

MSS Developmental Psychology (PSYC7305) First Semester, 2026-2027

Lecture Hours	: Mon 6:30pm-9:20pm
Lecture Hall	: CPD-3.28
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Conversation Hours	: Tue 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. or by appointment
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Conversation Hours	: Tue 2:00p.m. to 3:00 p.m. or by appointment via Moodle link
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Conversation Hours	: By email appointment
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Conversation Hours	: By email appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a master's course taught in a problem-based learning mode, students are expected to go beyond understanding existing knowledge. This course aims at helping students build knowledge of developmental issues. More importantly, it aims at helping students develop an ability to relate the knowledge to real-life scenarios, and *access, integrate and evaluate* information from different sources. Various topics in developmental psychology are selected to illustrate thematic, theoretical as well as methodological issues. Students will also gain hands-on experience of simple data-collection projects. To achieve these aims, students will play an active role in the course. Through various class activities, the facilitators and peers will give timely feedback to students' ideas and work.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Acquire a better understanding of different aspects of human development from a life-span perspective
2. Developing the habit and ability to search for, and critically integrate, analyze and evaluate information
3. Gain hands-on experience in applying psychological concepts and research methods by conducting developmental psychology projects

COURSE SCHEDULE

Lecture	Date	Topic	Due
1	Sep 7	An overview of developmental psychology	-
2	Sep 14	Infancy (Class 1A)	-
3	Sep 21*	Infancy (Class 1B)	-
4	Sep 28	Early Childhood (Class 2A)	Individual Reflection 1
5	Oct 5*	Early Childhood (Class 2B)	Proposed Essay Title
-	Oct 12 & 19	<i>Reading Week & University holiday - no class</i>	
6	Oct 26*	Nature Nurture Debate	Individual Reflection 2
7	Nov 2	Middle Childhood (Class 3A)	One-page Essay Outline (Optional)
8	Nov 9*	Middle Childhood (Class 3B)	-
9	Nov 16	Adolescence and Young Adulthood (Class 4A)	Individual Reflection 3
10	Nov 23*	Adolescence and Young Adulthood (Class 4B)	-
-	Nov 30	Unseen Quiz	Individual Reflection 4
-	Dec 7	-	Final Essay

(For dates that mark with *, please go to the assigned classroom directly by 6:30pm. See the class list posted on Moodle for more information.)

ASSESSMENT

In-class attendance and participation 15%

Mini-project reflections 30%

Unseen quiz 20%

Final Essay 35%

1. In-class Participation and Attendance (15%)

Attendance and contribution to in-class discussion will both be assessed. Absence without adequate justification or proper documentation (e.g. a medical certificate) will be counted negatively towards class participation. 2% of the course grade will be deducted for a no-show or a late arrival more than 15 minutes without sound justification. Please use the HKU App to check your attendance. For more information, please visit <https://its.hku.hk/services/university-wide-applications/mobile-applications/about-hku-app/>.

2. Two Mini-Project Reflections (30%)

Before each Class A, you will start to engage in some mini-project activities with your group members. Each group will conduct and report all four mini projects which resemble data collection or behavioral testing. Instructions for each mini project will be given at an appropriate time. Please note that this is not a research method course, and you are not required to find a big number of participants in the mini-projects. Try to be creative and reflective in data-collection and enjoy the process of it. Based on your learning from the mini-projects, reading, group discussions, and lectures, you can choose to **write an individual reflection with guided questions for two out of the four topics** (no more than 3 pages, font 12, Times New Roman, double line spaced and formatted in APA-format). You can write about one or more of the following:

What have you learned/experienced in the mini-project? How do you interpret the findings? How does your findings relate to the existing literature? What could you apply/bring to your learning, personal experience and daily life?

A reflection that is critical, insightful and supported by theory and evidence is of higher quality than one that is merely based on personal opinion or one that only summarizes the readings or lecture materials. **The submission deadline is one week after each Class B. All late submissions will receive a grade not higher than B-.** If you choose to write more than two reflections, only the best written two will count.

3. Unseen Quiz (20%)

The unseen quiz is scheduled for Nov 30 2026, 7:00-9:00pm. You will be given a case and some supplementary materials to study in the first 30 minutes of the quiz. After that, you will answer some questions in relation to the case, based on what you have learnt in the lectures and the readings.

There is no need to overprepare for the quiz, as the quiz will assess your understanding and the ability to apply theories/knowledge in developmental psychology, rather than memorization of facts. You are allowed to bring ONE piece of A4-size “cheat sheet” to the examination.

4. Final Essay: Developmental Psychology in the Digital Era (35%)

This essay is designed to help you better equip yourself for the constantly evolving modern digital world, and to further encourage the integration of research into daily life problem-solving strategies.

First, ask a GenAI (or more than one GenAI if you choose to) a question about developmental psychology, such as parenting, child development, ways to support children with SEN, etc. Screenshot the question and the answer(s) generated and include that in your essay. Then, do a literature review on the chosen topic. Based on the latest body of literature, write an essay to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the answer(s) generated, and/or make recommendations for improvements.

You can choose to prepare the final essay yourself (word limit: 1500) or in pairs (word limit: 2500). The essay should be written in compliance with the APA-format. While you can choose whatever question to ask and write about, the general principle is to choose a question that is specific enough for discussion, and does not have a clear and definitive answer and thus allows room for critical analysis and argumentation. If you are not sure whether your question is a suitable one or not, seek help from your instructor or tutor. Extra guidelines and instructions will be provided on Moodle, and there will be an optional tutorial session showing you how to prepare for the final essay.

To facilitate your preparation and to give you early feedback, please kindly

- i. submit your proposed topic to the tutor via Moodle for approval no later than 11:59 pm Oct 5. We will give you very brief comments on the feasibility of your topic within two weeks.
- ii. (optional) submit a one-page draft/outline to Moodle no later than 11:59 pm Nov 2. You will schedule an individual appointment with your tutor to receive written or verbal feedback.

The essay is due **11:59 pm Dec 7 2026**. Submit a soft copy to Moodle (if you choose to work in pairs, one submission is sufficient). Use font 12 Times New Roman, double line spacing and format the essay in the APA 7th Ed format. The essay will not be accepted one week after the due date. Late submission will be deducted 10% of the assignment grade per day. Extension of deadline will only be considered if your medical doctor gives you (or both of you in case you are working in pairs) TWO or more consecutive days of sick leave inclusive of the day on which the work is due.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student who engages in any form of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on exams, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, interfering with grading, falsification and fabrication of data in any academic exercise etc.) will receive a grade of F on the component(s) of assessment concerned or in this course and will be reported to the Department/Faculty Office/University Disciplinary Committee for further disciplinary action. There will be no exceptions. If you are not sure what constitutes the academic offense of plagiarism, checkout the webpage at <https://tl.hku.hk/plagiarism/>. Department of Psychology has formulated departmental polices/guidelines on student misconduct. Visit the website at <https://psychology.hku.hk/useful-information-to-current-students/> for more information.

Beware of Plagiarism

A softcopy is required for all assignments. The softcopy will be checked for plagiarism against database of articles, books, webpages, and essays submitted by students at HKU and other universities. No credit will be given for an assignment that contains plagiarised materials. Further penalties may also be applied. These penalties may include a zero mark for the course. Plagiarism will also be reported to the Department / Faculty Office / University Disciplinary Committee for consideration of possible disciplinary action. If you are not sure what constitutes

the academic offence of plagiarism, checkout the webpage at <http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism>. Please note that if you reuse any material previously submitted for another course without proper acknowledgement that also constitutes plagiarism, although you are the author of the original work. This is called self-plagiarism.

Generative AI usage

Since you are submitting your assignments under your name, you should be responsible for the content generated through AI queries, ensuring that it remains compliant with intellectual property laws, devoid of misinformation, plagiarism, and ethically sound. In our course, the more specific policies of AI usage are:

For individual reflections

AI tools, such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, and similar technologies, is ONLY permitted to help students, fine-tune assignments, or check grammar and writing style. AI tools are NOT permitted to generate references. You are also not expected to use AI to prepare any part of these assignments.

For the final essay

You will use AI to generate materials for further discussion. Make sure that you SCREENCAP (instead of copy and paste) the prompts and the answers generated and attach them in the appendix of your essay.

For the rest of the essay, you may use AI for concept and idea refinement, as well as grammar verification or word choice enhancement ONLY. AI tools are NOT permitted to generate references. You are also not expected to use AI to prepare any part of these assignments.

For all written assignments, submissions will be automatically checked through Turnitin's built-in AI detection tool. Students are required to maintain documentation demonstrating the development of their work. This includes both:

- Work history, including drafts, showing the evolution of the work. Students may use any versioning method but may find Word versioning or Google docs helpful.
- If any Generative AI tools are used, complete records of AI interactions must be retained. This includes all prompts, outputs, and relevant timestamps (i.e., full chat history).

If a submission is identified as potentially substantially AI-generated, students will be contacted and expected to produce the above documentation. Evaluation of potential AI-related academic misconduct will be conducted holistically by the course instructor/teaching team, taking into account Turnitin's results and the supporting materials provided. Failure to provide the requested information is grounds for failure, notation in student records, and/or alternative penalties, at the discretion of the instructors.

Late Drop Policies

Late drops will not be permitted under normal circumstances. Exceptions will be considered only in cases of verifiable medical conditions that prevent a student from continuing their studies in their entirety for the remainder of the semester (i.e., circumstances requiring withdrawal from all registered courses for the semester). Selective latedrop of a single course will not be approved under any circumstance. Requests to latedrop due to academic difficulty, dissatisfaction with grades, or changes in interest will not be approved. Students are fully responsible for managing their course selections and should use the official add/drop period to assess whether their schedule and workload are appropriate. The add/drop period is the designated opportunity to determine which courses students can reasonably commit to for the term. All late-drop requests must be supported by appropriate documentation. Appeals will be reviewed by the Department Teaching and Learning Committee (DTLC) on a case-by-case basis.

OPTIONAL TUTORIALS

There will be optional tutorials throughout the semester. Your tutor will provide some general guidance and feedback to the written assignments in the tutorials. Some basic research skills will also be introduced to help you better cope with the course. Tutorial is also the time when you can ask whatever questions you have about the course. These tutorials are entirely optional and there will be no consequences of not attending them.

READINGS

Compulsory Readings

The reading list will be available on Moodle soon for each topic should be read before you attending the relevant lecture. Your pre-lecture questions shall be based on the knowledge and reflections from the assigned readings.

Optional Readings

As the course is partially adopting the problem-based learning approach with no exam, you will be assigned to read empirical papers instead of chapters from a textbook throughout the semester. However, you are more than welcome to consult the relevant chapter(s)/section(s) of any textbook on developmental psychology. Some textbooks that you may consider include:

Boyd, D., & Bee, H. *Lifespan development* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Berk, L. (2015). *Child development*. Pearson Higher Education AU.