Developmental Psychology 4684  
Dr. Schwartz Spring 2003  
Term Paper/Project Requirements

The following is an outline designed to help you complete your term paper/project for Developmental Psychology, Psych 4684. Please read it carefully and approach me with questions as they arise. You have three general options from which to choose—please choose only one. Regardless of the paper/project option you choose, the following will apply:

1. **Your paper is worth 100 points.** Please answer all of the questions listed above. Students in the past have lost points because they have failed to answer all of the questions.

2. **Your paper should be about 8 pages long.** Students in the past have lost points because they have not included sufficient detail and information to demonstrate their knowledge of the material. When writing an academic paper it is necessary to define terms.

3. **Papers must be typed.** I must receive a hard copy. Do not send your paper to me as an attachment to an email. I will not accept papers that are handwritten.

4. **Your paper is due on Monday, March 17 at the start of class. You will receive a 5 point penalty for each day late.** No papers will be accepted after Friday, March 21. I will only give extensions on the paper for dire emergencies (illness, death in the family, etc.). If you experience an emergency contact me as soon as possible after the emergency to set up an extension date. I will be very unlikely to grant an extension if you approach me shortly before or after the due date. If you anticipate difficulty completing the paper on time, please discuss your options with me as much in advance of the due date as is possible given the circumstances.

5. **I am happy to read drafts and give feedback if you turn them in by Monday, March 3.**

6. If you choose to do Option III, your paper topic must be pre-approved. In order to get your topic approved you must turn in a prospectus describing your project by Monday, February 24.

**Option I: Critical review of one empirical study**

1. Please choose one of the following articles to read and critique for your paper:

2. The point of this assignment is to give you experience reading a primary source, empirical study in developmental psychology. The two studies from which you can choose are based on theories about which we will be learning in class. This will allow you to integrate and apply theoretical material learned in class to primary source material.
This is the kind of skill which will allow you to be an educated, well informed consumer of developmental psychology after you leave this class. If you want to learn about any topic in psychology you can critically read the primary literature on it and form your own conclusions.

3. After you read your article please answer the following questions about it:
   (a) Explain the basic tenets of the theory on which your article is based and its stance on the central debates of developmental psychology: nature vs. nurture; continuity vs. discontinuity; primacy vs. resiliency; and individual differences. (25 points)
   (b) What are the main hypotheses of the study? Please explain how the predictions of the hypotheses derive from the theory on which your article is based. (25 points)
   (c) Describe the results of the study. Were the results predicted by the researchers? (15 points)
   (d) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study? In what way does each weakness influence the results? What could the researchers do differently to eliminate each weakness? How does the study contribute (or fail to contribute) to the development of the theory from which it is based? (35 points)

Option II: Literature review and study proposal

1. Please choose one of the following review articles to read for your paper:

2. The point of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to get a broader view of a particular topic in developmental psychology. The two studies from which you can choose are based on theories about which we will be learning in class. After reading the review article you will propose your own experiment that will add to the literature in a meaningful way. This will allow you to integrate and apply theoretical material learned in class to the full body of literature addressing a particular issue. This assignment will allow you to think creatively (and scientifically) about an important question in developmental psychology.

3. After you read your article please answer the following questions about it:
   a. Explain the basic tenets of the theory on which your article is based and its stance on the central debates of developmental psychology: nature vs. nurture; continuity vs. discontinuity; primacy vs. resiliency; and individual differences. (25 points)
   b. Describe the major findings of the review article (10 points).
   c. Discuss the strengths and the weaknesses of the literature reviewed (NOT the strengths and weaknesses of the review article itself) (15 points).
   d. Propose your own experiment which will address some of the weakness/gaps/unanswered questions left in the literature. Be sure to include the
hypothesis of your study, how the hypothesis derives from the theory, the
procedures (including the kind of participants, what they have to do, and what the
experimenters will do), and how potential results will contribute to the
development of the theory and the current literature on this topic (50 points).

Option III: Design your own project involving service learning or direct contact

1. Please design your own project relevant to developmental psychology and write a paper
about it. The goal of this project is to gather information about development as it occurs
in the biological, social, cultural, and psychological domains. The specific content of the
project is up to you (though it must be approved by me—see below) but it must involve
direct contact with developing individuals and relate to a theory of development learned
in class. You could choose one of the following examples or create your own project.

2. Sample Topics:
   a. Observe 2 children ages 1 – 2 and interview their mothers or fathers, one who has
      never worked outside the home and one who immediately returned to work after
      the birth of his or her baby. Ask how they feel about the role of day care in our
      culture. What does each see as the advantages and disadvantages of his/her
      situation for him/herself and the development of his or her child. Relate your
      observations and conclusions to attachment theory.
   b. Observe 2 preschool-aged children and interview their parents. Assess the level
      of aggression demonstrated by each child. Ask the parents about their
      perceptions of the aggressiveness of their child and the factors they see
      contributing to this. Ask about their children’s television habits; the kinds of
      programs they are allowed to watch; and the kind of monitoring they are given
      while watching television. Ask about their perceptions of the role of the media in
      the development of their child. Discuss how your observations and conclusions
      relate to social learning theory.
   c. Interview a preschool-aged child and a middle-childhood-aged child. Compare
      and contrast their cognitive abilities as described by Piaget. How do they
      compare to the stages he described? What factors do you see either in their
      school or home environments that may contribute to their current cognitive
      functioning? Relate your observations and conclusions to Piaget’s theory of
      cognitive development.
   d. Observe and interview several teenagers from “minority” groups (e.g., African-
      American, Native-American, homosexual). Discuss with these teens how they
      have resolved their identity crises as described by Erikson. Talk with teachers of
      these teens and ask how they generally respond to the developing identity of
      teens. Relate your observations and conclusions to Erikson’s theory of human
      development.
   e. Volunteer at a nursing home. Discuss your observations of the psychological
      concerns of the residents. Have most of the residents been able to make sense of
      their lives or do they feel despair over unachieved goals? How do these residents
      compare to elderly adults you might know who are not living in a nursing home?
      Discuss how your observations and conclusions relate to Erikson’s theory of
      human development.

3. Regardless of the specifics of the project you propose, you will need to:
   a. Turn in a written prospectus of your project by Monday, February 24.
      Your project must be pre-approved by me in order to receive credit.
b. Provide documentation validating your direct contact. This could take the form of an audio or video tape of the interviews conducted; signature of a supervisor who can attest to your work or volunteer activities, etc.

c. Base your project on a theory learned in class.

d. Start your paper by explaining the basic tenets of the theory on which your project is based and the theory's stance on the central debates of developmental psychology: nature vs. nurture; continuity vs. discontinuity; primacy vs. resiliency; and individual differences (25 points). The remainder of your paper will be worth 75 points.