

PSYCHOLOGY 352

COGNITIVE & LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Queen's University

Fall 2012

Syllabus

Lecture: M: 10-11:30; W: 8:30-10, BIO1103

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Office hours: TBA

Introduction and Overview

Children perceive, consider, and explain the world in ways that are sometimes similar, and sometimes radically dissimilar to that of adults. Where there are similarities, particularly similarities can be seen in infants, we gain insight into how the human mind has evolved to understand the world. Dissimilarities, in contrast, flag the areas in which idiosyncratic experience, culture, and biological maturation play their roles in shaping how we come to think the way we do. The goal of this course is to provide an overview of the basic scientific enterprise of understanding the developmental origins of human cognition and language, and the mechanisms that cause change over the childhood period.

Structure of the Course

Following the structure of the textbook, we will first survey the field from a theoretical perspective that uses examples from research to illustrate how particular theoretical mechanisms might work. Following this, we will survey a number of broad domains research on cognitive and language development. Throughout these sections there will be more of a focus on looking the abilities and capacities that infants (or young children) might start with and how those change over time. Although I expect it will be challenging, I hope that one will get a sense for how the different broader theoretical approaches might make sense within these different developmental domains.

In general, each of the topics that we cover will be introduced with an “overview” lecture. This will be followed by a “focus” lecture in which we will attempt to focus more closely on either specific research studies or theoretical points of contemporary interest. The reading material for “focus” sessions will be primary literature that has been written by and for scientists in the field. I expect this material to be challenging, but I hope that students who engage the material will find it rewarding.

FAQs

Will this be on the exam? There will not be complete overlap between the material that is covered in the textbook and the material that is covered in lecture. Some material will be textbook only, and some will be lecture only. I have not yet composed the exams and so I do not know what will be on the exam, but please know that all material that has been presented in the course is fair game for the exam.

How should I study for the exam? As you study, the main questions you should be asking yourself is “What?” and “Why? or How?” So, for instance, you might ask “What did Piaget think about kids between the ages of 0-2 and why did he think that?” Or, you might ask “What is the biological basis for language and how do we know that?” If you have good answers to these questions, you are probably in great shape.

Will your lectures be online? The media (presentations, videos, pictures, etc.) I use in lecture will be available to download from the class Moodle site following the lecture. The media are selected and designed with the intention of enhancing the lecture and promoting active, thoughtful engagement of the material, but rarely will they be informative on their own. They are not my lecture notes, and they are not meant to be copied from as a substitute for engaging the material. This may be a little different from your experiences in other courses, but I hope that it will promote a meaningful, self- motivated learning experience.

Evaluation

Performance in the course will be evaluated in two in-class exams and a final examination to be given during the exam period. The in-class exams will include multiple choice and short-answer questions about material covered only in the preceding section of the course (i.e., Exam 1 covers

the first five weeks of class, and Exam 2 covers the next five or so). The final exam will be cumulative. The mark breakdown is as follows:

In-class exam 1 (covers material from beginning to exam): 30%

In-class exam 2 (covers material since previous exam): 30%

Final exam (cumulative): 40%

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen's Official Grade Conversion Scale:

Grade	Numerical Course Average (Range)
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	49 and below

The in-class exam dates can be found in the schedule of classes below. Our final will be scheduled during the final exam period. Please see the departmental website:

<http://www.queensu.ca/psychology/Undergraduate/psycdepartmentalpolicies.html>

This site includes department policies regarding exam absences (and arranging makeup exams), travel during exams (which is not a valid excuse for missing or deferring an exam), and accommodation after the fact. If you know now that you cannot attend one of the exams, please contact me immediately to discuss your situation.

Required course materials

Siegler, R. S. & Alibali, M. W. (2005). *Children's Thinking*. Prentice-Hall.

Supplemental readings available on the class Moodle site

Academic Integrity & Copyright

Academic Integrity. Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senateandtrustees/principlespriorities.html>).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/2011-2012-calendar/academic-regulations/regulation-1>), on the Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity>), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

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Additional Comments

Although it is a large class, please feel free to ask questions about the course material at any time. If you are not comfortable piping up in class, send me an email.

Please visit me in office hours to chat over a cup of coffee or tea. The lecture format is impersonal and I would like to get to know folks this fall and hear what everyone is thinking about the class.

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Week	Day	Topic	Reading
1	Monday	Why study Cognitive Development?	Ch 1
	Wednesday	Piaget: Infancy and preschool years	Ch 2, pp. 26-42
2	Monday	Piaget: School-aged to adolescence	Ch 2, pp. 42-64
	Wednesday	Information processing approach	Ch 3, pp. 65-82
3	Monday	Some specific information processing theories	Ch 3, pp. 82-106
	Wednesday	Focus: Delay of Gratification	Munakata et al.
4	Monday	Vygotsky: Socio-cultural factors	Ch 4
	Wednesday	Focus: Guided Participation	Rogoff
5	Monday	Thanksgiving (No class)	
	Wednesday	Focus: Imitation, conventionality, and norms	Rakoczy et al.
6	Monday	In-class exam #1	
	Wednesday	Perceptual development	Ch 5
7	Monday	Focus: From sound to speech	Werker et al.
	Wednesday	First words and semantic development	Ch 6, pp. 183-208
8	Monday	Syntax and morphology	Ch 6, pp. 208-225
	Wednesday	Focus: Sensitive periods and language creation	Senghas et al. 2004
9	Monday	Memory Development	Ch 7
	Wednesday	Conceptual Development	Ch 8
10	Monday	Focus: Children's understanding of categories	Gelman
	Wednesday	In-class exam #2	
11	Monday	Social Cognitive development	Ch 9
	Wednesday	Focus: "Theory of mind" and autism	Tager-Flusberg
12	Monday	Problem Solving	Ch 10
	Wednesday	Wrap-up/Review	