanding of major developmental milestones of each age period, we will investigate the development of identity, intelligence and cognition, language, morality, personality, and close relationships. Special attention will be paid to the parts parents and socioeconomic contexts play in those processes.

The course will follow the chronological sequence of development through seven major age periods: infancy and toddlerhood, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, emerging and early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. This approach allows us to explore how different domains of development evolve simultaneously and impact one another. It also has the advantage of imitating how development actually occurs in life. However, chronological organization requires that you apply theories covering several age periods to each and remember earlier milestones when considering the period under study. As in life, to understand the present one must understand what came before.

Course Goals

- Know the major developmental milestones distinguishing each developmental period;
- Understand the impact of genetic and environmental factors on biological, cognitive, and psychosocial development across the life span;
- Grasp, evaluate, and compare the major theories of human development that guide research in the discipline;
- Apply those theories to understanding everyday developmental phenomena, including your own developmental process;
- Distinguish between the research designs used to study development and compare their relative strengths and weaknesses;
- Gain an understanding of the field of developmental psychology and of how developmental psychologists conceptualize and conduct research.

These goals map onto the following Departmental Learning Goals: Goal 1(1-4), Goal 3 (a-f). See http://psychology.georgetown.edu/undergraduate/handbook/ for details.

Course Requirements

1. Lectures. Students are expected to attend all lectures and complete all assigned readings prior to lecture to facilitate lecture comprehension, class discussion, and class activities. If you must be absent, please provide a valid excuse (e.g., a medical emergency or note from the Dean). Note, 6 or more unexcused absences will guarantee you a failing grade.

2. Exams: There will be three exams in this course, all of which are required. Each exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions derived from the textbook, all other assigned readings, and class lectures. The first two will cover material from specific sections of the course. The third, and final, will cover material from the whole semester.

Required Texts


Other Readings (Articles will be posted on Blackboard)


Articles relevant to specific topics; see class schedule below.

Class Outline and Readings

1. Introduction/Class Overview
   Berger, Chapter 1, pp. 3-22

2. Theories of Development
Berger, Chapter 2

Karen, Introduction


Berger, Chapter 3 (review Chapter 1, pp.7-22)


4. Research Methods for Developmental Psychology

Berger, Chapter 1, pp. 22 - 33


The First Five Years: Foundations of Development

5. Prenatal Development and Birth Outcomes

Berger, Chapter 4: pp. 93 – 116

6. Socioemotional foundations: Attachment

Berger, Chapter 7, pp. 189 - 199

Karen, Chapter 10

7. Socioemotional foundations: Parenting


*This article is difficult. Just read to get the overall point. Do not worry about the biological details.

Karen, Chapter 13

8. Socioemotional foundations: Temperament

Berger, Chapter 7, pp. 181-189

Karen, Chapter 21

9. Socioemotional foundations: Attachment, parenting and temperament


10. Cognitive foundations: Early brain development

Berger, Chapter 5


11. Cognitive foundations: Early Learning and the home environment

Berger, Chapter 6, pp.155 – 168, Chapter 9, pp. 245 – 256

12. Early Learning and the Environment: Language

Berger, Chapter 6, pp.168 – 179, Chapter 9, 256 - 262


Middle Childhood: The Transition to School

13. The Transition to School: Learning and Achievement

Berger, Chapter 12


14. The Transition to School: The Role of Behavior and Emotions

Berger, Chapter 13, pp. 367 - 389

15. **Exam 1

Adolescence: A Risky Period
16. Puberty and the Start of Adolescence

Berger, Chapter 14, pp. 401-416


17. Brain Development, Decision Making, and Risky Behaviors

Chapter 14, pp. 416 – 427; Ch. 15, 429 – 440; Ch. 16, pp.462-484


18. The “Me!” Generation (that means you)


Roberts, B. W., Edmonds, G., & Grijalva, E. (2010). It is Developmental Me, not Generation Me: developmental changes are more important than generational changes in narcissism—Commentary on Trzesniewski & Donnellan (2010). *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5*(1), 97-102.

Emerging Adulthood: Roads Diverge

19. Emerging Adulthood and the Quest for Identity

Chapter 16, pp.457- 462; Chapter 17, pp. 500-513


20. Diverging Destinies

Berger, Chapter 19


**Adulthood and Beyond: Finding Meaning**

21. Becoming Partners


22. Becoming Parents

Karen, Chapter 24


23. Cognition in Late Adulthood: Decline or Depth?


Berger, Chapter 21; Chapter 24

24. **Exam 3**
Grading

The three midterms exams will be worth 30%, 30%, and 35% of your final grade each, for a total of 95%. Your highest scoring exam will count for 35% while the lower scoring exams will count for 30% each. Five percent of your final grade will reflect your attendance and class participation, which includes active involvement in discussion and/or classroom activities.

Honor Code

I expect all students to uphold the university’s standards for academic honesty. Please take note of the honor pledge: "In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: to be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together."