SYLLABUS – PSY 493-005 Issues in Psychology (W)

**NEUROSCIENCE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Weds & Fri, 10:20-11:40, Psychology 119

**Instructor**

Dr Melissa Johnson

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**Office hours by appointment – please feel free to email me to arrange. Just because I don’t have posted office hours, doesn’t mean I don’t want to see you – I do, it’s just easier to arrange on a case-by-case basis. We can meet in the Psychology department.**

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This writing (W) course will examine brain and mind development during the first five years of a child’s life, including in-utero. The focus of is on content but also writing (we will have writing tutorials, written assessments). The content (lectures, quizzes) will focus primarily on prenatal influences on brain development, and postnatal brain development as it corresponds to sensory and mental function. For ease of organization and class discussion of topics, it is organized into three modules:

Module 1

1. Nature and Nurture (Life in the womb): nature and nurture; prenatal brain development, prenatal influences on brain development; brain and birth.

Module 2

1. The senses (Pre-and post-natal development): Touch, taste, smell, vestibular, hearing, vision.
2. Cognitive functions (The magic of age 4): Motor, intelligence; memory; socio-emotional; Theory of Mind; language.

Module 3

**By the end of the course:**

Have a good understanding of how the brain develops and how this impacts a developing fetus/baby/infant/child: There is a heavy focus on real-life, what they can do (or prefer) and why. Students say the course will be useful to them in their life.

Understand the process of brain development from its basic stages of neural development to the functional development of different regions. You will appreciate the relative influences of nature and nurture on sensory and cognitive development, and how human brain development is in many ways a form of ‘mini-evolution’.

You hopefully will be a better writer and appreciate the importance of trying to write for your reader. You will hopefully also have an appreciation for the power of planning an essay.

You will appreciate the importance of completing work on time and attending and contributing to class.

**RECOMMENDED COURSE TEXT**

**Eliot, L. “What’s going on in there: How the Brain and Mind develop in the first five years of life” (2000) Bantam Books, ISBN: 0553-37825-2**

This book is written by a behavioral neuroscientist who is also a parent - it is not a textbook but rather a parenting/popular psychology text. It is written in a style for a parent, however it has great value (and is scientifically sound) and provides an easily digestible discussion on complex developmental brain science from a neuroscientist’s perspective. I hope you will learn much about good writing from reading this book. The topics of lectures (see course schedule) corresponds to chapters in this text, and the lecture material will focus (and expand) upon information contained in the book.

**Additional readings**

For each lecture, there may be additional readings (empirical papers) that will be on the D2L site for the course. The number of additional readings will vary per lecture, but should be between 1-3 (depending on their length/level of complexity, etc.). **You are expected to read these papers.** Given they are on topics based on a scientist’s topic of study (i.e., written by experts in their respective fields) they go into a level of detail often beyond that covered in class. Please don’t be intimidated by this—you don’t need to try and understand or memorize all of it (try and get the gist). **You are also encouraged to go beyond the additional readings sent to you, and to independently find other relevant articles** (**particularly on topics** that interest you, or **that you choose to write an essay on**). One way to do this is to do a literature search (i.e., on PubMed, Web of Science, Google) and/or to read other papers in the reference section of the papers you have been given (or other papers cited in the recommended course book ‘What’s going on in there’ by Lise Eliot.

**D2L COURSE PAGE**

The D2L page is organized like the course into three modules. **Modules and assignments will become visible to you as we progress through the course.** The D2L page appears like this:

Overview: Syllabus

Course schedule: see Full schedule tab for all assignment deadlines

Grading rubric: Really important, please refer to for all assignments

Writing materials: Additional resources for effective writing, guides and tips

Tutorials: Materials to support our 5 tutorials, e.g., Chicago School videos, ABA essay, handouts and reading for tutorials – focus on Tutorials on writing.

Assignment details: Includes copy of grading rubric. Essay 1 & 2 questions (when released), word counts, etc. There is a **submission portal** for all of the graded assignments typed outside of class, in Assessments> Assignments tab on D2L.

In-class assignments are not on submitted on D2L, though grades may be released into a folder in the Assignments tab, or in class if work returned.

Module 1: Lecture handouts, required or suggested readings, videos, homework

Module 2: Lecture handouts, required or suggested readings, videos, homework

Module 3: Lecture handouts, required or suggested readings, videos, homework

Quizzes (one per module) will be available on D2L for study purposes, see in Assessments> Quizzes tab (when completed in-person). You can re-take multiple times on D2L and it will remove questions you get correct on re-takes (quiz scores on D2L do not contribute to your final grade).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

* Read the accompanying chapter in the course book, and readings/lecture handouts/videos on D2L for each lecture
* Attend lectures, tutorials and exams on time, excuse absence from class -email me BEFORE class.
* Contribute to class and/or small group discussion
* Complete assignments on time (email me ahead of deadline if any delays, or email me your assignment if issue with submission on D2L).
* High grades require independent reading (finding relevant articles), critical thinking.
* Work is required outside of class – you should aim to spend at least 3-4 hours per week working on reading the textbook, required readings for class, ungraded homework (designed to support your learning), revising/preparing for quizzes/exams, and working on written assignments.
* Don’t feel daunted: Having a class which is heavily weighted on written assessments may be intimidating especially if you don’t feel like a confident writer, and that’s ok. You can (and should) still take this class! My aim is that this course will help to improve your writing, and you will appreciate the value of writing to express ideas to your reader (rather than for yourself). If you are an average writer and/or want to improve and learn how to engage with a reader, or you are a good writer, you can do well (and shine) on this course. Students whose first language is not English have also done well on this course. Demonstrating your understanding of the course content is the main focus of written assignments with respect to grading.

**WHAT YOUR GRADE IS BASED ON**

**80% of your final grade is based on writing assignments** (while 15% on multiple-choice quizzes and 5% student engagement).

You will be using **pen and paper for in-class assignments which will be 60% of your final grade** (quizzes-using scantrons [15%], written exams, [30%] short in-class writing assignments [15%]. **Outside of class assignments will be typed and will be 35% of your final grade** (Nature OR Nurture—Three Identical Strangers [5%], Essays 1 & 2 [30%]).

FIRST HALF OF COURSE

**5%** Three Identical Strangers, due 9/12, out of class, (to peers)

**10%** Essay writing 1 (feedback provided)due 10/3, out of class, (to parent/academic)

**6-9%^♦** In-class writing assignments (3% ea.), on 9/10, 10/8, 10/22), in-class, (short paragraph answers)

**10%** Quizzes (Mods 1 & 2; 2 @ 5% ea.) on 9/24 & 10/17, in-class, (multiple-choice)

**10%** Essay 1 revised due 10/24, out of class (**optional; if no revision, original Essay 1 grade repeats.** If you do resubmit, your revised score will not reduce, but it can stay the same, or go up**).**

**15%** Exam 1 on 10/29 & 10/31, in-class, (plan**^**=5%, essay=10%)

SECOND HALF Of COURSE

**6-9%^** **♦**In-class writing assignments (3% ea.), on 11/5, 11/12 & 11/19), in-class, (short paragraph answers)

**10%** Essay 2 due 11/21, out of class, (to other reader; parent or academic)

**15%** Exam 2 on 12/3 & 12/5, in-class, (plan**^**=5%, essay=10%)

**5%** Quizzes (Mod 3) on 12/3 (before exam), in-class, (multiple-choice)

**5%^** Engagement (across entire course)—expected of employers when you graduate.

(Meeting deadlines =2.5%^, Class engagement=2.5%^)

**^**These assignments will receive a numerical (A-F) grade (ordinal data) rather than a detailed % score (interval data) like your other graded writing. In your final grade calculations: A=94%, B=88, C=81, D=74, E=63, F= 58, fail=0 %.

**♦You complete 6 in-class writing assignments but only your best five will contribute to your final score (lowest one dropped).**

(With the exception of **^**)Whenever I grade written work, I give a percentage (e.g., 90%), which corresponds to a grade (i.e., 3.5). See grade boundary table below.

Each quiz will give you a % score (~15 questions per quiz).

Final grade boundaries are:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| % score | 93+ | 87-92 | 80-86 | 73-79 | 67-72 | 62-66 | 57-61 | <57% |
| Grade | 4.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 1.0 | fail |

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**As a general rule, each Wednesday, first 20 mins of class will be for in-class assignments** (in-class writing assignments, quizzes, non-graded exercises related to writing and/or being a reader).

All graded writing assignments are due on a Friday by midnight.

Graded assignments in **red**

W 8/27 Introductions – How to read a paper – reading nature/nurture.

F 8/29 Nature vs Nurture

W 9/3 ‘Three Identical Strangers’ video watch – *assignment given*

F 9/5 Tutorial 1– Writing for your reader, Chicago School videos; my ABA essay; effective beginning and final paragraphs; transitions.

W 9/10  *[****in-class writing assignment****]* Biology of Prenatal Brain Development

Module 1

F 9/12 Prenatal influences on the brain

**Friday 9/12 Nature OR Nurture—Three Identical Strangers assignment due by 11:59 pm**

W 9/17 *[****in-class writing assignment****]* How birth affects the brain. – *Essay 1 questions given*

F 9/19 Tutorial 2– Grading student ‘Three Identical Strangers’ assignments according to grading rubric; reading homework class discussion

W 9/24 *[****Quiz 1****]* Somatosensory development

F 9/26 Vestibular development

W 10/1 Olfactory development

F 10/3 Taste and food preference (Guest lecture) – *see ‘Hands’ on D2L to prep. for next class*

Module 2

W 10/8 *[****in-class writing assignment*** *on ‘Hands’]* Auditory system development

F 10/10 no class

**Friday 10/10 Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm**

W 10/15 Visual system development

F 10/17 *[****Quiz 2****]* Small group work – ungraded, on first half of course, evaluating writing – *Essay 2 questions given*

W 10/22 Tutorial3*-- General graded writing feedback*

F 10/24Tutorial 4*– Question picking, planning an essay and exam prep.*

**Friday 10/24 Revised Essay 1 (optional) due by 11:59 pm**

W 10/29 **EXAM 1** – **Modules 1 & 2** Questions given and essay plan (in class)

F 10/31 **EXAM 1** – Write essay (in class)

W 11/5*[****in-class writing assignment****]* Motor development

F 11/7 Intelligence

W 11/12 *[****in-class writing assignment****]* Development of memory

Module 3

F 11/14 *Tutorial 5 – General exam feedback, Intro, conclusions and*

*transitions*

W 11/19 *[****in-class writing assignment****]* Social-emotional development .

F 11/21 Theory of mind (no chapter in book)

**Friday 11/21 Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm**

W 11/26 Language and speech

F 11/28 *no class - Thanksgiving*

W 12/3 ***[Quiz 3]*** and **EXAM 2** – **Module 3** Questions given and essay plan (in class)

F 12/5 **EXAM 2** – Write essay (in class)

(MSU classes end, Sunday 12/7)

W 12/10 and F 12/12 - – *no classes – EXAM WEEK – I will be available on 12/12 at 7:45-9:00 am if you would like to meet to discuss any aspect of the course.*

***I have RCPD accommodations and some classes may be delivered virtually (via pre-recorded lectures on D2L) which may be announced short-notice (please check your email by 9 am before coming to class – if going virtual I will have emailed by 9 am that day)*** *–* This does not count as me canceling class.

**GRADED WRITING ASSIGNMENT DETAILS**

For **Nature OR nurture—Three Identical Strangers assignment**

* Word limit =**600 words**.
* **Write to your classmates** (peers).
* You will be given a side to argue for by the Instructor
* **References required** (don’t contribute to word count, APA format).

This is used to get you writing in preparation for Essays 1 and 2. You will receive my feedback on the grading rubric feedback sheet (as for Essay 1, Essay 1 revised, see below for details). Imagine your reader is on a jury and you are presenting a case - don’t dumb down your content—I want to see you selecting and linking to relevant topics, find independent evidence to support your thesis (high on the ‘quality of evidence’ hierarchy), focus on the prompt, critical thinking, walk your reader through your argument, engage your reader, unpack; organize your content; strong intro and conclusion.

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For **Essay 1 (on Module 1),**

**Essay 1 revised (optional), and**

**Essay 2 (on Module 2).**

* Word limit = **1000 words**. **Write to a parent or academic reader**
* **References required (don’t contribute to word count, APA format).**

Try and include independent reading (as many as you can, empirical articles)

* You **MUST choose a different reader** (parent, academic) **for Essays 1 and 2** (or you may face a deduction in your writing score. You may not change reader if you revise Essay 1.

You will get a score breakdown for content and writing (**your essay score is composed 70%=Content, 30% writing for each essay**). Become familiar with the grading rubric (which I use when grading) and which you will receive as feedback.

I want to see selection and discussion of relevant course content, and independent reading/studies found; critical/independent thinking on the topic; writing style and engagement of reader (parent, academic); organization and structure of thesis (argument); see grading rubric for details).

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For **in-class writing assignments**

* **Word limit = no more than a paragraph or two.**
* These will be on some Wednesday mornings in the first 20 mins of class (so be on time). The prompt may be given ahead of time (as homework to prep) or given unseen. They are designed as exercises in writing for your reader, and/or summarizing content effectively.
* Coursebook and/or notes may or may not be allowed (depending on assignment, tba), no electronic devices allowed.
* An idea of what to expect will be given in class (via email) ahead of class time.

**You complete 6 in-class writing assignments but only your best five scores will contribute to your final score (lowest one dropped).**

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**For Exam format (Exam 1 on Modules 1 & 2; Exam 2 on Module 3)**

* **Word limit = no word limit for plan or essay, no references required**
* Each exam requires two classes/a week (Wednesday & Friday):

Wednesday: Questions given (pick one), course book allowed (no other class material). Plan your essay, plan for any question you might write your exam essay on (more than one plan is fine). Plans can be in any formats; notes, diagrams, text. Return your plan at the end, a scan will be emailed to you that day (you may work on your essay plan in your free time). The plan contributes 1/3 of your exam score. I’m looking for selected content to include and organization/planning.

Friday: No course book (or other materials) allowed. Your original plan will be returned to you and you write your essay (pen and paper). Write as a regular essay for an instructor (no references required but you should still try and include required and wider reading generally). The essay contributes 2/3 to your exam score. I’m looking for selection and depth of discussion of content.

**If your plan is substantially different from your essay you will be penalized at the Instructors discretion -your plan needs to resemble your essay. You may add readings and extra information but should not substantially change the content topics covered. See me with any questions/concerns.**

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For **Quizzes (1 per module)**

* **Multiple-choice, on scantron**
* They have ~**15 questions each, timed at 20 minutes** (one attempt).
* These will be on some Wednesday mornings in the first 20 mins of class (so be on time).
* No coursebook, notes, or electronic devices allowed.

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

You are expected to be on time (try and arrive a few minutes before class, attendance sheet available before and after class to sign), and pay attention in class (please mute cell phones, refrain from social networking, etc.) and not disrupt the learning environment (or face ejection from a class). If you are ill, I would prefer you miss a lecture than jeopardize the health of your fellow students (and me). I am happy to meet with you individually to go over any lecture material you miss (but not if you make a habit of it!).

You are also responsible for getting yourself ‘up to speed’ on any classes you miss, and to contribute to class discussion. Your grade for engagement is based on:

* **Completing assignments on time (in-class and outside of class time)**
* **Attending lectures**
* **Unexcused absences or lateness in completing assignments are penalized –**

**email me before NOT after class or deadline to excuse** (I may not respond)**.**

* You may have three excused absences on attendance without penalty on your student engagement score\*, unexcused absences may each affect your score, and each one counts\*.

\* (at Instructors discretion)

Late submissions for assignments will be counted as late after a 9-hr grace period after the deadline\*. This may affect your student engagement score and the % grade for the assignment may also be reduced, given tardiness\*. If you need more time to complete an assignment, or you need the weekend to finish an essay, you must let me know ahead of the deadline (if you do so you may avoid a reduction in your % essay score but it may still affect your student engagement score). The assignments are designed to be spaced such that they are a week or so apart, and your grade is distributed on work done throughout the course, so it’s important for you to try and keep yourself punctual and organized, showing up on time and completing work when it’s supposed to be done (as would be expected by an employer).

**STUDENTS (AND AN INSTRUCTOR!) WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

* If you are a student who requires accommodations or who has certain needs, please reach out to me.
* Please feel comfortable in prompting me if I forget to contact you about any necessary accommodations.
* Given **you have an instructor with such needs**, I would like to thank you for your **patience with me, as I also may require:**

***Some classes may be delivered virtually (via pre-recorded lectures on D2L) which may be announced short-notice (please check your email by 9 am before coming to class – if going virtual I will have emailed by 9 am)*** *– if this happens we won’t be missing class content so class is still on but available to view.* This does not count as me canceling class.

*I may need the window open for ventilation.*

***My speech may sound a little hoarse or slurry*** *(no I haven’t been drinking!)****, and I may be a little forgetful and lose my train of thought occasionally***.

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [rcpd.msu.edu](https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored. If you require testing accommodations (e.g., additional time.) you must contact me and present your VISA at least two weeks before the exam dateto schedule an alternative exam.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The Spartan Code of Honor states, "As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do." In addition, Article 2.III.B.2 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities ([SRR](https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities/article-two-academic-rights-and-responsibilities.html)) states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." The Psychology Department adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in [General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades](https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/general-student-regulations.html); [the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/student-group-regs-rulings-policies-ordinances/integrity-of-scholarship-and-grades.html); and [Ordinance 17.00, Examinations](https://trustees.msu.edu/bylaws-ordinances-policies/ordinances/ordinance-17.00.html).

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the [www.allmsu.com](http://www.allmsu.com) Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also the [Academic Integrity webpage](https://ossa.msu.edu/academic-integrity).).

**GENERATIVE A.I. STATEMENT**

**Use Prohibited:**  The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) is not permitted in this class; therefore, any use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of Michigan State University’s policy on academic integrity, the Spartan Code of Honor Academic Pledge and Student Rights and Responsibilities, since the work is not your own. **The use of unauthorized AI tools will result in a fail grade for that assignment at a minimum (at discretion of the Instructor).** This is a writing course, and so you are expected to do the content selection, organization and writing of any work yourself (and to demonstrate your understanding of the course material as covered in the coursebook). Please refrain from entering the course essay questions into AI tools. While it may be tempting to do so, this is a writing course and writing and critical thinking are skills linked to our thinking process (we often think and learn best when writing). It is a valuable skill, one that may become more valuable to possess with the advent of AI. Hence the no AI stance.

**INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT**

MSU is committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive community in which students, faculty, and staff can work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination. The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) reviews concerns related to discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, national origin, religion, disability status, and any other protected categories under the University Anti-Discrimination Policy (<https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/university-wide/ADP_policy.html>) and Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (<https://civilrights.msu.edu/policies/rvsm.html>). If you experience or witness acts of bias, discrimination, or harassment, please report these to OIE: <http://oie.msu.edu/>.

**LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY**

Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies.  However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others.  As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the MSU Police Department) if you share it with me:

·        Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,

·        Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and

·        Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared.  In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual.  If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the [MSU Counseling Center](https://caps.msu.edu/).

It is important to promote a vibrant exchange of ideas while respecting the privacy of students taking this class. Comments taken out of context are often misleading and undercut the environment of trust and respect that is essential for learning. Given these factors and the importance of supporting one another, recordings of the class, lecture notes, other materials created by the instructor, and screenshots of the class (including online discussions) should not be uploaded to other online environments. Impermissible use of class recordings and lecture notes or other material may violate the rights of other students and the MSU Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy (<https://ossa.msu.edu/srr>).

**DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

Article 2.III.B.4 of the [Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR)](https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities/article-two-academic-rights-and-responsibilities.html) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 of the [SRR](https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities/article-two-academic-rights-and-responsibilities.html) states that "The student and the faculty share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility." [General Student Regulation 5.02](https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/regulations/general-student-regulations.html) states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action.”

**DISCLAIMER**

**The instructor reserves the right to make any changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary. If changes are made, they will be announced in class and/or via email.**