The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus Template

Course title: Developmental Psychology

Course code: SOSC2990

Credits: 3

Pre-requisites: SOSC 1960 or SOSC 1980

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Course Description

This course introduces students to developmental theory and research across the lifespan and explores the interaction of heredity and environment from conception through death. In addition, the impact of sociocultural contexts (culture, gender, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity, etc.) on physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development will be considered throughout the semester. Students should complete the course with a deeper understanding of key theories, research methods, and research findings on human development.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate fundamental knowledge and comprehension of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends related to developmental psychology.
2. Describe how developmental theories and concepts can be applied in evaluating and solving human problems related to a variety of issues, for examples, parenting, education, close relationships, and mental health.
3. Identify specific socio-cultural contexts (e.g., culture, society, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.), the ways these influence human growth and development, and how socially responsible behaviors can be informed by these factors.
4. Demonstrate scientific reasoning and problem-solving and describe common research methods within developmental psychology including longitudinal, cross-sectional, and cohort-sequential research.
5. Demonstrate competence in writing and in oral and interpersonal skills in activities and assignments related to lifespan development in context.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Class Participation	10%	/
Group Project		
Presentation	20%	7/5/2026
Take-home Kit	10%	12/5/2026
Exams		
Midterm	20%	12/3/2026
Final	40%	TBD
Total	100%	

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Class Participation	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	This task assesses the ability to explain and apply fundamental knowledge and major concepts related to developmental psychology in real life (ILO1, ILO2), identify and evaluate related factors (ILO3), use research methods to write and present related topics (ILO4, ILO5).
Group Project **Presentation** **Take-home kit**	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	This task assesses the ability to explain and apply fundamental knowledge and major concepts related to developmental psychology in real life (ILO1, ILO2), identify and evaluate related factors (ILO3), use research methods to write and present related topics (ILO4, ILO5).
Quizzes **Midterm** **Final**	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	This task assesses the ability to explain and apply fundamental knowledge and major concepts related to developmental psychology in real life (ILO1, ILO2), identify and evaluate related factors (ILO3), use research methods to write and present related topics (ILO4, ILO5).

1. **Class Participation (10%+ 2% bonus points)**
   - You are expected to attend every class. Class Participation is gained through **10** in-class activities (via Qualtrics) and group discussions (via Group activities). Each class participation takes up **1**% to the final score.
   - Additionally, class participation can also be earned through active in-class participation including answering questions and taking part in on-stage activities and demonstrations, for up to 2 (bonus) points.

2. **Mid-term Quiz (20%) + Final Quiz (40%)**

- Two quizzes will be administered to test your understanding of course materials. Exams are multiple-choice and True/False questions, and non-cumulative. Exams count for 20% (Mid-term) and 40% (Final) separately and cover all materials in lectures and required readings (the relevant chapters will appear on the last page of the lecture handouts).
- Supplementary readings are also listed in the lecture note but they will NOT be included in the exams. These readings are useful for a deeper understanding of the course contents.
- Midterm quiz is scheduled on **March 12** and covers topics from **Chapter 1-4.** Final exam is scheduled during the final examination period and covers all topics**.**
- Arrive on time for the exams as no additional time will be given for students arriving late.
- No make-up exams will be given to students who are absent from the examination unless students can provide <u>validated medical reasons</u>. You should notify the instructor (through email) about your absence by attaching your <u>official medical certificate</u> **within 24 hours** of the original exam date if you wish to arrange for a make-up exam. All make-up exams will ONLY be in the form of **essays and oral questions**.

3. **Group Project: Presentation (20%) + Take-home kit (10%)**
   - In a group of 5, you will <u>give a presentation for 10 minutes and a Q&A session for 5 minutes</u> on a pre-determined topic.
   - Based on what you have learned in this course, your group will design an educational program or application to help children or adolescents learn and develop, grounded in one developmental psychology theory or concept (e.g., Piaget's cognitive stages, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Erikson's psychosocial stages, information-processing theory, attachment theory, parenting styles, etc.).
   - The goal of this project is to bridge theory and application by using scientific principles of developmental psychology to design an innovative and age-appropriate learning service or tool. Your presentation should demonstrate how theory informs the program's or the app's design, indicate why it is developmentally suitable for the target age group, and discuss its sociocultural relevance.
   - Groups will be formed during class time on **Feb 24**. You may find your groupmates in class and submit the group name list before Feb 24 on Canvas group. For those who did not form groups or are absent on **Feb 24**, we will assign a group for you.
   - Your project's topic will be assigned in Week 7 (March 17).

Grading Rubrics

Grades		Grading description
A	Excellent	Demonstrates thorough and insightful understanding of developmental theories, concepts, and research findings across the lifespan. Consistently applies knowledge to real-world issues with depth and accuracy. Exhibits strong critical and scientific reasoning, integrates sociocultural perspectives effectively, and communicates ideas clearly and professionally in both written and oral formats.
B	Good	Demonstrates solid understanding of major developmental theories and research. Applies concepts appropriately to practice and interprets findings with reasonable accuracy. Shows good analytical reasoning and awareness of sociocultural factors, though with occasional gaps in depth or integration. Communicates clearly and competently.

C	Satisfactory	Meets the basic requirements of the course and demonstrates general understanding of fundamental concepts and theories. Application to real-world issues and developmental contexts is apparent but limited in depth, precision, or critical reflection. Communication and reasoning are adequate but may lack coherence or detail.
D	Marginal Pass	Shows partial or inconsistent understanding of major developmental concepts and theories. Application of knowledge is limited or inaccurate, and reasoning lacks clarity or integration. Communication demonstrates minimal engagement with course content.
F	Fail	Fails to demonstrate adequate understanding of developmental psychology concepts or research. Work shows significant conceptual errors, lack of application, and minimal effort or engagement. Does not meet minimum course learning outcomes.

Course AI Policy

Restrict ways of using generative AI tools for assessment.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include specific details of strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Texts and Materials

Berger, K.S. (2016). *Invitation to the life span.* (4th ed.) NY: Worth Publishers.

Robert Siegler et al. (2017). *How children develop* (5th ed.) NY: Worth Publishers.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Some Notes
- Course communication platform – All lecture materials and announcements will be posted on **CANVAS**. Be sure to check CANVAS frequently for any updated news
- Interaction in class – I believe interactions (both verbal and non-verbal) between lecturer and students (and among students) are one of the key ingredients to an optimal learning experience. Your active participation in class discussion or activities will not only enhance your learning, but also motivate the teaching team to do better!
- Lecture slides – Lecture slides will be posted to CANVAS before each class, but the contents will be a bit different from the displayed slides as I hope to encourage you to take your own notes. Note-taking facilitates your reflection and assimilation of the lecture contents.

- Modifications to the Syllabus - I reserve the right to modify the syllabus in response to your needs and unforeseen circumstances. Any changes in the syllabus will be announced in class and posted as announcements on CANVAS. Please be aware that you are responsible for keeping up-to-date with all course announcements.
- Late submission – For any group assignment, the group leader will do the submission. Submissions received less than 5 hours after the deadline will not be penalized. No submissions will be accepted after 5 hours on the due date and time.
- Communication – Please expect that your emails will be responded to during weekdays 10am to 6pm HKT.
- Your feedback – Your opinions about the course are very valuable to help me improve the course. Feel free to drop by to talk to me. A course evaluation will also be held at the end of the course.

Teaching Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Chapters
1	Feb 3	Introduction	Chapter 1
	Feb 5	Research in Lifespan Development & Theories	
2	Feb 10	Genes and Prenatal Development	Chapter 2
	Feb 12	The First Two Years: Body and Mind (3)	Chapter 3
3	Feb 17	*Lunar New Year Holiday (no class)*	-
	Feb 19		
4	Feb 24	The First Two Years: Body and Mind	Chapter 3
	Feb 26		
5	March 3	The First Two Years: Psychosocial Development	Chapter 4
	March 5		
6	March 10	Review of Early life development	Chapters 1-4
	March 12	**Midterm Exam (covers Chapters 1-4)**	
7	March 17	Early Childhood: Brain and Body	Chapter 5
	March 19		
8	March 24	Early Childhood: Psychosocial Development	Chapter 6
	March 26		
9	March 31	Middle childhood	Chapter 7 & 8
	April 2	Documentary Day & Group Discussion	Supplemental Material
10	April 7	*Mid-Term Break (no class)*	-
	April 9	Group Project Clinic	-
11	April 14		
	April 16	Adolescence	Chapter 9 & 10
12	April 21	Emerging Adulthood	Chapter 11
	April 23	Middle adulthood	Chapter 12
13	April 28	Review of Developmental Life Span	Chapters 5-12
	April 30	Group Presentation & Discussion	-
14	May 5		
	May 7		

Important dates & Deadlines

Feb 24	Group formed
March 12	Midterm Exam
March 17	Group project topic assigned
April 29	Group presentation PPT
May 8	Peer evaluation
May 12	Take-home kit
TBD	Final Exam