Psychology 394S: Developmental Psychology
Fall 2016

Dr. David S. Yeager

Time: Tues 3-6PM
Place: TBD

The course will examine core principles, processes, and issues in developmental psychology. The goal is to prepare students to launch a career in developmental science, or, for non-developmental scientists, to be abreast of the core theories in the field so as to facilitate an interdisciplinary research career. Each major principle, process, or issue will be explored mostly from the perspective of cognitive and social development. The focus is on experimentation and other methods of causal inference, with less emphasis on correlational methods.

A detailed schedule of topics and reading assignments for each section is below. Please keep up with the readings, and try to read ahead, especially for the longer theory papers.

I ask all students to meet with me personally at least twice over the term to discuss research and course progress. Schedule times with my lab manager: quinnhirschi@utexas.edu.

Course grades will be based primarily on two take-home exams. Each test is worth 33% of your grade.

A second requirement for the course is active participation in class discussions, which will be the final hour of each class meeting. Participation counts for 33% of your grade. For each class, prepare a 1 paragraph commentary of the indicated article—write about its implications for theory, how it could be improved, and what research questions it leads to. Try not to focus on trivial aspects of the study (e.g. need for a larger sample size, or more heterogeneous sample). Try to understand the “story” of the week’s readings and comment on it in light of developmental theory. Over the course of the term, try to increasingly think about how you might bring principles, processes, or issues from the course to bear on your own research. These paragraphs are due in class, printed out, on the day of each discussion. Please have a printed commentary for 100% of class meetings. I will use these to inform the discussion for each day. Do not expect written feedback on these. But I will use them in evaluating participation grades.

The final class meeting will be devoted to research presentations. Write roughly 2 single- or 4 double-spaced pages describing a study that you have designed in your area of interest that is informed by the theories, concepts, methods, and findings in the course. A developmental perspective would be ideal. The paper should spell out the background for your study, the purpose, the ideas from the course that you are integrating, methods and possible results. Tell the audience which studies in the course inspired your research idea(s). Each student will have about 5 minutes for the presentation and 2 minutes for questions. This final class presentation and study description is a part of your class participation grade.

All of the pdfs listed below can be found and downloaded from Canvas. All slides will be posted on Canvas. All studies mentioned in slides or assigned in class can be downloaded from a class
Zotero file; you are encouraged to sync to the Zotero file and then use Zotero to cite the papers from the class in your papers.

8/30 – Introduction – Welcome, review of syllabus and course overview

9/6 – Theoretical perspectives in developmental psychology + Student presentations


Discussion. Critically evaluate and discuss: ***Choose an article that made you want to become a psychological scientist. Present in 5 minutes what the key findings were, what the methods were, and why you were passionate about it. Comment on developmental, theoretical issues related to the phenomenon it investigated.***

9/13 – Adolescence


9/20 – Language learning 1


9/27 – *Language learning and intuitive statistics*


10/4 – *Categories, labeling and induction*


**Discussion. Critically evaluate and discuss:** Cimpian, A., & Salomon, E. (2014). The inherence heuristic: An intuitive means of making sense of the world, and a potential precursor to psychological essentialism. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 37*. (only read the target article; do not read the replies)

**10/11 – Exam 1 (no class)**

**10/18 – Mental representations, Contingency learning and cultural learning**


**10/25 – Temperament and mental representations: Origins of personality**


**11/1 – Lay physics and theory of mind**


**11/8 – Social categories**


**Discussion. Critically evaluate and discuss:** Cimpian, A., Mu, Y., & Erickson, L.C. (2012). Who is good at this game? Linking an activity to a social category undermines children’s achievement. *Psychological Science*.

**11/15 – Social lay theories**


**Discussion. Critically evaluate and discuss:** Haimovitz & Dweck (2016). *Psychological Science.*

**11/22 (NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING)**

**11/29 – Child development in context**


**12/6 – Final discussion and class presentations.**