Anger and Aggression among Children

“Anyone can get angry – that is easy, … but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for everyone, nor is it easy, wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.”

Aristotle

My primary goal for this course is to help you develop a sophisticated understanding of current issues in the study of anger and aggression in children, with particular attention to the following questions.

• What is aggression, and how does it relate to anger, conflict, aggression, bullying, conduct disorder, antisocial behavior, and violence?
• Do girls and boys engage in similar or different types of aggressive behaviors?
• What are the early, developmental origins of anger and aggression in children?
• How stable is aggressive behavior during childhood and adolescence?
• What types of causal factors contribute to individual differences in aggressiveness?
• How do angry, aggressive behaviors influence children’s peer relationships?
• What long-term, negative outcomes are associated with aggressive behavior in childhood and adolescence? Are these similar or different for girls and boys?
• What interventions have been successful in reducing aggressive behavior in children?

You will explore these questions in two ways: by reading and discussing state-of-the-art research and theory on anger and aggression, and by preparing a substantial, detailed proposal for an empirical research project on a topic of your own choosing.

The course will be conducted in a conference format. What this means is that you will carefully read and critically evaluate each assigned chapter and article, and come to class prepared with focused questions. I will moderate the discussion and help the group try to formulate answers to questions, or at least plans for how questions could be answered. My hope is that most of our meetings will be predominantly discussions. I will lecture when I feel it is needed and useful in answering the questions you raise, but I will also encourage you to ask questions and comment at any time. The requirements for this course are as follows.

Readings Prior to each class meeting, you need to read all of the assigned selections, which include book chapters and carefully selected primary source materials. Many book chapters are from our course text, Social Aggression among Girls. Most empirical articles are available online through the UTD library. All readings not available online may be found in a coursepack for sale at Off-Campus Books (518 W. Campbell Rd., 972-907-8398). Readings may be modified somewhat depending on the needs and interests of this group.

Discussion Questions For each assigned reading, you will write a brief, focused question for discussion, which you will send to the rest of the class by electronic mail no later than 1 PM on the Monday afternoon before we meet. These questions could be genuine questions of understanding
about the reading, or an argument or controversial issue that you plan to discuss in the conference. You should write one short comment or question for every chapter and article that you read. I will integrate and organize these questions in preparation for the class meeting. Part of your preparation for each class meeting should be to read and think about others’ questions.

Research Proposal Throughout the semester, you will develop a research proposal for an empirical project pertaining to some aspect of anger and aggression in children. Detailed guidelines for the format of the proposal will be forthcoming later. So that you can work on the proposal over a long period of time and so that I can give you feedback along the way, your proposal will be due in installments. With each subsequent draft, it is important that you revise portions written earlier in response to my suggestions and your own ideas for improvement. The entire proposal will be handed in as a unit on April 19.

Tuesday, 2/1 Statement of topic due in writing
Brief oral presentation of initial plan for research project

Tuesday, 2/22 Introduction due

Tuesday, 3/22 Revised introduction and method due

Tuesday, 4/19 Entire proposal due
Final oral presentation of research projects

Grading and Course Policies Each of the following components will count equally toward your course grade: written questions and conference participation, introduction submitted on 2/22, revised introduction and method submitted on 3/22, entire proposal submitted on 4/19, and oral presentation on 4/19. Please refer to the UTD catalogue for policies concerning withdrawals, incompletes, and academic honesty.

One final word The intellectual excitement of a course of this type depends on the active participation of all students. I look forward to each of your contributions, and welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Readings

1/18 Anger


1/25 Aggression: Definitions and Subtypes


2/1 Theories and Models: Biological and Frustration-Aggression

**STATEMENT OF PROPOSAL TOPIC DUE IN WRITING**

A. Historical Overview


B. Biological Approaches


C. Frustration-Aggression Approaches

Theories and Models Continued:

D. Social Learning Approaches


E. Social Information-Processing Approaches


F. Gender


Anger and Aggression in Young Children


Development of Aggression: Stability and Change

INTRODUCTION DUE


NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2004). Trajectories of physical aggression from toddlerhood to middle childhood. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 69*, read as much of the monograph as you can, but skim methods and results if you must.

### 3/1 Peer Relationships and Friendships


### 3/15 Targets of Aggression: Peer Victimization


3/22 Risk

REVISED INTRODUCTION AND METHOD DUE


3/29 Intervention with Aggressive Children


4/5 Family Factors


4/12 Videotape and Discussion, *The Trouble with Evan*

4/19 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE
Student Presentations