Child and Adolescent Development: A Psychological Perspective

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Credit Rating 20 credits, SCQF 11

Aims
The course aims to enable students to:
• Extend and update their knowledge of child and adolescent development;
• Critically evaluate explanations of the key processes and mechanisms of developmental change;
• Identify the implications of child development for working with children in education and other contexts;
• Identify the research implications and the limitations of current theories of developmental processes and outcomes.

Teaching
10 x 2.5 hours = 25 hours
Lectures, workshops, group activities and discussions, individual student presentations, and a student-led seminar.

Assessment
One essay of 4,000

Course Sessions
1. Introduction to Developmental Theory and Methods: This session provides an overview of some of the key features of developmental theory, identifies aspects (physical, cognitive and social) and contexts of development. It will highlight current theoretical debates within developmental psychology. Finally, different methods of researching child and adolescent development will be reviewed and discussed.

2. Infant Development: An overview of developmental change between the ages of birth and two years will be provided including physical development and motor ability, social development and emotional attachments and cognition.

3. Childhood Social Development: Social development between the ages of two years and 11 years will be described and evaluated including parental styles, friendships and self-esteem.

4. Childhood Physical Development: Physical development between two and 11 years will be explored including physical growth and changes in motor ability. Issues relating to child health and injuries will also be discussed. The second half of this session will comprise a workshop to explore individual differences in physical development focusing on handedness and dyspraxia. This will involve experience of using left-handed equipment and discussing challenges facing children with dyspraxia.

5. Childhood Cognitive Development: A range of theories of cognitive development among children aged two to 11 years will be contrasted including Piagetian theory, Vygotskian theory and domain-specific approaches (e.g. Karmiloff-Smith, 1992).

6. Adolescent Physical Development: This session will discuss trends in research on
adolescent development. It will then focus on the processes and consequences of puberty including the effects of achieving puberty early or late compared to one's age-peers.

7. Adolescent Cognitive Development: This session will focus on recent work on cognitive changes in adolescence including neuropsychological research. The second half of this session will comprise group discussions on images of adolescence in the media and how this might impact on the public, adolescent and funding of adolescent research.

8. Adolescent Social Development: Important developments in family relations, peer-group affiliations and peer-group structures, and friendships will be discussed.

9. Gender and Development: This session is a student led seminar on the importance of gender in development. Students will work in small groups to prepare short presentations on a variety of aspects of development that have been shown to be influenced by gender (e.g. cognition and educational attainment, pubertal timing, and friendship development). The aim of this session is to highlight that while developmental psychology focuses largely on age differences there are also systematic within age variations in development.

10. Course Overview and Assignment Clinic: A review and synthesis of findings in developmental psychology will be presented drawing on research and theory covered by the course. The second half of the session will be devoted to providing advice and guidance on the course assignment.

Selected Reading

Relevant Journals
British Journal of Developmental Psychology
Child Development
Developmental Psychology
Journal of Adolescence

July 2009