

Current Topics in Developmental Psychology

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Office Hours: *Tuesday, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM*

Class Times and Location: *Wednesday, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, AA206*

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide a broad and comprehensive overview of theories and research in perceptual and motor development. The topics to be covered include object and depth perception, visual organization, intermodal perception, speech and music perception, spatial orientation, postural control and locomotion, and so on. The format of this course is seminar-discussion. Each week, students will read a series of papers and/or experimental reports, and will discuss these readings in class.

Course Requirements:

There are multiple requirements for this class. First, there are regular thought pieces (1-2 pages) that focus on the articles you have read. Second, there are slightly longer (3-5 pages) experimental proposals. These proposals focus on the recently read material (i.e., the last few weeks), and involve suggesting a topic for future study; research proposals will be orally presented in class as well. Third, there is a write-up (3-5 pages) on the laboratory observation that you will be doing (see below). Fourth, there is a (10-15) page term paper involving library research on any topic area involving perceptual and/or motor development; more detail will be given on this paper later in the class. Finally, a component of your grade is based on class participation. Because this is a seminar that meets once a week, it is critical that you both come to class and that you actively participate; to provide incentive, part of your grade is based on your participation. All papers are due at the beginning of class and should be double-spaced and typed. The thought papers WILL NOT be accepted late. For the remaining papers the penalty is that your mark is lowered one grade (e.g., A- → B+) for each day it is late.

Along with reading about work in perceptual development, this class will also give you some experience in seeing research being conducted. To do this, you will schedule time in which you will observe the running of experiments in my laboratory. Because this involves time outside of the regular class period, there are 2 days in which I have scheduled “no class”, to compensate for this outside commitment.

Class Outline and Assignment Dates

Date	Class Content	Assignment	% of grade
Week 1	Organizational meeting		
Week 2	Class Discussion	<i>Thought paper</i>	5%
Week 3	Class Discussion	<i>Thought paper</i>	5%
Week 4	Class Discussion	<i>Thought paper</i>	5%
Week 5	<i>No class</i>		
Week 6	Research proposal presentations	<i>Research proposal 1</i>	12.5%
Week 7	READING WEEK		
Week 8	Class Discussion	<i>Thought paper</i>	5%
Week 9	Class Discussion	<i>Thought paper</i>	5%
Week 10	Class Discussion	<i>Thought paper</i>	5%
Week 11	<i>No class</i>		
Week 12	Research proposal presentations	<i>Research proposal 2</i>	12.5%
Week 13	Lab observation discussion	<i>Lab observation paper</i>	10%
		<i>Term paper (due by 7 PM)</i>	25%
	Thought Pieces	30%	(6 x 5%)
	Research Proposals	25%	(2 x 12.5%)
	Lab Observation Paper	10%	
	Term Paper	25%	
	Class Participation	10%	
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	Total:	100%	

Potential Topics for Term Paper

1. Visual perception
 - a) visual psychophysics – contrast sensitivity, acuity, spatial vision, color
 - b) shape and form perception, partly-occluded objects
 - c) the object concept and object permanence
 - d) depth perception – binocular, kinetic, and pictorial cues, looming, etc.
 - e) motion perception and the perception of biological (or biomechanical) motion
 - f) event perception
 - g) causality
 - h) face perception and facial expression
 - i) social perception
 - j) concepts and categorization
 - k) imitation
 - l) spatial orientation
 - m) the self in infancy
 - n) visual pop-out
 - o) memory in infancy

2. Auditory perception
 - a) auditory psychophysics – frequency, loudness discrimination, etc.
 - b) speech perception
 - c) infant-directed speech
 - d) music perception
 - e) sound localization

3. Intermodal perception
 - a) visual-auditory intermodal coordination
 - b) visual-tactile intermodal coordination
 - c) visual-proprioceptive intermodal coordination
 - d) intermodal speech perception

4. Motor and sensory-motor development
 - a) infant reflexes
 - b) reaching, grasping, and catching
 - c) crawling, bouncing, and rocking
 - d) posture and balance control
 - e) walking and locomotion
 - f) perception of affordances
 - g) manual object exploration
 - h) visually-guided action