PSYC GU4202
THEORIES OF CHANGE IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
PAST TO PRESENT

4 points

Instructor: Prof. Dima Amso, Ph.D.
Class Time: Tuesdays 10:10 am-12:00 pm
Class Location: TBA
Office Hours: Tuesdays 9-10 and 12-1

Course Bulletin Description: What are the agents of developmental change in human childhood? How has the scientific community graduated from nature versus nurture, to nature and nurture? This course offers students an in-depth analysis of the fundamental theories in the study of cognitive and social development.

Prerequisites: PSYC UN1001 The Science of Psychology or an equivalent introductory psychology course and PSYC UN2280 Introduction to Developmental Psychology or an equivalent developmental psychology course.

Contact hours: Seminar meets 2 hours a week, and readings, presentations, and writing assignments are expected to take an additional 10 hours of work time per week.

Full Description And Learning Objectives:

(1) To provide breadth by reviewing the major theoretical approaches, classic tasks, and paradigms for studying and understanding development (constructivist, nativist, biological, information processing, and ecological systems approaches).

(2) To provide depth by considering the strengths and shortcomings of each theory and the pros and cons of different research strategies for investigating the central questions of cognitive and social development.

(3) To provide a background on goals of developmental studies (characterizing change, underlying change mechanisms, generality of change, and stability of behaviors across individuals and circumstances).

Readings: Readings will comprise empirical and review papers. Journal articles and review chapters will be posted to Canvas as pdfs. The course will include classic and current readings.

Role In The Psychology Department Curriculum: PSYC GU4202 is a seminar course open to PhD students and advanced undergraduate students in Psychology. It fulfills the following requirements:
For PhD students, this course could be used to fulfill one of the seminar requirements for the MA or the MPhil.

For Neuroscience & Behavior majors, this course could be used to fulfill the P5 Advanced Psychology Seminar requirement.

For Psychology majors and concentrators, this course could fulfill the seminar requirement and/or the Group I distribution requirement.

PhD students in Psychology and Psychology and Neuroscience & Behavior majors will have enrollment priority.

Grading And Evaluation
(1) Class participation (10%). Attendance is mandatory. Participation in discussions is expected of every student. This provides an opportunity to debate and discuss with mutual respect for other scientific opinions.

(2) Article presentations (30%). You will be asked to present two articles to the class over the course of the semester and to lead a discussion.

(3) Two short (3-5 page) essay discussions on a topic to be announced in class (30%).

(4) Final Paper (30%). You will write a review and analysis (10-12 pages, double-spaced) of recent research in an area of development of interest to you. How can a developmental approach shed novel insight into your questions? Topics need to be approved by instructor. More detail in class.

Grading: Details regarding expectations and grading will be provided in class.

Grading:

+ 97.5-100: A+  
+ 90-94: A-  
+ 87-90: B+  
+ 84-87: B  
+ 80-84: B-  
+ 77-80: C+  
+ 74-77: C  
+ 70-74: C-  
+ 60-70: D  
+ <60: F

Assignment Due Dates:
1. 9/28 Essay 1 Due
2. 10/26 Essay 2 Due
3. 12/7 Final Paper Due
4. 12/14 Brief Presentations on Final Paper

Fostering an Inclusive Classroom: My aim is to foster a learning environment that supports a diversity of perspectives and experiences and honors your identities. Please reach out to me with any concerns or suggestions you may have to better address your learning needs and to improve the effectiveness of this course. I look forward to working together to create a classroom community built on mutual respect and inclusivity.

Students with special needs who may require classroom/test accommodations should make an appointment with me before or during the first week of class. You should also contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Lerner Hall before the start of the course to register for these accommodations. The procedures for registering with ODS can be found at https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services or by calling (212) 854-2388.
**Promoting Wellness:** Many of us have periods in which our mental health and well-being suffer. I urge you to take care of yourselves – and of each other. Please prioritize your mental health and wellbeing and know that there are many resources available to you both within our classroom community and throughout the university:

https://health.columbia.edu/content/counseling-and-psychological-services
http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/nightline/
https://universitylife.columbia.edu/student-resources-directory#health

We are in this together. Please reach out for help if you need it, and, if you see others who are struggling, please make sure they know how to find the support they need.

**Ensuring Academic Integrity:** As members of this academic community, we are responsible for maintaining the highest level of personal and academic integrity, which includes presenting only our own work on assignments and exams. You can find detailed definitions and examples in Columbia University’s Guide to Academic Integrity: (http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity).

Any questions of academic integrity will be automatically referred to Columbia’s office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. The semester progresses very quickly, and there is a lot of material to learn. If you find yourself in a situation – e.g., starting an assignment too late – in which it seems like the best option may be to violate your academic integrity, please see me. Together, we can work out a solution. It is far better to have a few points deducted from an assignment than to compromise your academic integrity and potentially put your academic standing at the university in jeopardy. Plagiarism—whether intentional or inadvertent—is a serious violation of academic integrity. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism and/or how to properly cite sources, please come to me. I am more than happy to help.

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

9/14– INTRODUCTION TO COURSE & UNDERSTANDING AGE

9/21 -CONSTRUCTIVIST STAGE THEORIES (PIAGET)
9/28 – CONSTRUCTIVIST STAGE THEORIES – A THEMATIC COLLECTION

10/5 – ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY – BRONFENBRENNER

10/12 – SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES – VYGOTSKY & ALTERNATIVES

10/19 – EMBODIED COGNITION
10/26 – NATIVISM– HABITUATION, FAMILIARIZATION


11/2 – NO CLASS

11/9 – THEORY THEORY & ORIGIN OF CONCEPTS


11/16 – SIMPLE ASSOCIATION AND STATISTICAL LEARNING MODELS. NEOCONSTRUCTIVIST MODELS.


11/23 – MATURATIONAL ACCOUNT AND NEUROCONSTRUCTIVISM

11/30 – NEUROCONSTRUCTIVISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

12/7 – A MARRIAGE OF ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

12/14- FINAL PRESENTATIONS