

Honors Critical Questions in Psychology
PSY 4923-001 CRN XXXXX Spring 2020
3 credits

Department of Psychology
College of Science
Florida Atlantic University

Meeting Time and Place

Tuesday and Thursday 11:00am – 12:20pm, Performing Arts (PA), Room 101

Prerequisites

3.2 GPA and invitation from Faculty

Instructor

Dr. David F. Bjorklund

Office: Behavioral Science 112

Email: dbjorklu@fau.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2pm - 5pm

Wednesday and Friday 10am – 1pm or by appointment

Course Web Site

This course is available through Canvas. Log in to: <https://canvas.fau.edu>

A course syllabus, announcements, PowerPoint slides, additional information and course instructions will be available on Canvas. In addition, grades will also be available on the site.

Required Texts

Title: Why youth is not wasted on the young: Immaturity in human development

Author: Bjorklund, David.

Publisher: Blackwell

Title: Why we cooperate

Author: Tomasello, M.

Publisher: MIT Press

Course Description

This is an advanced seminar-style course for honors undergraduate psychology and neuroscience and behavior students in which controversial issues from a psychological viewpoint will be discussed. Specific topics will vary from semester to semester, but will include topics such as the relationship between psychological development and evolution, the incidence of violence in society and the prosecution of violent acts, and whether artificial intelligence is a good model for human intelligence.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to acquaint students with the relationship between evolution and development, particularly evolutionary developmental psychology. The instructor will introduce key concepts, issues, and lines of research, but in each case students are expected to take an active role in discussing and developing the topic under consideration.

Course Requirements

Class discussion will center on readings assigned for each class meeting. Students are expected to have read this material prior to the class meeting and be prepared to discuss and critically evaluate it. Each student will be responsible for organizing and presenting the material concerning one or more topics during class meetings.

Students will write one review paper on a topic related to the course and approved by the instructor. They will also write six one-page commentaries on videos assigned by the instructor. Students will also complete a take-home final exam covering the material presented in readings and class discussion. Details regarding these requirements will be presented in class.

Note of Honors Distinction

This course differs substantially from a non-Honors course. The writing component of the course will be much more demanding and the expectations for participation in class discussions will be greater than in a typical undergraduate course. Students will also give in-class presentations requiring them to discuss and critically evaluate primary sources. Most importantly, this course will require critical thinking that will teach students how to learn for themselves. Students in the Honors Program must complete this course. This course can be taken in a student's junior or senior year, either before, after, or simultaneously with completion of the Honors Thesis.

Attendance Policy Statement

Attendance is mandatory and your performance in the class will invariably depend on your coming.

Course Evaluation Method

Students grades will be assigned according to the following weighted criteria:

Review Paper 25%

Final Exam 25%

Brief papers on videos 25%

Class participation 25%

Course Grading scale (%):

100 - 93.00 = A

92.99 - 90.00 = A-

89.99 - 87.00 = B+

86.99 - 83.00 = B

82.99 - 80.00 = B-

79.99 - 77.00 = C+

76.99 - 73.00 = C

72.99 - 70.00 = C-

69.99 - 67.00 = D+

66.99 - 63.00 = D

62.99 - 60.00 = D-

<59.99 = F

Policy on Missed Exams

Students will be allowed to take a make-up exam only for documented, University-sanctioned reasons and only if they have followed the below outlined procedures for receiving approval. For foreseeable instances in which the student will miss the exam period, students must provide acceptable documentation and get approval to make-up the exam **prior** to the absence. When an exam is missed due to an unforeseeable emergency, students must contact the instructor and provide acceptable documentation no later than 24 hours from the time of the missed exam to get approval to take a make-up exam.

No make-up exams will be administered to any student who does not have a documentable, University-sanctioned reason. Missing the exam for any reason other than those covered under the university policy or being unable to document a University-sanctioned reason will result in a student receiving a 0. For example, "My alarm did not go off." is not acceptable reason for missing an exam. Further, students are expected by the University to participate in the assigned final activity during the final exam period. **Scheduled travel arrangements that conflict with exam period do not fall under the University-sanctioned absence policy and therefore students are strongly urged to keep exam dates and times in minds when making any travel arrangements.**

Policy on Missed or Late Assignments

Ample time will be provided for students to complete assignments. Therefore, **NO late work will be accepted.** Please note that it is unusual for make-up opportunities because activities are assigned well before the due dates. Further, excuses such as, "I forgot about the assignments" or "I did not have Internet access at home" are not acceptable excuses that warrant assignment extensions. In other words, it behooves you to complete these assignments early. All assignments are due one hour before the start of class time on the day the assignment is due.

Credit Hour Definition: This course involves 50 minutes of in class instruction for each credit hour per week, and a minimum of two hours of out of class assignments each week for 15 weeks. To master the material covered in this course it is expected that the student will spend a *minimum* of two hours per week per credit hour on the out of classroom assignments.

Disability policy statement: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/

Code of Academic Integrity Policy Statement: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001. If your college has particular policies relating to cheating and plagiarism, state so here or provide a link to the full policy—but be sure the college policy does not conflict with the University Regulation.

Reasonable Accommodation Statement for Makeups: Reasonable accommodation will be made for students participating in a religious observance or in University-approved activities, including athletic or scholastics teams, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center: Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all their University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging

to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

Religious Accommodation

In accordance with rules of the Florida Board of Education and Florida law, students have the right to reasonable accommodations from the University in order to observe religious practices and beliefs with regard to admissions, registration, class attendance and the scheduling of examinations and work assignments. Students who wish to be excused from coursework, class activities or examinations must notify the instructor in advance of their intention to participate in religious observation and request an excused absence. The instructor will provide a reasonable opportunity to make up such excused absences. Any student who feels aggrieved regarding religious accommodations may present a grievance to the director of Equal Opportunity Programs. Any such grievances will follow Florida Atlantic University's established grievance procedure regarding alleged discrimination.

Course outline (Topics span multiple class meetings)

I. Evolution and Development (*Why Youth*, Chapters 1 & 2)

- a. Introduction to the course
- b. Evolution by natural selection
- c. Ontogeny and phylogeny

Reading:

Gould, S.J. (1980). A biological homage to Mickey Mouse. In *The Panda's Thumb*.

II. The Evolution of human life stages (*Why Youth*, Chapter 2, pp. 36-53; Chapter 3)

Video:

The Evolution of Childhood: The Role of Development in Explaining Human Uniqueness, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7BZUkb9Elw> (Melvin Konner lecture; 1 hour 4 minutes)

III. Evolutionary Developmental Psychology (*Why Youth*, re-read Chapter 1, pp 5-14;)

- a. Basic Assumptions of Evolutionary Developmental Psychology

Readings:

Bjorklund, D.F., & Ellis, B. J. (2014) Children, childhood, and development in evolutionary perspective. *Developmental Review*, 34, 225-264; pp. 225-232.

Spelke, E.S., & Kinzler, K.D. (2007). Core Knowledge. *Developmental Science*, 10, 89-96.

- b. Adaptations of Infancy and Childhood

IV. Evolutionary Developmental Psychology Continued (Chapters 4 & 5)

Reading:

Bjorklund, D.F., & Ellis, B.J. (2014). Children, childhood, and development in evolutionary perspective. *Developmental Review*, 34, 225-264; pp. 241-246.

- a. Developing Domains of Mind

Reading:

Bjorklund, D.F., & Ellis, B.J. (2014). Children, childhood, and development in evolutionary perspective. *Developmental Review*, 34, 225-264; pp. 246-256.

V. Play (*Why Youth*, Chapter 6)

Readings:

Nielsen, M. (2012). Imitation, pretend play, and childhood: Essential elements in the evolution of human culture? *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 126, 170-181.

"More U.S. Children Being Diagnosed With Youthful Tendency Disorder." (2000), Vol 36, Issue 34.

VI. The Evolution of Cooperation

Readings:

Tomasello, M. (2009). *Why we cooperate*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Chapter 1, 2, & 3

Warneken, R., & Melis, A. (2014). The ontogeny and phylogeny of cooperation. In J. Vonk and T.K Shackelford (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of comparative evolutionary psychology* (pp. 399-418). New York: Oxford university Press.

VII. Life History Theory and Risky Adolescent Behavior

Readings:

Bjorklund, D.F., & Ellis, B.J. (2014). Children, childhood, and development in evolutionary perspective. *Developmental Review, 34*, 225-264; pp. 232-240.

Ellis, B.J., Dahl, R.E., Del Giudice, M., Dishion, T.J., Figuerso, A.F., Gray, P., Hawley, P., Jackson, J.J., Jacobs, W.J., & Wilson, D. S. (2012). The evolutionary basis of risky adolescent behavior: Implications for science, policy and practice. *Developmental Psychology, 48*, 598-623.

VIII. Evolutionary Perspectives on Education (*Why Youth*, Chapters 7 & 8)

Video:

Peter Gray: The human Ancestral Environment for Education, and Its Relevance for Education Today. <http://evolution.binghamton.edu/evos/2009/10/video-of-peter-grays-evos-seminar/> (Gray lecture, 1 hour 5 minutes)

Assignments

Brief (one page, double spaced) comments on videos:

1. Evolution- It's a Thing, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3GagfbA2vo> (12 minutes- overview of evolution)

Is there any evidence of direct evolution, that is, that evolution has occurred over a human lifetime?

2. Human Evolution, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPggkvB9_dc (16 minutes- human evolution, emphasizing human sociality)

According to the video, what was the role of collective learning in human evolution? Do you agree?

3. Evolutionary Development: Chicken Teeth, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sjwlxQ_6LI (11 minutes- Evo-Devo and genetics; regulatory genes)

How can so few changes produce such great differences among species (e.g., *C. elegans* vs. mice vs. humans)?

4. The decline of play, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bg-GEzM7iTk> (16 minutes- Peter Gray on the decline of play)

Do you agree with Gray's argument that the decline in play and the increased emphasis on academic achievement is responsible for the increases we see in children's mental health problems.

5. Risky adolescent behavior, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyDpr_NmW5U (37 minutes- Bruce Ellis, An Evolutionary Developmental Perspective on Mental health)

How does an evolutionary developmental psychological perspective differ from the "traditional mental health model" in explaining adolescent risky behavior?

6. Risky adolescent behavior, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrSZVWT-1c> (33 minutes, Jay Belsky on life history theory)

Why should natural selection craft an organism whose future functioning is influenced by its early experiences?