
DEP 6930 - INFANT DEVELOPMENT

Fall Semester, 2005
Friday, 09:00-11:50 AM, Room 105, Behavioral Sciences Bldg.
Boca Raton Campus

Dr. David J. Lewkowicz

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Class Web Page: <http://home.fau.edu/lewkowic/web/index.htm>

Disclaimer: This class will not cover topics such as infant rearing practices, developmental milestones, clinical assessment of the infant, how to be a better parent, how to be a better infant-care provider, or any other practical topics of this nature.

Course Objectives: This seminar course will explore in detail some of the “hot” topics in the field of infant development. The overall focus of the course will be on the process of development from a broad comparative perspective. Thus, the development of infants of any species will be of interest. The general aim of the course will be to provide the student with an understanding of the mechanisms and processes that underlie the development of behavioral function and organization. To achieve this general aim, we will focus on two specific and related aims. The first aim will be to answer the “how” question and the second to answer the “what” question. Although one would usually ask the “what” question first, we will actually begin with the “how” question to give us a good conceptual grounding for framing the “what” question. Thus, we will first explore various conceptual/theoretical approaches to the study of development and the various controversies that have surrounded the study of development (e.g., the innate/learned dichotomy, the role of genes and environment, the role of experience, the origins of knowledge, etc.). We will then embark on a semester-long discussion of the “what” question, always keeping the “how” question in mind. We will review the empirical evidence on a variety of topics including prenatal development & the role of early experience, perceptual development (including visual, auditory, and intersensory), motor development and the development of the action-perception link, cognitive development, and the development of speech and music. In addition to providing the student with a solid empirical knowledge of the field, the ultimate aim of the course is to give the student: (a) the ability to identify an important problem, (b) the conceptual tools to investigate it, and (c) the methodological and empirical grounding to design new studies to better understand the problem.

Student Requirements: Each student will be required to present two empirical papers to the class and will be expected to lead a class discussion relevant to that paper. Students will be graded on their presentations and on their ability to lead an effective discussion. To ensure success in this task, students are advised to not only become familiar with the paper but with background information relevant to the paper. In addition, each student will write two position papers (maximum 6 pages each, double-spaced) on topics related to the course and approved by the instructor. Finally, each student will write a mini grant proposal related to one of the topics in their position papers and will hand it in at the end of the semester. This proposal will have to conform to NIH format and, thus, will include the following sections: Specific Aims, Background, Preliminary Studies, and Research Methods (with at least two different experiments).

Class Requirements

You are expected to attend all classes, read all assigned materials, and complete all assignments prior to class. You are requested to bring all current readings with you to class.

Paper Presentations

A list of papers will be provided on the class web site and each student will sign up at the beginning of the course for presentation of 2 of the papers. To facilitate the work in the class, all papers will be made available as .PDF files on the class web site. As a result, all students will be expected to read all the assigned papers, regardless of whether they present them or not. We can only have effective class discussion if everyone has read all the papers.

Course Grade will be based on:	Class Paper Presentations	15%
	Class Participation	10%
	Position Papers	40%
	Grant Proposal	35%

Position paper due dates: 1st Paper - September 30, 2005
2nd Paper - October 28, 2005

Mini grant proposal due date: Day of the final exam

Recommended Text:

The Cradle of Knowledge: Development of Perception in Infancy, Phillip J. Kellman & Martha R. Arterberry, MIT Press, 1988 (available from Amazon.com)