

PSYCH 490 (Senior Seminar) Topics Spring 2019

Section 1: Dr. Kisha Jones (Industrial-Organizational)

Diversity in Organizations

We all have various aspects of ourselves that make up our identities. These diverse identities influence many areas of our lives, including our experiences at work. This course will focus on understanding the perspectives of individuals that have been traditionally underprivileged in the workplace, including women, racial/ethnic minorities, LGBT individuals, individuals with disabilities, and religious minorities. Students will be exposed to theories and empirical research from psychology, management, and other related areas that will allow them to better understand how gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, physical ability, and other characteristics influence entry into the workplace, career advancement, interpersonal treatment, and other work experiences. We will also consider practical examples of how to manage diversity in the workplace.

Section 2: Dr. Dawn Witherspoon (Developmental)

Youth Development in Context: How Place affects Youth

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the theoretical and empirical literature about how characteristics of place (i.e., community, neighborhood, activity space) are associated with development during childhood and adolescence. Topics to be discussed in this class include attention to cultural variables (i.e., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, acculturation), exposure to violence, parenting strategies in neighborhoods, cultural socialization, and a variety of youth academic, behavioral, and psycho-social outcomes (e.g., academic self-concept, deviance, friendships, substance use, and identity). An important aspect of this course is the attention to multiple forms of data, various methodologies (i.e., quantitative and qualitative), and dissemination of empirical findings (e.g., scholarly reports, newsletters, briefs, etc.) to elucidate a greater understanding of how place and its social characteristics are related to family functioning and youth outcomes. This course is designed for students who have had exposure to developmental psychology and want to learn more about how contexts outside of the family may shape development. The course will be discussion based with some lectures to introduce concepts and themes.

Section 3: Dr. Reg Adams (Social)

The Psychology of Humor and Laughter

Humor and laughter are vital to human functioning, promoting physical and emotional well-being, social harmony, learning, and creativity. Humor and laughter can also be used as weapons against others, and can transmit and perpetuate stereotypes and prejudice. This course is designed to explore these phenomena and to apply insights gained to broader research themes such as creativity, social cognition, attribution theory, and emotion theory.

Section 4: Dr. Keith Nelson (Developmental)

Art, Language, and Creativity in Children and Adults

Steve Jobs of Apple Computer, among other commentators, has observed that visual arts skills will be critical to many of the (rapidly changing) sorts of career challenges that adults will face in this, the 21st Century. Other commentators have emphasized that creative, flexible thinking skills are critical to both job success and personal satisfaction. Finally, rich language and communication skills also are strong benefits in every area of life. Despite widespread agreement on the importance of all these skills, it is far from clear what the best paths are to developing these skills during childhood. This course will approach these issues first through reviewing what is already known about facilitating art, language, and creativity in children and adults. The role of contact//awareness of patterns in nature also will receive attention. Then we will concentrate on generating ideas about new ways of facilitating these skills. Finally, we will critically sort through our new ideas to propose specific teaching and intervention plans that would appear to have high probabilities of high impact on art, language, and creativity.

Section 5: Dr. Jenae Neiderhiser (Developmental)

Developmental Behavioral Genetics

This senior seminar focuses on understanding how genes and environments operate together to influence behavioral development throughout the lifespan. This course will be comprised of four interrelated sections that will usually be discussed together as part of a substantive topic. (1) The theories and methods of quantitative and molecular genetics. This will include a review of family, twin, sibling, and adoption designs; basic molecular genetic methods including association and linkage designs and within and between family strategies; assumptions and limitations of quantitative and molecular genetic methods; and the relative roles of genotype-environment correlation and interaction. (2) Quantitative genetic studies of development throughout the lifespan. This section will review classic and recently published articles examining genetic and environmental influences on behaviors including temperament and personality, cognitive abilities and psychopathology. We will also discuss papers that focus on understanding the etiology of comorbidity and of understanding genetic and environmental influences on change and continuity. (3) Molecular genetic studies of development throughout the lifespan. The focus here will be on examining studies that have examined genes related to behaviors of particular relevance to developmental psychologists. (4) The interplay of genes and the environment: gene-environment correlation (rGE) and interaction ($G \times E$). This final section will consider published studies of rGE and $G \times E$ in both quantitative and molecular genetics.

Section 7: Dr. Michele Diaz (Cognitive)

Cognitive Neuroscience

Have you ever wondered how we're able to think, feel, and act? The field of Cognitive Neuroscience tries to answer these questions by examining how the brain supports different aspects of cognition such as memory, language, and vision. This course will cover brain anatomy and experimental methods that are used to study the brain, such as electrophysiology and functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). We'll learn about how the brain supports

cognition in healthy individuals, as well as the neural and cognitive consequences of neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, amnesia, and stroke.

Section 8: Dr. Sam Hunter (Industrial-Organizational)

Creativity and Innovation in Organizations (Industrial-Organizational)

This course will examine the individual, team, organizational, and environmental factors that shape novel idea generation and implementation in organizations. The course will introduce students to a number of theoretical frameworks for understanding creativity and innovation, as well as the methods and techniques utilized in research of the phenomena. We will take a process perspective on creative performance, considering the various activities that are required for successful innovation. Students engage in a semester long team-based project where they apply what they have learned from course material to understanding an invention or product of their choosing.

Section 9: Dr. Roger Beaty (Cognitive)

The Creative Brain

This course is designed for students who are interested in the psychology and neuroscience of creativity. It surveys scientific research on a broad range of topics, including the nature and measurement of creative thinking, the right vs. left brain controversy, the roles of memory and attention in creative problem solving, the relationship between creativity and intelligence, and the neural basis of musical improvisation, among others. The course will include diverse examples from the fine arts and humanities (visual art, literature, music), the sciences, and other relevant domains, largely from the perspectives of cognitive psychology and neuroscience.

Section 11: Dr. Kristin Buss (Developmental)

Emotions, Temperament and Developmental Psychopathology

This course is designed to teach you about the current state of knowledge in development of emotions, emotion regulation, temperament and adjustment. This seminar will cover the research literature examining developmental pathways towards adjustment and maladjustment from infancy to adolescence. We will discuss literature focused on emotional reactivity and emotion regulation reflected in temperamental variation as core biopsychosocial processes that account for adjustment outcomes. This course will be presented from the perspective of developmental psychology and will be focused primarily on the **current state of research knowledge** (i.e., empirical evidence).

Section 12: Dr. Amy Marshall (Clinical)

Clinical: Intimate Partner Violence

This course is designed to provide students with both breadth and depth in the understanding of intimate partner violence from the perspective of the scientific literature. A focus will be placed on the study of psychological causes of intimate partner violence perpetration, but we will also consider issues such as

consequences for victims, co-occurrence with child maltreatment, and interventions. Throughout, methodological challenges to fully understanding the phenomenon will be emphasized. Reading materials exclusively comprise original scientific literature. Course objectives include: 1) improve students' abilities to critically read original scientific literature, 2) help students to understand the current state of the science, 3) strengthen students' abilities to integrate material from different areas, 4) exercise and grow students' verbal and written communication skills, and 5) improve students' general critical thinking skills. To accomplish these objectives, this course will emphasize writing assignments and oral presentations. Students will be required to participate in class on a regular basis, including group presentations and discussion of the scientific literature. Course assignments will additionally include thought papers, a research review paper, a study development paper, and a final exam. Intimate partner violence is a sensitive topic that can elicit strong emotions, sometimes based on personal experiences. In order to do well in this course, students must be able to demonstrate serious critical thinking skills, sometimes despite the emotive nature of the topic. If you are unsure about whether you should enroll in this section, you are welcome to contact me at AmyMarshall@psu.edu.