Dynamic Approach to Understanding Child Development

3rd Year
C8897
15 Credits
Spring Term 2016

Module Convenor: Dr Jessica S. Horst
MODULE STRUCTURE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
This module will cover current topics in developmental psychology. A brief introduction to
dynamic systems theory and the associative learning account will be provided by the instructor
in the first week of class. During the rest of the module we will read and discuss recent research
form the framework of this perspective. Topics will include: motor coordination and learning to
walk, learning about objects and categories, language acquisition (nouns) and spatial cognition.
Assessment will include student in-class presentations and final essay.

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of the module, a successful student should be able to:
• Understand the key concepts of dynamic systems
• Evaluate the relevance of empirical evidence concerning child development
• Evaluate the methods and procedures used in developmental research
• Discuss the contribution of dynamic systems theory to understanding child development

PRE-REQUISITES
The prerequisite for this module is ‘Developmental Psychology’ (C8546).

MODULE CONTACT INFORMATION
The module convenor is Dr. Jessica Horst.

Location: Pevensey 1, 1c 09
Telephone: (01273) 873084
E-mail: jessica@sussex.ac.uk

OFFICE HOURS
Office hours are for your benefit. You are welcome to come discuss ANYTHING module related
during office hours. You may also email to make an appointment for a specific time. Please see
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/profiles/205721 for office hours/student consultation times.

STUDY DIRECT
You are encouraged to access module materials and use the module forum in Study Direct.
This is the best way to share ideas amongst your fellow students and ask questions about the
module. It is preferable that you ask queries via the Study Direct module forum than by email.
If you email the module convenor, please specify which class you are in (many instructors are
teaching more than one module at a time).

INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING CAN BE FOUND AT THE LINKS BELOW:
• submitting your work
• missing a deadline
• late penalties
• EC – Exceptional Circumstances (formerly known as MEC- mitigating evidence
• Exams
• Help with managing your studies and competing your work
• Assessment Criteria
TEACHING AND LEARNING
Opportunities for learning on this module include:

1. Lectures
   - 2 x 2hr Lectures
   - Weeks 1-2

2. Workshops
   - 10 x 2hr Workshops
   - Weeks 3-12; Test in Week 5 (see last page in handbook for details)

3. Independent Study

Please see your timetable in Sussex Direct for details of when and where this module will meet.

1. Lectures. The module will begin with 2 2-hour lectures to introduce you to Dynamic Systems Theory and the topics we will cover during the workshops. The material covered in these introductory lectures is CRUCIAL for building your foundational understanding of Dynamic Systems Theory, which you will need to do well in this module.

2. Workshops. There will be 10 2-hour workshops in this module (with one test in Week 5). Workshops will begin with short presentations of the assigned readings by students assigned to the relevant reading. Everyone is expected to participate in the class discussion following each presentation.

3. Independent Study. The difference between studying at university and study you may have done previously is that at university the emphasis is on you finding out things for yourself. Not everything you will need or want to know will be covered in the classroom. You need to become familiar with the material you are guided towards, but you also need to learn to ‘manipulate’ that material: apply it to new domains, compare and contrast across topics, synthesise it, evaluate it, consider its relevance to issues of interest to you, supplement it, etc. This can only be done by being interested and working hard because you want to. Thus, study because you want to learn and stop when you have answers to your own satisfaction for the questions you care about. Finally, note that independent study is study you engage in outside of formal contact hours with faculty and tutors, but it does not have to be solitary.

To avoid disruption to the majority, please try to arrive at least 5 minutes before the start time of the lecture or workshop (see lecture attendance etiquette in Psychology programme handbook). Please keep your mobile phone on silent during the lectures and workshops.

You should note that all the study skills advice in existence suggests that straightforward ‘absorption’ of material (i.e., reading, listening, rote-learning and memorising) should take up about 20% of learning time. The other 80% should come from ‘interrogating’ that information (e.g., looking for links, attempting to summarise and synthesise, looking for strengths and weaknesses and possible improvements, applying to different areas, etc.).

ASSESSMENT
This module is assessed by means of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Component</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coursework</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Précis (summary)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Test</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study Design Assignment</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBMISSION DEADLINES**
Please consult your assessment deadlines timetable on Sussex Direct: https://direct.sussex.ac.uk

**GROUP PRESENTATION**
Each student will be assigned to present one of the readings to the class before we start discussing that reading. Your presentation should recap your summary and should include:

- The goals/hypotheses of the study
- The methods used
  - The participants (e.g., newborn infants)
  - The methods used (e.g., test of stepping reflex)
  - Anything particularly note-worthy about the design (e.g., infants were placed waist-deep in water)
- The general results (in plain English: what did they find? E.g., in water infants who do not normally exhibit a stepping reflex DID show the reflex).
- If the goals were met/hypotheses were found to be true or false
- Your impressions
  - Likes/dislikes
  - Implications for understanding child development
  - Directions for future research
  - How the reading influenced your thinking about child development

**PRÉCIS (SUMMARY)**
On the day you give your presentation should also submit a summary of the paper in your own words (no longer than 2 sides of A4, typed in 12pt font, 1inch margins). After your presentation you should turn 1 copy of this summary into the instructor.

**TEST**
A short (1hr) in-class test will be given in Week 5. A study guide is available on Study Direct and we will discuss what to expect in class.

**STUDY DESIGN ASSIGNMENT (CF. EXTENDED ESSAY)**
The word limit for this essay is strictly 3000 words. You should consult your timetable in Sussex Direct for the exact due date.

In this assignment you will write a proposal for at least one experiment on an aspect of child development (e.g., learning to walk; learning to talk; peer relationships, etc.). The proposal should include (1) a brief literature review outlining the problems and issues in the area and (2) a description of the experiment that would logically follow from these issues. Your description of the experiment should explain why you would have chosen your particular design and how this experiment stems from a dynamic approach to understanding child development.

Your study proposal should be “realistic,” that is, you should only propose ethical studies and you should take care that your variables can be measured and analyzed. Example essays are available on Study Direct.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

To facilitate discussion, students are asked to submit discussions via Poll Everywhere to facilitate the workshop discussions. You are not required to answer your own question. You may ask questions about:

- Points needing clarification (e.g., definitions, analyses, questions about studies mentioned in the introduction)
- Thoughts on how a reading relates to another reading or phenomenon in child development.
- Ideas for future research
- Questions/comments about the implications of a study
- Questions/comments about how the reading relates to general ideas from dynamic systems theory/child development.

**BOOKS AND READINGS**

All of the essential readings for this class are primary source journal articles available on the module website or at the library. You are expected to read the assigned readings BEFORE each lecture or workshop.

**ESSENTIAL READINGS: ALL ON STUDY DIRECT**


Gillen-O'Neel, C., Huynh, V. W. & Fuligni, A. J. (2013). To study or to sleep? The academic costs of extra studying at the expense of sleep. Child Development, 84(1), 133-142.


RECOMMENDED READINGS

MODULE SCHEDULE
For a timeline or schedule of when we will discuss each reading, please see the Study Direct site.