

COGNITIVE AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Psychology 352, Winter 2015
Queen's University

M: 11:30-13:00, Macdonald 1
Th: 13:00-14:30, Biosci 1103

Instructor: Dr. Stanka Fitneva
Email: fitneva@queensu.ca
Office hours: Friday 2:30-3:30pm, H349

TA: Nicole Bardikoff, Nicole.Bardikoff@queensu.ca
TA: Rebecca Stead, Ors1@queensu.ca
Office hours: TBA

Introduction and Overview

Children perceive, consider, and explain the world in ways that are sometimes similar, and sometimes dissimilar to the ways adults explain it. Where there are similarities, particularly similarities that can be seen in infants, we gain insight into how the human mind has evolved to understand the world. Dissimilarities, in contrast, flag the areas in which idiosyncratic experience, culture, and biological maturation play their roles in shaping how we come to think the way we do. The goal of this course is to provide an overview of the basic scientific enterprise of understanding the developmental origins of human cognition and language, and the mechanisms that cause change over the childhood period.

Structure of the Course

Following the structure of the textbook, we will first survey the field from a theoretical perspective that uses examples from research to illustrate how particular theoretical mechanisms might work. Following this, we will survey a number of broad domains of research on cognitive and language development. Throughout these sections there will be more of a focus on the abilities and capacities that infants (or young children) might start with and how those change over time.

In general, each of the specific domains that we cover will be introduced with an "overview" lecture. This will be followed by a "focus" class in which we will attempt to focus more closely on either specific research studies or theoretical points of contemporary interest. The reading material for "focus" sessions will be primary literature that has been written by and for scientists in the field. I expect this material to be challenging, but I hope that students who engage the material will find it rewarding.

Required course materials

Siegler, R. S. & Alibali, M. W. (2005). *Children's Thinking*. Prentice-Hall.

Supplemental readings available through Moodle.

Evaluation

In-class exam 1 (covers material from beginning to exam): 25%

In-class exam 2 (covers material since previous exam): 25%

Science News Report: 10%

Final exam (cumulative): 40%

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen's Official Grade Conversion Scale:

Grade	Numerical Course Average (Range)
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	49 and below

The in-class exams and the final will consist of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and essay questions. For the Science News Report (2.5 pages max, single spaced), you will work in a group to distill the findings of 2 or 3 primary research articles for the general public, highlight their theoretical importance, identify their implications for public policy, education, or the family, and identify any shortcoming in the research or directions for future research. Further details will be provided in the third week of class, after enrollment is set.

You can find the dates of the exams and the due date for the Science News Report in the schedule of classes below. The final exam will be scheduled during the final exam period.

Please see the departmental website:

<http://www.queensu.ca/psychology/undergraduate/current-students/departmental-policies>

This site includes department policies regarding exam absences (and arranging makeup exams), travel during exams (which is not a valid excuse for missing or deferring an exam), and accommodation after the fact. If you know now that you cannot attend one of the exams, please contact me immediately to discuss your situation.

Disability Accommodation

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at:

<http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/>

FAQs

Will this be on the exam? There will not be complete overlap between the material that is covered in the textbook and the material that is covered in lecture. Some material will be textbook only, and some will be lecture only. I have not yet composed the exams and so I do not know what will be on the exam, but please know that all material that has been presented in the course is fair game for the exam.

How should I study for the exam? As you study, the main questions you should be asking yourself is "What?" and "Why? or How?" So, for instance, you might ask "What did Piaget think about kids between the ages of 0-2 and why did he think that?" Or, you might ask "What is the biological basis for language and how do we know that?" If you have good answers to these questions, you are probably in great shape.

Will your lectures be online? The media (presentations, videos, pictures, etc.) I use in lecture will be available to download from the class Moodle site following the lecture. The media are selected and designed with the intention of enhancing the lecture and promoting active, thoughtful engagement of the material, but rarely will they be informative on their own. They are not my lecture notes, and they are not meant to be copied from as a substitute for engaging the material. This may be a little different from your experiences in other courses, but I hope that it will promote a meaningful, self-motivated learning experience.

Academic Integrity & Copyright

Academic Integrity. Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Faculty of Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/students-at-queens/academic-integrity>) and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the

seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Additional Comments

Although this is a large class, please feel free to ask questions about the course material at any time. If you are not comfortable talking in class, send me an email. Please visit me in office hours to chat over a cup of coffee or tea. The lecture format is impersonal and I would like to get to know folks and hear what everyone is thinking about the class.

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Week	Day	Topic	Reading
1	Monday, September 14	Why study Cognitive and Language Development?	Chapter 1
	Thursday, September 17	Piaget: Infancy and preschool years	Chapter 2
2	Monday, September 21	Piaget: School-age to adolescence	Chapter 2
	Thursday, September 24	Information processing approach	Chapter 3
3	Monday, September 28	Specific information processing theories	Chapter 3
	Thursday, October 1	Socio-cultural theories: Vygotsky	Chapter 4
4	Monday, October 5	Growing up within a culture	Childhood in three cultures
	Thursday, October 8	In-class exam #1	
5	Monday, October 12	Thanksgiving - No Class	
	Thursday, October 15	Language development 1: from sound to speech	Chapter 5 pp. 164-174 Werker, J.F., Yeung, H. H., & Yoshida, K. (2012). How do infants become native speech perception experts? <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i> . 21(4), 221-226.
6	Monday, October 19	Language development 2	Chapter 6
	Thursday, October 22	Language development 3	Chapter 6
7	Monday, October 26	Focus: Language and thought	http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/630 (positions and featured guest comments)
	Thursday, October 29	Memory Development	Chapter 7
8	Monday, November 2	Focus: Truth and consequences	Principe, G., Kanaya, T., Ceci, S. J., & Singh, M. (2006). Believing is seeing: How rumors can engender false memories in preschoolers. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 17, 243-248.

	Thursday, November 5	Conceptual Development	Chapter 8
9	Monday, November 9	Focus: The number sense	Libertus, M. E., & Branon, E. M. (2009). Behavioral and neural basis of number sense in infancy. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i> , 18, 346-351.
	Thursday, November 12	In-class exam #2	
10	Monday, November 16	In-class group work	
	Thursday, November 19	Social Cognitive development	Chapter 9
11	Monday, November 23	Focus: The social world	Rakoczy, H., & Schmidt, M. F. H. (2013). The early ontogeny of social norms. <i>Child Development Perspectives</i> , 7(1), 17-21.
	Thursday, November 26	Problem Solving Science News Report due	Chapter 10
12	Monday, November 30	Focus: Tools and strategies Report votes	Richland, L.E., & Burchinal, M. (2012). Early executive function predicts reasoning development, <i>Psychological Science</i> , 24,87-92.
	Thursday, December 3	Wrap-up/Review	

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