1. Course Description

Biopsychosocial development in the first decade of life will be viewed from a multicultural perspective. Normative, as well as “non-normative” development, will be addressed. A strong emphasis will be placed on the integration of research and practice with young children and their families. Examinations of how environmental influences such as racism, poverty, and violence impact infant and child development will also be central to this course.

2. Course Content

This course focuses on early development, contexts of development, and practice with infants, children, and their families. Developmental and ecological frameworks for assessing human development will be presented. Individual development will be analyzed within the contexts of race, class, and gender. Emphasis will be placed on fostering the student’s understanding of how culture and biology interact to promote or inhibit developmental outcomes. Human development from conception to early adolescence will be explored through topics such as: ecology of the family as a context of development, biological aspects of development, family and caregiving relationships, social risk factors and resilience, peer relations and the school environment, and the interface between mental and physical health.

Empirical findings pertaining to the developmental process will be drawn from a number of disciplines, including developmental psychology, neuroscience, psychiatry, and public health. The bridge between theory, research, and practice will be continually addressed. Special attention will be given to the relationship between developmental periods, environmental contexts (i.e., poverty, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation), and psychological and physical functioning. The relevance of this course to Interpersonal Practice Methods courses and Field of Service courses, such as those dealing with families and children, will be explicated.

3. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe key periods and associated developmental acquisitions.
2. Describe patterns of life cycle development from a multicultural perspective, including gender, ethnicity, social class, and religious and regional beliefs.
3. Describe how theory and research relate to social work practice.
4. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and critique various theories of development.
5. Discuss relevant ethical concerns related to infant and child development and behavior.

4. Course Design

This course will include a series of readings, lectures, class discussion, videotapes, and experimental exercises. Students may be asked to assume various roles during some of these experimental exercises.

5. Relationship to Four Curricular Themes

Multicultural and Diversity themes will be addressed by attention to the association between culture, gender, social class, religion, family structure, and ability on child behavior and development.

Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed through analysis and critique of the impact of economic and social oppression, racism, and sexism on development.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be addressed through an emphasis on factors and strategies that contribute to infant, child, and family well-being. Environmental conditions, programs, and interventions that promote optimal development will be analyzed and critiqued.

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be emphasized by drawing on empirically based knowledge from a number of disciplines. These include developmental psychology, neuroscience, psychiatry, and public health.

6. Relationship to Social Work Ethics and Values

A number of ethical dilemmas may arise for social workers working with infants and children. In this course, examples will be reviewed. The importance of identifying client strengths and working with the entire family or community in determining appropriate interventions will also be underscored. This course will address the need for macro and micro interventions to enhance child and family well-being.

7. Assignments

1. Weekly Integration Papers (30%)
2. Developmental History (10%)
3. Child Observation (10%)
4. Case Presentation/Lead discussion (30%)
5. Social Work Practice Proposal (20%)
Weekly Integration Papers (30% of final grade)

Must be submitted to coursetools website by Saturday night (before 12am)

As social workers, one of the most important aspects of our work is to be able to identify features of optimal development and deviations. Therefore, it is critical that we have a “trained eye” with which to make necessary assessments and referrals. A primary goal of this course is to teach students to identify aspects of expected/“normal” and delayed development. We will focus on (1) acquisitions in the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional domains, (2) features to consider during assessment and treatment, and (3) the impact of environmental and cultural variations on development.

Based on the readings, students will write a one-page reflection/integration paper identifying developmental expectations for a particular period and features to look for during assessment. These papers should also incorporate environmental factors that may impact developmental outcomes. Summaries and lists of developmental abilities are not acceptable. Rather, students should comment on features that should be identified at specific points in development and reflect upon environmental circumstances that may impact development outcomes.

The purpose of these papers is to provide students with an opportunity to identify critical features to assess at various developmental periods and to do so within environmental and cultural contexts. It is anticipated that these reflection papers will aid the student’s social work practice and can be stored in a practice portfolio.

Developmental History (10% of final grade) Due February 16th

Complete a developmental history for an infant or child. The instructor will provide a developmental interview format. The interview does not have to take place in a clinical setting. You can interview any parent about their child’s development or an adult about their own developmental history. Using the information obtained from the developmental interview format, write a 3-page, double-spaced, developmental history.

Case Presentation/Lead Discussion (30% of final grade)

Each week, 2-3 students will be responsible for (1) presenting a case to the class, and (2) leading discussion on assessment and treatment planning. Cases should reflect the developmental period reviewed that week. These cases can be based on the student’s social work practice or can be provided by the instructor. The two students will present the details of the case to the class which will be divided into groups (or treatment teams). Each group will summarize an assessment and treatment plan and similarities and differences between teams will be discussed. Student presenters will be responsible for leading the discussion and integrating critical contextual factors. The role of various environmental factors on development will be covered in the assigned readings.

Infant/Child Observation & Assessment (10% of final grade) Due March 29th

Observe a child (0-11 years) individually or in a group for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Carefully observe the child’s behavior without making judgments or forming conclusions. Unless it would be too intrusive, take specific notes about the context of the
observation and what the child is doing. Depending on the age of the child, observations about physical activity, verbal expressions, play sequences, activity shifts, and interactions with others may be relevant. You can focus your observations on some of the domains of assessment presented in Meisels and Fenichel (1996) (language, social-emotional, symbolic play, etc.). (5-7 pages)

Please use observation exercises in Davies text for this assignment (pp. 168, 225, 292, or 365). Also, please consider utilizing the University of Michigan Children’s Centers for your observations. Observations can be scheduled by contacting Ellen Hamilton (UM Children’s Centers Research and Training Coordinator) at rtc@umich.edu.

**Social Work Practice Proposal** (20% of final grade) Due April 12th

Students will propose a creative action plan for social work with infants or children. First, students will identify and briefly describe a social problem affecting infants and children. Next, students will review how this problem is currently addressed in social work practice and identify critical gaps or limitations based on course readings. Finally, students will develop a creative proposal for social work action that effectively addressed the identified problem.

Social work action proposals should be designed to promote and enhance the well-being of children and their families. Intervention can occur on interpersonal, community, policy levels. Examples include addressing (1) racial disparities in low birth weight by developing support groups for pregnant mothers struggling with racism, (2) the effects of community violence on infant development by promoting urban revitalization, or (3) the effects of parental stress by promoting family friendly policies in the workplace and the legalization of same sex marriages and benefits.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide students with an opportunity to develop a creative and contextually appropriate proposal. It is anticipated that this proposal may be used by students’ in future practice focused on enhancing child and family well-being. (10 pages)

**8. Required Readings:**


Additional readings on reserve at the Social Work Library

**9. Class Calendar and Readings**

1st Class (1/12)  
*History and Introduction to Social Work with Infants and Children*


[http://www.mpi.wayne.edu/zeroto.htm](http://www.mpi.wayne.edu/zeroto.htm)


*Individual introductions, expectations, & goals*

*Introduction to course*

*Social work interventions with infants & young children*

*Case presentation & group exercise*

**Holiday (1/19)**  Martin Luther King Day, no class

**2nd Class (1/26)**  **Models of Development & Risk Assessment**


Davies: Chapter 2 & 3


*Case presentation, developmental history, & risk assessment:*


**3rd Class (2/2)**  **Developmental Assessment**


(Eds.), New visions for the developmental assessment of infants and young children (pp. 147-167). Zero to Three: Washington, DC.


Guest Speaker: Abby Jewkes, PhD Candidate, UM Early Childhood Education

4th Class (2/9) Prenatal & Neonatal Development

Berk chapters 3 & 4


Case presentation & class discussion: prematurity & low birth weight, non-organic failure to thrive

5th Class (2/16) Infant and Toddler: Cognitive and Physical Development

Berk chapters 5 & 6


Case presentation & discussion: Sensory integration difficulties, Developmental disabilities

6th Class (3/1) Infant and Toddler: Social and Emotional Development

Berk, chapter 7

Davies, chapter 1


Case presentation & discussion: Attachment disorders

7th Class (3/8) Practice with Infants & Toddlers

Davies, chapters 4-7


Guest speaker: Doug Davies, PhD., Clinical Professor, UM School of Social Work

8th Class (3/15) Early Childhood: Cognitive and Physical Development

Berk, chapter 8 & 9


Guest Speaker: Catherine Lord, PhD., Director of University of Michigan Autism & Communication Disorders Center

9th Class (3/22) Early Childhood: Social and Emotional Development

Berk, chapter 10


Case presentation & discussion: Preschool behavior problems

10th Class (3/29) Practice with Preschoolers

Davies, chapters 8 & 9


11th Class (4/5) Middle/Late Childhood: Cognitive and Physical Development

Berk, chapter 11 & 12


Case presentation and discussion: Learning Disabilities/ADHD
12th Class (4/12)  Middle/Late Childhood: Social and Emotional Development

Berk, chapter 13


*Case presentation & discussion: Depression and preadolescent girls*

13th Class (4/19)  Practice with School-Age Children

Davies, chapters 10, 11, & 12

*Future directions in social work with infants and children*