
The Developing Child: Toddler and Preschoolers

HDCD/PSYC 6320/HCS 6359 (001), Spring 2026

Wed, 8:30 to 11:15 AM, HH 2.706

Contact Information

Instructor	Email	Office hours
Meridith Grant, Ph.D.	Mgrant@UTDallas.edu	Book a time to meet with me virtually Book a time to meet with me in person

You are invited to meet with Dr. Grant to discuss course material, graduate school life or to simply say "hi".

Cannot make it to my office? The best way to reach me is by email me using your UTD email account, not by phone, Teams or eLearning. When you email, include the course name, as well as your first and last name. I will do my best to respond to your message within 24 hours on regular workdays. Anticipate longer delays on weekends, holidays, and during busy times in the semester.

General Information

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

BBSC majors only or departmental consent required. You will get the most from this class by taking HDCD 6319 The Developing Child: Infants and Toddlers first, but students with a strong background in child development coursework are welcome.

Description

Parents, teachers, early intervention specialists, doctors, psychologists, and many others who work with children need to have an accurate understanding of child development. This course will explore the ways that children change (and how they stay the same) in their physical, cognitive, and social development focusing on ages 24 to 60 months and beyond. Students will also build skills to evaluate and communicate about empirical research in development, with emphasis on application to real-world problems that impact children.

Required Materials

1. The instructor-designed textbook excerpt from John Santrock, Jennifer Lansford and Kirby Deater-Deckard (2024) *Children* (15th ed.), McGraw Hill. Our ISBN is 1 2025 9798219053122 (digital, 17.05) or 1 2025 9798219052934 (print, \$25.43) per the publisher. However, you must purchase an access code through the UTD bookstore, go to this [link](#), and enter the code. Note: A complete (used) copy of the textbook is acceptable too.
2. A charged laptop computer with Internet access (to reach eLearning) for use in the classroom throughout the semester. *Bring your device to class already charged.*
3. Additional mandatory readings and other media will be assigned and posted in eLearning.



Professional Learning Outcomes

Evaluation(s)

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Apply knowledge about typical and atypical child development across multiple domains (e.g., physical, sensory/motor, language, cognitive, and socioemotional development). | Quizzes and final exam |
| 2. Critically evaluate research evidence to promote best practices in intervention and working with families. | Quizzes and final exam |
| 3. Build professional skills through conscientious completion of responsibilities, meaningful participation in the collaborative learning environment, and development of professional repertoire (e.g., skills in presentation, active listening, time management, continuous learning). | Class discussion
Presentations |

Learning Opportunities: Quizzes, Presentations, Final Exam & Class Discussion

Quizzes

Quizzes are designed to reinforce learning and memory for major developmental milestones and research findings. They also encourage preparation for meaningful class discussions. Each quiz will cover assigned textbook content and articles as listed in the course schedule.

You will have the first 30 minutes of class to complete the multiple-choice quiz via eLearning using [Lockdown Browser](#). The quiz will automatically open at 8:30 AM and close at 9:00 AM. To take a quiz, you must be physically present in the classroom at the time of administration, have a fully charged personal laptop, and have the Lockdown Browser downloaded and ready to use (respondus.com/lockdown-guides). No materials such as textbooks, articles, or notes may be used during the quiz.

Ten quizzes will be offered throughout the semester, each worth 10 points. While 100 points are available, only 90 points are required to earn full credit toward your quiz grade. This provides a 10-point “wobble room.” Quiz grades are capped at 90 points; you cannot earn more than this toward your final quiz score.

Important: No make-up quizzes will be administered.

Learning Opportunities, cont.

Presentations

Presentations are designed to deepen understanding of major developmental milestones and build skills for effectively communicating to a broad audience about healthy child development. On the first day of class, you will sign up to present a section of the assigned textbook. Your presentation should be tailored to a broad, nonscientific audience and should highlight key textbook content along with relevant examples, media stories, engagement activities, and/or additional empirical research. You do not have to cover all the content assigned for your section; instead, choose the most important information for a general audience. Presentations should last 8 to 15 minutes, followed by 5 minutes for questions.

Before your presentation, upload your PowerPoint slides to the assignment submission portal in eLearning. Your instructor will use these slides to evaluate your presentation.

You will have one presentation opportunity, worth 30 points. If you are absent on the day of your presentation, a 3-point deduction will be applied to your presentation grade. You will be required to present during the next class period at 8:30 AM, before the weekly quiz. The quiz time will be adjusted accordingly. If you are absent or late to your rescheduled presentation, a 10-point deduction will apply, and you will be required to present later in the semester at a time determined by the instructor.

Presentation weighted rubric

	Novice	Competent	Proficient	Exceptional
34% Content and organization <ul style="list-style-type: none">Information is presented in a logical sequenceTerms are well defined and appropriate for audienceExpertise demonstrated answering any questionsIncludes examples, elaboration and/or additional resources as relevant	75%	85%	95%	100%
33% Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none">Appropriate animation and enthusiasmSpeaker is audible, clear, poised and smoothWell-paced/uses time wiselyUses direct eye contact/seldom references to notes	75%	85%	95%	100%
33% Materials and instructions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slides are well prepared, informative, effective and <i>not distracting</i>8 to 15 minutes maximumMaterials are uploaded per instructions	75%	85%	95%	100%

Learning Opportunities, cont.

Final Exam

The cumulative final exam is designed to support you in building longer-term memory for major milestones in development and deepening your critical thinking about the main themes from class. The final exam will consist of three parts: (1) open-note, take-home essay questions on all class content; (2) closed-note, in-class multiple choice questions on textbook content; and, (3) a final class discussion. For both the multiple-choice questions and final class discussion, you must be in person at the time the exam is administered and have access to a personal laptop that is charged. Bring a power cord as backup. The final exam is worth 50 points.

Class Discussion

We will use an adapted version of the fishbowl discussion technique on most days for class discussion. This format empowers students to take responsibility for leading the conversation, strengthens communication skills, and fosters a sense of community. The small-group structure provides opportunities for all students—including those who are typically quieter—to participate meaningfully and engage in deeper dialogue.

You will be assigned to participate in the fishbowl discussion two or more times during the semester without advance notice. You have one opportunity to opt out of a fishbowl discussion. This means that, on one occasion when you are present and assigned to the fishbowl, you may choose to become an observer instead. If you elect to opt out, a 3-point deduction will be applied to your score for that discussion.

Important: No student may opt out on the day of Quiz 10, which is our final fishbowl discussion day.

Your participation will be graded on the two days you are assigned to be part of the fishbowl. Each opportunity is worth 40 points, for a total of 80 points. Prior to class on all days, you should prepare discussion notes. On the days you are assigned to the fishbowl, you will be required to upload your discussion notes to eLearning at the start of class. Your preparation and participation will be evaluated according to the following guidelines.

Class engagement weighted rubric

	Novice	Competent	Proficient	Exceptional
30% Discussion notes: Three to five points that are supported with quotes or images from the readings. The best points integrate evidence from more than one reading.	75%	85%	95%	100%
25% Active participation: Proactive participation in the fishbowl.	75%	85%	95%	100%
25% Quality of contributions: Contributions integrate evidence and invite critical thinking and engaged dialogue. <i>Contributions rarely (if ever) rely on anecdote or personal experience alone.</i>	75%	85%	95%	100%
20% Active listening skills: Listens without interrupting and incorporates and expands on the comments of other students. <i>Not attending to phones, computers or other distractions.</i>	75%	85%	95%	100%

Your Grade

Evaluation	Points Possible
Quizzes (10 quizzes,10 points each; Quiz grades are capped at 90 points max)	90
Presentation	30
Final Exam	50
Class Discussion (graded twice, 40 points each)	80
Total	250

Final Letter Grade Determinations

Letter Grade	Minimum Points	Maximum Points
A	225	250
B	200	224
C	175	199
D	150	174
F	0	149

A note about grade-related concerns: You *can* be successful in this class with diligent and thoughtful work from the beginning of the semester, and I am here to support your efforts to earn the grade you desire.

Final grades are *final* unless there is a mistake in the calculation of that grade. Do not put me in an uncomfortable position at the end of the semester by requesting that I "bump" your grade. It is unethical and unfair to other students in the class.

Course Schedule

Date	Work Due	Class Agenda
Wed, Jan 21		Research design practice activity; Course overview; Fishbowl discussion guidelines; Agree on discussion rules; Sign up for presentation times
Wed Jan 28	<i>Flex day used for weather</i>	
Wed Feb 4	Review research design practice, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 1 (8:00 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design terms • Lopes, 2025: Chapter 10 • Wouri, 2024: Chapter 1 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Physical Development in Early Childhood - How does a child's body and brain grow and change? How do motor skills develop?
Wed Feb 11	Quiz 2 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 2 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Physical Development in Early Childhood - How does a child's body and brain grow and change? How do motor skills develop? • London et al., 2015 • Marano, 2008: Chapter 5 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Physical Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are some important aspects of young children's health?
Wed Feb 18	Quiz 3 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 3 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Physical Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are some important aspects of young children's health? • Hill et al., 2016, including the corrigendum • Morris & Hays-Grudo, 2024, Chapter 2 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Physical Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are best practices to support children's health globally?

Course Schedule (cont)

Date	Work Due	Class Agenda
Wed Feb 25	Quiz 4 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 4 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Physical Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are best practices to support children's health globally? • Hair et al., 2015 • Weissman et al., 2023 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Cognitive Development in Early Childhood – How do young children learn? How accurate are young children's memories?
Wed Mar 4	Quiz 5 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 5 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Cognitive Development in Early Childhood – How do young children learn? How accurate are young children's memories? • Haber et al., 2024 • Sun, Norton & Nancekivell, 2023 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Cognitive Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - How do executive functioning and TOM skills develop? What are some important individual differences?
Wed Mar 11	Quiz 6 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 6 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Cognitive Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - How do executive functioning and TOM skills develop? What are some important individual differences? • Savina, 2020 • Talwar, 2022, Chapter 11 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Cognitive Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are variations on and controversies in early childhood education? How can we improve education for young children growing up in poverty?
Wed Mar 18	UTD Spring Break	
Wed Mar 25	Quiz 7 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 7 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Cognitive Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are variations on and controversies in early childhood education? How can we improve education for young children growing up in poverty? • Lillard et al., 2021 • Bustamante et al., 2015 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood - What characterizes young children's emotional and personality development?

Course Schedule (cont)

Date	Work Due	Class Agenda
Wed Apr 1	Quiz 8 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 8 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood - What characterizes young children's emotional development? • Radesky et al., 2022 • Roma et al., 2025 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00) 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are the contexts and consequences of child maltreatment?
Wed Apr 8	Quiz 9 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 9 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are the contexts and consequences of child maltreatment? • Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afifi et al., 2017 • Cuartas, 2024 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00): 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Student presentations (10:10 – 11:15): Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are the changing roles of families, peers and media for young children?
Wed Apr 15	Quiz 10 readings, Student presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 10 (8:30 – 9:00): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: Socioemotional Development in Early Childhood (cont.) - What are the changing roles of families, peers and media for young children? • Weir, 2021 • Allen et al., 2021 2. Class Discussion (9:00 – 10:00): 3. Break (10:00 – 10:10) 4. Presentation of Final Exam Instructions
Wed Apr 22	Final exam Part I: Take-home short essay questions due 11:59 PM Tue, Apr 28	
Wed Apr 29	Final exam Part II: In class multiple choice questions (about text) and final class discussion	
Wed May 6	<i>Flex Day</i>	

*Timeline is subject to change at the discretion of the professor

AI Policy

AI tools can sometimes be beneficial for various tasks, including research, idea generation, overcoming writer's block, and grammar editing. However, solely relying on AI-generated content without proper attribution can lead to plagiarism. To promote the responsible and ethical use of AI in this class and to align with the academic integrity policies at the University, here are my requirements:

1. Identification and Citation: As with any other tool, use of AI in your writing must be explicitly identified, citing the tool/generator, date of query, and text of query. See APA citation guidelines that follow.
2. Transparent Attribution: Be transparent in how you used AI tools in your work by distinguishing what was AI-generated and what is your original writing. At the end of your submission, create an "AI Acknowledgment" section and in your own words, answer the following:
 - how AI was utilized
 - what prompts you used to obtain results
 - how you revised AI outputs
 - what you learned by using AI
3. Compliance: Take full responsibility for ensuring the use of AI tools does not infringe upon copyright or intellectual property laws and does not plagiarize without citation. Verify the accuracy and reliability of any AI content, and do not assume what is generated is automatically correct. I recommend you cross-reference with credible sources. Exercise sound judgement to ensure the integrity and impartiality of your work prior to submission.
4. Detection: Written submissions are subject to evaluation by AI detection tools to verify compliance with guidelines. Violations will be grounds for reporting, in accordance university policies.

Throughout the course, there may be instances in which AI tools may be used, abiding by these guidelines. It is my hope that we recognize the potential of AI and collectively foster a learning environment where AI is used critically alongside our human integrity.

Policy adapted from Meera Gatlin at Tufts University; [Developing Syllabus Statements for AI - Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching \(tufts.edu\)](#)

APA Guidelines for Citing AI

Cite the AI company as the author and list the date that you used it (where you see "Jan 1" below). Some models may not list the version date; in that case, list the version number like 3.5 or 4 for ChatGPT.

APA Sample Reference Page Entries:

- Company. (Year). AI App (Version or version date) [Large language model]. link
- Microsoft. (2024). Copilot (3.5) [Large language model]. <https://bing.com/chat>
- OpenAI. (2024). GPT-4 (4) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

APA Sample In-Text Citations

- End of Sentence: Citations are important (Microsoft, 2024).
- In the Sentence: According to OpenAI (2023), citations are important.

You can view more details at: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/academic-writer>

Additional Information and Policies

Late/Makeup Policy It is very important that students keep up with the course schedule. Assignments are due on the dates designated. Even when regular but unfortunate life events occur (for example, minor illness, tricky childcare situations, emotionally difficult life events), makeup quizzes will not be administered; there is “wiggle room” built in your grade to accommodate for these types of events. Makeup exams may be administered only in the event of sudden emergencies that are professionally communicated about in a timely manner, ideally before the missed exam. Missed quizzes/exams will earn a grade of 0. You should communicate with the professor if you miss a class meeting for any reason.

Accessibility and Accommodations It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one-week advance notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact ARC for a confidential discussion. ARC is located in the Administration Building, AD 2.224. They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu.

Professionalism Attend class meetings prepared. For example, (1) You are responsible for bringing a laptop to take ALL QUIZZES AND EXAMS. If you arrive without one, you will not be permitted to take the quiz or exam. You will receive a grade of “0”. (2) Stay up to date with any changes to the course schedule. To do so, check eLearning at least twice weekly; set your accounts to receive eLearning notifications; and, monitor your UTD email. (3) Engage in the behaviors that we would generally expect of outstanding employees.

No Extra Credit No extra credit work will be available. The course requirements have been established so that there are a number of opportunities that contribute to your course grade.

Academic Honesty This class is designed to support the development of a community of learners who are actively engaged in the process of learning facts about child development and the science behind that. The community model is built on trust, and I trust you to do the right thing. No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Recall the Comet Creed, voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by.

Comet Creed: “As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

Submissions on eLearning Verify that what you submit can be viewed in eLearning. If you can’t see it, I can’t see it to evaluate your hard work. Notify eLearning tech support by email at assist@utdallas.edu or call the UT Dallas Computer Help Desk at 972-883-2911 if you have technical problems.

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies](#) webpage for these policies. **The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.**