

**Advanced Topics in Developmental Psychology**  
**Psychology 4311(CRN 16520)**  
**Fall, 2023**  
**Mondays & Wednesdays 1:30-2:50, PSYC 308**

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**Office:** Psychology 109

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 3:00-4:30 or by appointment

<https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/81575350326?pwd=UFhUSTE1djl6VGIramE4aXNDL29HUT09>

### **Course Description**

What goes on in the minds of children? How do they learn about and make sense of the world around them? The goal of this course is to explore central issues in the study of cognitive development. We will review theoretical frameworks for understanding how thinking changes over time and discuss specific aspects of children's thinking, including how they perceive the world, what they learn and remember, and how they solve problems and gain the kind of knowledge that adults may take for granted.

At the end of the course, students should be able to...

- Describe ways in which children's thinking changes over time
- Reason about potential causes and effects of changes in children's thinking
- Compare and contrast different theoretical approaches to understanding human cognition and behavior
- Evaluate claims made based on empirical findings
- Develop the ability to express their ideas using clear and concise language

### **Course Materials**

Most of your reading will come from your textbook and all supplementary materials will be available on Blackboard. I will release other materials and assignments through Blackboard, so please make sure that you are checking it regularly.

**Textbook: Children's Thinking** (2020, Fifth Edition)

by Robert S. Siegler & Martha Wagner Alibali: Pearson

*Note:* This is a relatively new edition, so it may be difficult to get a used copy, but the 4<sup>th</sup> edition is over 15 years old, so please do get the most recent edition.

### **Course Communication**

Most of our communication will take place in class, but we will also use a variety of online tools. I will regularly post announcements and updates on **Blackboard**. Please come to my **office hours**, either in the Psych building or over **Zoom**. I want to get to know you, and this is a large enough class that the best way for me to answer questions is likely to be in these smaller settings. You can also use the **Help Board** to ask questions of your classmates, and often, they can provide helpful tips and answer questions more quickly than I can. **If you do need to email me, please use "Psych 4311" in the subject of your email. I will only promise to answer emails that include the course number in the subject header.** One other important note is that if you have

questions about your grades, I can only answer them face-to-face or if you have used your UTEP email address because of FERPA privacy rules.

## **Course Assignments & Grading**

### **Assignments**

**Participation (24 pts).** You will have multiple ways to earn credit for attending class and engaging with the material. I will not track attendance on a daily basis, but I do expect you to come to class and to be an active participant in your own learning. This class will be much more productive and interesting for everyone if you speak up and share your thoughts and questions!

*'Discussion Day' Attendance (6 points).* On 3 days during the semester (noted on the schedule), we will spend class breaking down empirical articles, which will be especially critical in helping you write your paper. For that reason, you will receive 2 points for being in class and contributing to the discussion. If for some important reason (health, family emergency), you cannot attend class that day, you can make up the points through an additional post on the Discussion Board, but I strongly encourage you to come, and alternative credit will only be offered if there is a documented reason why you were unable to attend.

*Discussion Posts (18 points).* The other way to demonstrate participation will be through the Discussion Board. Each week, we will use Blackboard to supplement in-class discussions. Prompts will be released after class on Wednesday, and your response is due by **Friday at 11:59pm** (with one exception: Thanksgiving break). No credit will be given for late posts. Your responses should be at least 100-150 words (a short paragraph), and you can respond directly to the prompt or build on prior comments from your classmates, and I will expect you to use examples from class to show that you were present and engaged. There will be 11 opportunities to earn points (2 pts each), including the first week where instead of posting publicly, you'll be asked to fill out a short survey. You only need to respond to 9 prompts (including the check-in questionnaire) to receive full credit, if you attend all Discussion Days. You will not receive points for additional posts, but I encourage you to use this as an opportunity to practice your writing and to learn from and engage with your classmates.

**Quizzes (16 points).** Quizzes will be released after class on Mondays and made available through Blackboard. They are due before next class, and you will be able to see your grades within 24 hours of the due date. Quizzes are designed to be comprehension checks so that I can see if there are points of confusion for the whole class. There will be 11 quizzes (2 pts each), and I recommend that you take all of them as a way of making sure that you are studying regularly. However, your grade will be determined by your 8 highest scores, so if you don't complete up to 3 quizzes, it will not affect your final grade.

**Exams (120 points).** There will be three exams, including the final. Midterm exams will each cover 1/3 of the course material and will be worth up to 40 points. The final exam will be longer and worth up to 80 points (2/3 of the questions will be about new material, 1/3 will be from earlier parts of the course). I will drop either your lowest midterm or half of the final. That is, your final point total will be whichever combination of the following gives you the highest grade:

- a) Exam 1 (up to 40) + Exam 2 (up to 40) + ½ Final (up to 40)
- b) Exam 1 (up to 40) + Final (up to 80)
- c) Exam 2 (up to 40) + Final (up to 80)

All exams will take place online, using Blackboard. You do not have to take midterms during class time, but there will be one class time set aside for each test to make sure that you have time to take it before the time of the due date. Because of this flexibility, makeup exams will be offered only under extreme circumstances, so please plan your time well.

Due dates:    Exam 1:        Monday, 10/2 at **7pm**  
                  Exam 2:        Monday, 11/6 at **7pm**  
                  Final:         Wednesday, 12/13 at **7pm**

**Paper (40 points).** You will be asked to write a short paper (3-5 pages) that explores how cognitive development is described in the media. You will choose a popular press article from a list that I will provide and evaluate how accurately this article describes an empirical study. We will discuss this assignment in class and you'll receive a handout with more details. Note that papers will be graded on both content AND writing form/style. You should also know that all papers will be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software.

Students who want help with their writing can come to office hours or work with the Writing Center, and you should plan well in advance of the due date if you want help. The paper will be due on 11/22, through Blackboard, and any paper not received by 11:59pm on the due date will lose 10% (4 points) for each day they are late, unless you can provide a documented reason why you couldn't complete the assignment on time.

### **Extra Credit opportunities**

**Participate in real research!** In the Psychology department, we believe that experiencing research firsthand helps students understand course material and research methods. UTEP has a vibrant research tradition, and you can help contribute to what we know about human behavior. You will receive 2 extra credit points for every hour of research that you participate in, up to 4 hours (8 points total). To learn more, see the document on *SONA System Policies*.

*Alternative.* If you are unable to participate, or don't feel comfortable, you can still receive extra credit and learn more about the research process. Instead of participating in a study, you can write a 2-page summary of a research article. In your summary, you should describe the research question, how it was tested, and what the authors concluded. You will receive up to 2 points for each paper you choose to write, up to 4 (8 points total). Note that these summary papers are an alternative to being a SONA participant, and you can only receive up to 8 total points of extra credit for research engagement.

#### Grading

<b>Participation</b> (15 opportunities, 12 required)	24 pts
<b>Quizzes</b> (11 opportunities, 8 required)	16 pts
<b>Exams</b> (2 midterms, 1 final, weights adjusted)	120 pts
<b>Paper</b>	40 pts
<b>Total</b>	200 pts

#### Extra Credit Opportunities

*SONA participation/summary papers*        8 pts

Your final grade will be based on total points across the semester.

**A:** 180 +

**B:** 160- 179

**C:** 140- 159

**D:** 120- 139

**F:** 119 or below

## **Requirements & Expectations**

### **Attendance**

I expect you to attend class and to participate in discussions. By engaging in discussions with your classmates, you have the opportunity to explore the material more fully and to help me understand what you are interested in and/or confused by, and attending class regularly will make it easier for you not to fall behind. The only excused reasons to miss class will be university commitments (e.g., athletic events) and family or health-related emergencies. I will post some content to Blackboard (e.g., slides, key videos shown in class), so you will have access to the course material, but the best way to succeed in this course is to attend. If there is a reason you cannot be in class one day, I encourage you to reach out to classmates for notes or any other information that you may have missed- the class Help Board can be a great resource if you choose to use it.

*Note:* Any course materials or recordings are governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP's acceptable-use policy. A recording of class sessions may be kept and stored by UTEP, in accordance with FERPA and UTEP policies. Your instructor will not share recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, teaching assistants, or graduate assistants, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. **You may not share materials outside of this course.** Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

### **Other expectations**

*Take notes.* With posted slides available, you may be tempted to sit back and just listen, or to try to write down every word on the slides. Neither of these is the best way to learn! Take notes about the information NOT available in the text on the slide, and this will make it much easier for you to study for quizzes and exams.

*Keep up with readings.* All readings should be done before the associated class. Lectures and readings will have some, but not complete, overlap and it will be easier to understand lectures if you have already read the chapters and papers that we'll be discussing. It will be very difficult to catch up on all the reading if you wait until the day before an exam, so help yourself by doing it as we go. This will be especially important for the non-text articles.

*Engage with your classmates.* This course will be a lot more fun if you share your thoughts and ask questions. In addition to actively participating in class, I recommend forming study groups where you can share notes and prepare for exams together.

*Show consideration in all communication.* Whether you are communicating online or in-person, you are expected to show the same level of respect for others' views. Sometimes, that is especially challenging in writing, but across any platform, the guiding principles should be kindness and understanding.

- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times, and all communication should reflect polite consideration of others' ideas.
- No harassment or inappropriate postings or comments will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person.
- Neither Blackboard nor the classroom are public venues; all comments should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for classmates and instructors only. Please do not copy documents or any materials and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.
- Please turn off or silence your phone during class.

*What you can expect from me.*

- I will be professional and respectful in all interactions with students.
- I will respond to communication promptly. Emails that include the course number will be answered within 2 business days (messages sent over weekends and holidays may not be answered as quickly).
- Grading will be prompt and transparent.
- I will be available during office hours or alternative times to discuss course materials, assignments, or any concerns you have about the class.
- I will solicit and incorporate student feedback at least once during the semester to try to make the class more enjoyable and useful for you.

### **Technology requirements**

Course content will be available through Blackboard. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome are the most supported browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications with the system. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the [Help Desk](#).

### **Other important information**

#### **Due dates & late work**

I know you're busy and that you have other commitments in your life. But, I urge you to complete work as early as possible. Because you have a lot of flexibility in dropping assignments and when to do them, I do not plan to accept late work, except under extraordinary circumstances, and documentation may be requested. If you have a family or health emergency, I will work with you to give you the best possible chance to succeed, but please contact me as early as possible if a situation arises. If you have technical difficulties that prevent you from uploading or submitting work, please take a screenshot and send it to me.

Writing assignments (discussion posts, paper) are due at 11:59pm on the due date (EXCEPTION: you get one automatic extension because of the Thanksgiving holiday). Quizzes are due before class on Wednesday. Exams are due at 7pm on the test day. To receive credit, *it is your responsibility to be aware of the date and time assignments are due.*

### **Drop Policy**

I will not drop you from this course. If you determine that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the [Registrar's Office](#) to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an "F" for the course.

### **Accommodations Policy**

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

**If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>.**

### **Scholastic Integrity**

I hope this goes without saying, but academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Your work should be your own, and if you are using another author's ideas, you should provide citations in your papers and posts. If I suspect any type of plagiarism or claiming of ideas that are not yours, I am required to report the case immediately, with no exceptions.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

*Copyright.* All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

*Guidance on Artificial Intelligence.* AI tools such as Chat GPT may not be used for graded assignments in this course including weekly discussion posts, your paper, or exams. I want to know what *you* think about the topics we cover, not to see the same bland response from everyone, and AI systems will not have access to the necessary information to connect with all material that we discuss together.

Students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

### **Title IX Reporting**

Faculty and teaching assistants are considered responsible employees who have a legal obligation to report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking allegedly committed by or against any UTEP student or employee. This means that if you report such an incident, I have a legal obligation to report it to a Title IX coordinator, and I cannot guarantee confidentiality. My priority is for you to feel safe and supported, but also to be aware of the reporting requirements, and if you want to take advantage of them, the university has other resources, some of which can offer confidential reporting.

### **Other important resources**

UTEP offers a variety of services to support your learning and well-being. Please take advantage of any of them that you think might help you!

#### Technology Resources

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

#### Academic Resources

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.
- [The Miner Learning Center](#): Join peer-led study sessions in person or online to review content and discover study strategies in core curriculum courses.
- [UTEP Edge](#): UTEP's cross-campus framework for student success and empowerment – develops students' assets through high-impact experiences made possible by the expertise and dedication of faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

## Individual Resources

- [Student Success Help Desk \(SSHD\)](#): Students experiencing challenges or obstacles to academic success including registration, financial, food, housing, and transposition resources may submit a ticket request assistance to [studentsuccess@utep.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@utep.edu)
- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.
- [UTEP Food Pantry](#): Non-perishable food items are available to students who are currently enrolled in classes. Bring a Miner Gold Card to Memorial Gym, Room 105, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



## Course Schedule

Every attempt will be made to follow the guidelines and plans in this syllabus as much as possible. However, I reserve the right to make changes (e.g., the schedule of topics) if needed.

Date	Topics	Reading/Assignments DUE
<b><i>Unit 1: Theories &amp; approaches to studying cognitive development</i></b>		
M 8/28	<i>What will happen in this class?</i>	
W 8/30	<i>Key issues in cognitive development</i>	Ch.1, pp. 1-16
F 9/1		<b>Check-in questionnaire</b>
M 9/4	<b>NO CLASS- LABOR DAY</b>	
W 9/6	<i>Piaget's theory of development I</i>	Ch. 2., pp. 20-34 <b>Quiz 1 (before class)</b>
F 9/8		<b>Discussion Post 1</b>
M 9/11	<i>Piaget's theory II</i>	Ch. 2, pp. 34-49
W 9/13	<i>Socio-cultural theories I</i>	Ch. 4 <b>Quiz 2</b>
F 9/15		<b>Discussion Post 2</b>
M 9/18	<i>Socio-cultural theories II</i>	Bronfenbrenner, 1994
W 9/20	<i>Information processing approaches</i>	Ch. 3, pp. 50-58, 64-71 <b>Quiz 3</b>
F 9/22		<b>Discussion Post 3</b>
M 9/25	<i>Dynamic systems &amp; neuro-constructivism</i>	Karmiloff-Smith, 2006
W 9/27	<i>Comparing theories</i> <b>**Discussion day**</b>	<b>Quiz 4</b>
M 10/2	<b>Exam 1 DUE at 7pm</b>	

<b>Unit 2: Building blocks of cognition</b>		
W 10/4	<i>Perceptual development: Vision</i>	Ch. 5, pp. 99-116
F 10/6		<b>Discussion Post 4</b>
M 10/9	<i>Perceptual development: Hearing</i>	Ch. 5, pp. 117-130;
W 10/11	<i>Language: Sounds &amp; words</i>	Ch 6., pp. 131-151 Ferguson & Lew-Williams, 2016 <b>Quiz 5</b>
F 10/13		<b>Discussion Post 5</b>
M 10/16	<i>Language: Grammar &amp; communication</i>	Ch 6., 151-163 Pyers, 2012
W 10/18	<i>Frameworks for studying memory</i>	Ch. 7, pp. 164-177 <b>Quiz 6</b>
F 10/20		<b>Discussion Post 6</b>
M 10/23	<i>Memory processes &amp; changes</i>	Ch. 7, pp. 178-196
W 10/25	<i>Concepts &amp; representations</i>	Ch. 8, pp. 197-208 <b>Quiz 7</b>
F 10/27		<b>Discussion Post 7</b>
M 10/30	<i>Children's early concepts</i>	Ch. 8, pp. 208-224
W 11/1	<i>Developmental science in the popular press</i> <b>**Discussion day**</b>	Lewkowicz & Hansen-Tift, 2012 <b>Quiz 8</b>
M 11/6	<b>Exam 2 DUE at 7pm</b>	
<b>Unit 3: Topics of children's thinking</b>		
W 11/8	<i>Social cognition: Self &amp; others</i>	Ch. 9, pp. 225-249
F 11/10		<b>Discussion Post 8</b>
M 11/13	<i>Social cognition: Learning from others</i>	Warneken & Tomasello, 2006
W 11/15	<i>Problem solving</i>	Ch. 10, pp. 250-268 <b>Quiz 9</b>
F 11/17		<b>Discussion Post 9</b>
M 11/20	<i>Reasoning</i>	Ch. 10, pp. 268-280
W 11/22	<i>Academic skills: Math</i>	Ch. 11, pp. 281-296 <b>Quiz 10</b> <b>PAPER DUE</b>
F 11/24	Thanksgiving break	<i>Discussion Post 10: due Monday before class</i>
M 11/27	<i>Academic skills: Reading &amp; writing</i>	Ch. 11, pp. 297-312 <b>Discussion Post 10</b>
W 11/29	<i>What did we learn about children's thinking?</i> <b>**Discussion day**</b>	Ch 12 Horowitz, 2000 <b>Quiz 11</b>
M 12/4	Exam review	
W 12/6	<b>Final Exam</b>	
		<b>DUE by 7pm on 12/13</b>