HHD 1003
Development – Middle Childhood through Adolescence
University of Pittsburgh, School of Education
Tuesdays & Thursdays, Spring 2026
Class Location: 5602 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

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**This syllabus has been adapted based on prior versions from HHD faculty.*

Course Description

This course focuses on developmental pathways from middle childhood through adolescence, drawing from both classical and contemporary frameworks. Over the semester, we will explore how young people develop biologically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and morally during this critical stage of life – in other words, we will build understanding of different domains of development. We will discuss the role of youth's contexts – including family, peers, community, school, and online spaces – in shaping developmental trajectories. The course will center the value of understanding the diversity of experiences young people might encounter as they navigate adolescence. As we explore developmental processes, we will examine youth voice – that is, how young people make themselves heard in their families, schools, communities, and in broader society. We will highlight positive youth development theories that can support youth's abilities to thrive across contexts. In addition to dissecting research and theory, we may discuss contemporary issues – primarily in the U.S. context and potentially beyond – where young people are speaking out and shaping the world. Some of these topics can be sensitive or even uncomfortable, but we will approach them together with respect, academic rigor, and pedagogical relevance.

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the key developmental processes across domains, such as biological, social, emotional, cognitive, and identity, for the period of middle childhood through adolescence;
2. Discuss the role of families, schools, neighborhoods, online spaces, media, and other institutional and cultural contexts in shaping developmental trajectories;
3. Understand the possibilities of using contemporary frameworks such as youth voice to reflect on the power and complexity of young people's voices in shaping their lives and our societies;
4. Demonstrate a stronger theoretical foundation in adolescent development as well as an appreciation for the diversity, resilience, and agency of young people as they navigate the transition from childhood into adulthood;
5. Think critically about human development, reflect on your own experiences, and connect theory to practice.

Course Readings

The main text we will rely on will be *The Developing Person Through Childhood and Adolescence* by Kathleen Berger. All additional required readings or supplementary will be posted on Canvas, available on the course reserves, or distributed in class.

Assignments & Assessments:

Interview Transcript & Reflection	20%
Exam	25%
Development Analysis Report	30%
Discussion Posts	10%
Attendance and Participation	15%

Interview Transcript & Reflection: In the first assignment, students will follow a protocol to conduct an interview (including recording and transcribing the interview) with a young person in middle childhood or adolescence. The transcription of the interview, as well as students' individual reflection papers on the interview process and findings, will be submitted.

Exam: About halfway through the semester, students will take an in-class exam, providing the opportunity to share what they have learned thus far about developmental concepts across the domains for middle childhood and adolescence.

Development Analysis Report: This final project allows students to work with classmates to analyze developmental concepts as applied to a fictional character of your choosing. Students will utilize course readings and their own experiences to consider how the character demonstrates developmental topics as well as how contexts might relate to developmental processes. This project will result in a group presentation (including slides) and an individual, short written report comparing the fictional case with findings from the interview process.

Discussion Posts: For a total of 5 weeks (any 5 weeks that students choose), students will be required to prepare ***one discussion question*** that you would like the class to consider, accompanied with ***2-3 sentences*** describing, or providing context for, your question. The question should result from a critical reading of the material for that week. Students might ask about application, relevance, similarity to other readings, how it fits with a talk they saw, a news article they read, a life experience, or something else we've considered in class. Your thoughts do not need to be fully formed, as the goal of this assignment is to generate more in-depth class discussion based on the questions you articulate. Discussion questions should be posted on the discussion forum on Canvas by ***7 pm Monday before class***.

Attendance and Participation: The attendance component includes being present in an engaged way, not just physically present (see participation rubric). Attendance is a required component of this course as much of the course will involve applying content through course discussion and participation. This includes arriving on time and staying for the duration of the class. Each student is allowed up to ***3 absences per semester***, no questions asked**.** After these 3 allowed absences, *2 points* will be deducted from your "attendance and participation" grade per absence.

If you find that you will have more than 3 please reach out to me as soon as possible. Absences also include leaving early from or arriving late to class. Assessment of participation will be based on adhering to our classroom culture (including any additions we make as a class) and the participation rubric in the section below.

Participation Rubric: Throughout our class meetings, I will invite you to engage in discussions, group activities, and other forms of participation. I will be looking for your meaningful, professional participation via discussions in our class. As your instructor (and as an introverted individual), I do understand that it is easier for some than others to engage in discussions. Discussions will be scaffolded with opportunities for small group conversation, and discussion posts (see below) will provide an opportunity for engagement outside of the classroom. I encourage any students who are concerned about participation to speak with me during office hours.

Excellent (15 pts)– leading discussions, bringing in new and original ideas and thoughts, challenging ideas in a way that is thought and discussion-provoking, and showing an ability to listen to the ideas of others. Using technology to support your learning.

Satisfactory (13 pts) - supportive, follow-up points that are relevant and valuable, bringing ideas but not taking a leadership role in discussions. Using technology to support your learning in a non-disruptive manner.

Minimally Acceptable (10 points) – present, awake, attentive, but not actively involved, at times using technology that does not support our collective learning environment.

Unsatisfactory (5 pts) –absent, present but not attentive, sleeping, irrelevant contributions that block movement in class discussions, and consistently using technology that distracts or disrupts our collective learning environment

**Please note that all assignments and deadlines are subject to change at the instructor's discretion as the semester progresses.*

Grading

98-100% = A +	77-79% = C+
94-97% = A	74-76% = C
90-93% = A-	70-73% = C-
87-89% = B+	67-69% = D+
84-86% = B	64-66% = D
80-83% = B-	60-63% = D-

All assignments should be submitted electronically through the canvas site by the deadlines listed. The assignments are due at the start of class. All assignments should follow APA 7th edition formatting including with 1-inch margins, double-spaced, and Times New Roman font and submitted as Word documents. Grades for late assignments will be deducted 10% per day that the assignment is late unless otherwise discussed prior to the assignment deadline.

Course Expectations

Respectful Participation & Class Culture. All students are expected to engage thoughtfully with peers and the instructor. In order to facilitate an environment where open discussion can occur, I ask that students be mindful of the questions and comments they raise in relation to their colleagues, and that students are open to listening to one another's perspectives without judgment. I understand that students have differing relationships to various topics that might be brought up. If a particular topic is triggering or difficult to discuss, I ask that students inform me on what they will need to feel comfortable. I also ask students to please remain respectful of each other's ideas and provide space for each individual to speak. This is a new class experience for everyone, and there is room for mistakes when engaging in new experiences. By practicing self-compassion and compassion towards others, we will all help make this a safer space for learning.

Communication. It is expected that you check the Canvas site and regularly check your email for course updates.

Expectations of the Instructor. I will also do my best to attend class on time and prepared for discussion. I will communicate with as much advanced notice as possible if there are any changes to the course format. I understand it can be difficult to give feedback, but I am open to your thoughts, requests, and suggestions towards an optimal learning experience throughout the semester. I am always open to meeting during office hours, or setting up a time outside of the set hours, to discuss questions/concerns. As an instructor, I aim to balance a rigorous learning experience with an opportunity for dialogue, discussion, and the exchange of new ideas. I encourage students to share their ideas and aim to include activities that encourage students to connect material to their lived experiences.

Knowledge and "Truth" in our course: I do my best to facilitate an environment where knowledge is co-created. This syllabus charts a journey for our course, but it may shift based on our learning and growth throughout the semester. This field of development is similarly very dynamic, what may be an understanding of psychological health and well-being may adapt and change in a few years time. We also are continually re-evaluating and broadening research and this is a very exciting time to learn about concepts and perspectives as more diverse researchers and scholars enter the field. I most likely will offer topics in development that are different than other instructors - this is part of what makes learning dynamic and which helps to offer you a well-rounded education.

Academic Integrity & Use of Generative AI. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are essential aspects of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace and also finding your own writing, research and creative style will be one of the strongest assets you can offer professionally. Utilizing AI to generate your own work prevents you from making those accidental connections and ultimately slows your progress professionally. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism. In the event that an activity utilizes AI for learning purposes, students will be informed as to when, where, and how these tools are permitted to be used, along with guidance for attribution. Any use outside of this

permission constitutes a violation of Pitt's Guidelines on Academic Integrity and will be treated as plagiarism.

Additional University Guidance and Resources

Disability Services. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page. I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or emailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Gender Inclusive Language Statement. Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Students, faculty, and staff have the right to control their own identity and to be referred to by the name and pronouns with which they identify. People also have the right to maintain their privacy regarding information they do not wish to share about their identities, including gender identity and pronouns. Source: School of Social Work.

Health and Safety Statement. It is important for students to take precautions necessary to prioritize and protect their health and the health of others**.** If you are required to isolate or quarantine, become sick, or are unable to come to class, contact me as soon as possible to discuss arrangements.

Religious Observations. The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructor, I am committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, presentations, or other required attendance. If at all possible, please contact me within the first two weeks of the first class meeting to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX. The University is committed to combating sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware. After a report is made, you will be contacted by the Title IX Office for opportunities for support and options for proceeding. For additional information, please visit the full syllabus statement on the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webpage.

Statement on Classroom Recording. To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Personal Technology Use. Students are expected to use electronic devices appropriately and responsibly in class. Using laptops or cell phones as tools for your learning is acceptable, as long as it is not distracting to you, your colleagues or your instructor. Examples of appropriate use of electronic devices include taking notes on class material and discussion and consulting resources to support your class engagement and learning. Non-instructional texting, phone calls, social networking, shopping, and other non-instructional use of these devices during class are distracting and discouraged in this course. Please speak with me if you are concerned about meeting this professional expectation, or if an emergency arises that necessitates use of a phone during class.

Writing Center. The Writing Center, located at 317B O'Hara Student Center, is an excellent resource for working with an experienced consultant on your writing. You can choose to work with a faculty consultant or a trained undergraduate peer tutor. Although you should not expect consultants or peer tutors to "correct" your paper for you, they can assist you in learning to organize, revise, and edit your work. They can also help you get started! Consultants can work with you on a one-time basis or throughout the term. Their services are free. You can browse the services they offer or make an appointment by visiting www.writingcenter.pitt.edu

Your Well-being Matters. College/Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to maintain your well-being and seek appropriate support can help you achieve your goals and lead a fulfilling life. It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. You are encouraged to visit Thrive@Pitt to learn more about well-being and the many campus resources available to help you thrive.
If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. The University Counseling Center is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.

Course Schedule

Note: The following schedule is subject to change as the semester progresses.

Week/Date	Class Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 (1/13 & 1/15)	Introduction & Overview of Developmental Science	Podcast: Adaptivity. Episode: Our Youth's Perspective, part 3: Developing Values, Goals, and Identity *Our Youth's Perspective, part … - Adaptivity: The Science of Adolescence - Apple Podcasts*	***Introductory Survey – Due 1/16 at 5PM***
Week 2 (1/20 & 1/22)	Middle Chidlhood: Biosocial Development	*The Developing Person, Chapter 11*	
Week 3 (1/27 & 1/29)	Middle Childhood: Cognitive Development	*The Developing Person, Chapter 12*	
Week 4 (2/3 & 2/5)	Middle Childhood: Psychosocial Development	*The Developing Person, Chapter 13*	***Interview Transcripts & Reflections – Due 2/6 at 5PM***
Week 5 (2/10 & 2/12)	Adolescence: Biosocial Development	*The Developing Person, Chapter 14*	
Week 6 (2/17 & 2/19)	Adolescence: Cognitive Development	*The Developing Person, Chapter 15*	
Week 7 (2/24 & 2/26)	Adolescence: Psychosocial Development	*The Developing Person, Chapter 16 Sections: "The Fifth Life Crisis: Identity" (pp. 1287-1310) and "Close Relationships" through the section on Peer Pressure (pp. 1311-1326)*	

Week 8 (3/3 & 3/5)	Exam (3/3)		**Exam 3/3 In-Class** **No Class 3/5**
Week 9 – Spring Break: No Class			
Week 10 (3/17 & 3/19)	Social Media & Family Contexts	Smetana, J. G. (2017). Current research on parenting styles, dimensions, and beliefs. *Current opinion in psychology*, *15*, 19-25. Chapter 2 "What Children Need to do in Childhood" *in Haidt, J. (2024). The Anxious Generation: How the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness. Random House.* *Optional:* Hill, J. A. (2011). Endangered childhoods: How consumerism is impacting child and youth identity. *Media, Culture & Society, 33(3),* 347-362.	
Week 11 (3/24 & 3/26)	Peer & School Contexts: Re-imagining High School	Podcast on Social-Emotional learning, linked here (scroll to the bottom of the page): The Truth About SEL? It Works | NEALinks to an external site. Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (2011). Schools as developmental contexts during adolescence. *Journal of research on adolescence*, *21*(1), 225-241. Chapter 1 "The State of Deeper Learning in American High Schools" in: Mehta, J., & Fine, S. (2019). *In Search of Deeper Learning: The quest to remake the American high school.* Harvard University Press.	
Week 12 (3/31 & 4/2)	Cross-context issues facing students (violence/bullying prevention, mental	Nadine Burke Harris: How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime | TED Talk	

	health) Out-of-school time Settings (+Youth Voice)	Pennsylvania Commission on crime and delinquency school safety and security committee: Act 18 of 2019 Guidance for School Entities Koyanagi, A., Oh, H., Carvalho, A. F., Smith, L., Haro, J. M., Vancampfort, D., ... & DeVylder, J. E. (2019). Bullying victimization and suicide attempt among adolescents aged 12–15 years from 48 countries. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *58*(9), 907-918. Eccles, J. S., Barber, B. L., Stone, M., & Hunt, J. (2003). Extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Journal of social issues*, *59*(4), 865-889. Ngo, B. (2017). Naming their world in a culturally responsive space: Experiences of Hmong adolescents in an after-school theatre program. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 32*(1), 37-63.	
Week 13 (4/7 & 4/9)	Youth Voice & Possible Selves	Foster-Fishman, P. G., Law, K. M., Lichty, L. F., & Aoun, C. (2010). Youth ReACT for social change: A method for youth participatory action research. *American journal of community psychology, 46,* 67-83. Woodgate, R. L., Tennent, P., & Barriage, S. (2020). Creating space for youth voice: Implications of youth disclosure experiences for youth-centered research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *19*, 1609406920958974. Community Connections Matter for the Mental Health of Politically Active Youth | CIRCLE	

Week 14 (4/14 & 4/16)	Emerging Adulthood	Ratner, K., Budesheim, E. F., Alexander, C. S., Klein, R. C., Leinenweber, S., Zhang, L., ... & Napolitano, C. M. (2025). Hurry up and wait: Developmental anxiety during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 17(3*), 483-505. Arnett, J. J. (2016). Does emerging adulthood theory apply across social classes? National data on a persistent question. *Emerging adulthood*, *4*(4), 227-235.	
Week 15 (4/21 & 4/23)	Group Presentations		***Group Presentations***
Week 16	4/28	***Written Reports – Due by 5pm***	