EDHD 711: Peer-Culture and Group Processes in Human Development
(3 CREDITS)

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Office hours:
Thursday: 10:30 AM-Noon.

Class Meetings:
Tuesday: 1:15-4:00 PM.

Course Content:
In this course, we will discuss issues and topics relevant to the study of children’s peer interactions, relationships, and groups. Several themes will run through the course material: (1) the interdependencies of individual characteristics (e.g., gender; age; personality), social behaviors (e.g., aggression; exclusion; victimization; prosocial behavior), social relationships (e.g., friendships; peer acceptance and rejection), and social groups (e.g., peer networks); (2) the relations between familial factors (e.g. attachment; parenting) and extra-familial peer interactions and relationships; (3) proximal and distal causes and consequences of normal and abnormal peer relationships (e.g., the developmental “costs” of peer rejection, exclusion, and victimization); and (4) cross-cultural universals and differences related to “all of the above”.

The typical child and adolescent spends significant periods of time, each day, in the company of peers. With increasing age, these periods of time with peers lengthen and extend beyond formal settings such as school and adult-led extracurricular activities. Significantly, it is within these various peer contexts that children and adolescents acquire a wide range of skills, attitudes, and experiences that influence their adaptation across the lifespan. Accordingly, peers are viewed as powerful socialization "agents," contributing well beyond the collective influences of family, school, and neighborhood, to child and adolescent social, emotional, and cognitive well-being and adjustment. Given these empirically supported realities, it is rather surprising that until 2010 and the publication of the Handbook of Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups, there has not been published a collection of reviews within which the history of research and theory, and descriptions of contemporary research and methods pertaining to child and adolescent peer interactions, relationships, and groups are considered within a single book-binding. And so, course participants will find, therein, a collection of chapters within which eminent researchers describe current theoretically and empirically derived findings about peer interactions, relationships, and groups.

The chapters that make up the Handbook of Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups can be viewed as both historical accounts and as state-of-the-art descriptions. The chapters represent historical accounts as they describe the remarkable progress of research on peer interactions, relationships, and groups during the past five decades. They also provide a detailed description of what we know...
at this moment about the features, processes and effects of children’s and adolescents’ experiences with their peers.

Like the course, the Handbook is organized topically and developmentally. It begins with two chapters outlining historical and theoretical underpinnings to contemporary research on peer interactions, relationships, and groups. This is followed by a section on methods and measures centered on each of peer interactions, relationships, or groups. Thereafter, there are separate chapters focused on peer interactions, relationships, and groups within infancy and early childhood, followed by chapters focused on these same general constructs in middle childhood and adolescence. Beyond these developmentally-oriented sections, there are separate sections on such topics as the proximal (genes, temperament, parents, and family) and distal (race/ethnicity, culture, neighborhood) factors influencing peer interactions, relationships, and groups in childhood and adolescence. The Handbook ends with two sections – one in which the varied consequences (school and psychological adjustment) of children’s peer experiences are described and the other in which policy and translational issues are noted.

All-in-all this course and the Handbook that will provide the readings for the seminar marks a historical step in the field of developmental science. Thirty years ago, the field of Developmental Science remained generally consumed by the notion that the primary influence on socio-emotional development emanated from the quality of children’s and adolescents parent-child interactions and relationships. By the end of this course, you will know of the significance of peer interactions, relationships and groups.

Textbook:

Course Goals

Course goals may be broadly described as follows:

1. To enhance your understanding and familiarity with the literature and methods re: the *scientific and developmental* study of peer interactions, relationships, and groups;

2. To give you a better understanding of the how theory and cultural assumptions influence empirical research and how to recognize the implications of theory for research;

3. To help develop your skills for scholarly communication by providing opportunities to make presentations and produce written work in formats that mimic those used by professionals in the field.

Course Requirements

Grades will be assigned on the basis of performance with regard to the following:

1. **Topic Presentations and Discussion.** Students will take responsibility for “two-thirds” of one class meeting, focusing on a particular aspect of peer interactions, relationships, and groups. Presentation topics will be linked to the general topics (and chapters) listed below in this syllabus. Assignment of specific topics and scheduling of presentations will occur between the first and second class meeting. Although some of the presentation can be didactic, students are expected to involve all class members in a rigorous discussion of the issues that they
present. Evaluation will be based on both the substantive content of the presentation as well as the student's skill in leading a sophisticated discussion of issues emanating from her/his topic.

b. Students are encouraged to be creative in their mode of presentation, so as to engage class members in the topic. Our meeting room features audiovisual equipment that students can use in their presentations.

c. At the class prior to the seminar, presenters will be responsible for providing classmates with a typed (and/or e-mailed) outline of their presentation. Additional readings (typically up to three empirical research articles) will appear on the outline and will be sent to each student as PDF files.

d. Students should arrange a meeting with the instructor at least two weeks in advance of the presentation, to discuss the content of the class meeting and assigned readings.

(35 percent of grade).

(2) Research Proposal and Presentation. Following a set of prescribed guidelines, class participants will be required to write a brief research proposal on a topic to be mutually agreed upon with the Instructor. The proposal must not exceed 3000 words (double spaced, including references). Guidelines for writing the proposal will be distributed in class.

a. The due date for the assignment is Apr 21st @ 4 PM. Absolutely no extensions will be given. A loss of one percentage point will be assigned for each day that the assignment is late. Assignments should be sent to the course instructor as a WORD-file.

Following submission of the proposal, each student will describe the project to the class-at-large. Classmates will provide feedback. This session will take no longer than 20 minutes of class time. Feedback can be incorporated into a revision of the manuscript if the student wishes to do so.

(50 percent of grade).

(3) Class Participation and Discussion. Each student is required to attend each meeting of the seminar and to play an active role in class discussions. Active participation includes discussing the presentations given as well as demonstrating that the assigned readings have been read. Active participation also means providing feedback to fellow students during the presentation of their research proposals. Every unexcused class missed by a student will result in the loss of 5 percent of the final grade.

(15 percent of grade).
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TOPICS

Jan 27  Introduction to course and course requirements

Feb 3  History, theories and guiding principles (Chapters 1 and 2)
       Ken Rubin

Feb 10  Measuring/Assessing peer interactions and relationships
        (Chapters 3, 4, 5)
        Ken Rubin

Feb 17  Measuring/Assessing peer relationships and groups
        (Chapters 4, 5, 6)
        Ken Rubin

Toddlers: Interactions, relationships, and groups
        (Chapter 7)

Feb 24  Preschoolers: Interactions, relationships, and groups
        (Chapters 8, 9, 10)

Mar 3   Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence: Acceptance, Rejection, Perceived Popularity
        (Chapters 13, 30)

Mar 10  Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence: Friendship
        (Chapters 12, 31)

Mar 17  Class is cancelled. Spring Break

Mar 24  Middle childhood and adolescence: Aggression and Bullying
        (Chapters 16, 18)

Mar 31  Middle childhood and adolescence: Social isolation and withdrawal
        (Chapter 17)
        Ken Rubin

Apr 7   Proximal Correlates of Children’s Social Skills and Peer Relations: Genetics, Temperament, and Personality
        (Chapters 25, 26)

Apr 14  Proximal Correlates of Children’s Social Skills and Peer Relations: Parenting, Parent-Child Relationships, Families
        (Chapters 27, 28)
Apr 21  Distal Correlates of Children’s Social Skills and Peer Relations: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture  
(Chapters 22, 23, 24)

Apr 28  Early adolescence: Romantic relationships; cliques, groups, crowds  
(Chapters 19, 20)

May 5  Translation and policy  
(Chapters 29, 32)

May 12  Presentations of graduate research projects  
TOPICS
CLASS POLICIES

Academic integrity: The University of Maryland, College Park has a student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. The code prohibits students from cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. Instances of this include submitting someone else’s work as your own, submitting your own work completed for another class without permission, or failing to properly cite information other than your own (found in journals, books, online, or otherwise). Any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and any sign of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate University officials.

Special needs: If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please see the instructor so necessary arrangements can be made. If you have a disability and have not yet registered with the University, please contact Disability Support Services in the Shoemaker Building (301.314.7682, or 301.405.7683 TTD) as soon as possible.

Religious observances: The University of Maryland policy on religious observances states that students not be penalized in any way for participation in religious observances. Students shall be allowed, whenever possible, to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. However, the must contact the instructor before the absence with a written notification of the projected absence, and arrangements will be made for make-up work or examinations.

Course evaluations: As a member of our academic community, students have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit course evaluations each term though CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. Campus will notify you when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses. Please go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing online, at Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

Missed single class due to illness: Once during a semester, a student’s self-authored note will be accepted as an excuse for missing a minor scheduled grading event in a single class session if the note documents the date of the illness, acknowledgement from the student that information provided in the note is correct, and a statement that the student understands that providing false information is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Students are expected to attempt to inform the instructor of the illness prior to the date of the missed class.*

Major scheduled grading events: Major Scheduled Grading Events (MSGE) are indicated on the syllabus. The conditions for accepting a self-signed note do not apply to these events. Written, signed documentation by a health care professional, or other professional in the case of non-medical reasons (see below) of a University-approved excuse for the student’s absence must
be supplied. This documentation must include verification of treatment dates and the time period for which the student was unable to meet course requirements. Providers should not include diagnostic information. Without this documentation, opportunities to make up missed assignments or assessments will not be provided.

**Non-consecutive, medically necessitated absences from multiple class sessions:** Students who throughout the semester miss multiple, non-consecutive class sessions due to medical problems must provide written documentation from a health care professional that their attendance on those days was prohibited for medical reasons.

**Non-medical excused absences:** According to University policy, non-medical excused absences for missed assignments or assessments may include illness of a dependent, religious observance, involvement in University activities at the request of University officials, or circumstances that are beyond the control of the student. Students asking for excused absence for any of those reasons must also supply appropriate written documentation of the cause and make every attempt to inform the instructor prior to the date of the missed class.