

## COGNITIVE AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Psychology 352, Winter 2015

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M: 11:30-13:00, Macdonald 1

Th: 13:00-14:30, Biosci 1103

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### Introduction and Overview

Children perceive, consider, and explain the world in ways that are sometimes similar, and sometimes dissimilar to the ways adults explain it. Where there are similarities, particularly similarities that can be seen in infants, we gain insight into how the human mind has evolved to understand the world. Dissimilarities, in contrast, flag the areas in which idiosyncratic experience, culture, and biological maturation play their roles in shaping how we come to think the way we do. The goal of this course is to provide an overview of the basic scientific enterprise of understanding the developmental origins of human cognition and language, and the mechanisms that cause change over the childhood period.

### Structure of the Course

Following the structure of the textbook, we will first survey the field from a theoretical perspective that uses examples from research to illustrate how particular theoretical mechanisms might work. Following this, we will survey a number of broad domains of research on cognitive and language development. Throughout these sections there will be more of a focus on the abilities and capacities that infants (or young children) might start with and how those change over time.

In general, each of the specific domains

The in-class exams and the final will consist of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and essay questions. For the Science News Report (2.5 pages max, single spaced), you will work in a group to distill the findings of 2 or 3 primary research articles for the general public, highlight their theoretical importance, identify their implications for public policy, education, or the family, and identify any shortcoming in the research or directions for future research. Further details will be provided in the third week of class, after enrollment is set.

You can find the dates of the exams and the due date for the Science News Report in the schedule of classes below. The final exam

seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

#### Additional Comments

Although this is a large class, please feel free to ask questions about the course material at any time. If you are not comfortable talking in class, send me an email. Please visit me in office hours to chat over a cup of coffee or tea. The lecture format is impersonal and I would like to get to know folks and hear what everyone is thinking about the class.

#### Tentative Schedule of Classes

Week	Day	Topic	Reading
1	Monday, September 14	Why study Cognitive and Language	

