

Rutgers University, Department of Psychology  
**Lab in Childhood Development**

**PROFESSOR**

	<b>Office Hours</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email/Web</b>
Vanessa LoBue	TBA	Smith 341	353-3950	vlobue@psychology.rutgers.edu

**CO-INSTRUCTOR**

	<b>Office Hours</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email/Web</b>
Katy-Ann Blacker	Wednesday 12:00-1:00pm	Smith 117	353-3933	katyann@psychology.rutgers.edu

**TEXT (REQUIRED)**

Miller, S. A. (2007). *Developmental Research Methods, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.*, California: Sage.

Additional readings may also be assigned for each class. All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**BLACKBOARD**

The syllabus is available on blackboard. It is subject to change, and I may post revised versions periodically. Additional readings and course announcements will also be posted on blackboard.

**ATTENDANCE**

Class attendance is mandatory. It is also mandatory to attend the child care center on scheduled dates and times. For every class period and child care center hours missed, ½ letter grade will be deducted from your final grade (5 percentage points). You will also lose points for arriving late to class or arriving late to a child care center visit.

**COMMUNICATION**

You are responsible for making sure that the email address on Blackboard and in the Rutgers online directory is a current address where I can actually reach you. You are also responsible for checking Blackboard regularly for announcements and information.

**RUTGERS CHILD CARE CENTER (RCCC)**

This course requires that you attend class twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30-12:50) and that you assist at the Rutgers Child Care Center (RCCC) once a week for three hours. Attendance is mandatory for class meetings and for weekly RCCC meetings. By attending RCCC once a week, you will have the opportunity to interact with children and observe their behavior. You will also collect data for your three paper assignments. In return for their participation, you will be required to assist the teacher in everyday activities. Policies for research at RCCC will be reviewed on the first day of class. When working at the childcare center, you will be expected to dress professionally and abide by all of the center's policies. Students who fail to do so will not be permitted to work at RCCC, and will consequently be unable to complete the course.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this course is to learn how to apply basic principles of scientific research, design and measurement to the study of child development. Specifically, the goals of this course are to:

- Understand the special methodological and ethical challenges of developmental research
- Develop skills for communicating and working with young children
- Design and carry out a research project

- Describe, analyze, and interpret research findings
- Evaluate others' research critically and constructively
- Communicate scientific results effectively, both orally and in writing

## **CLASS FORMAT**

Each week of class will have a 2-part structure. On Tuesdays, I will lecture on the class topic for the day. The topics will follow the chapters in the textbook and will focus on important issues in developmental methodology. We will also discuss the Thought Paper assignment for the week. On Thursdays, we will generally have a "workshop" day where we will discuss one of your three research projects in small groups, including plans for data collection and write-up of the next major paper assignment.

## **REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION**

Your grades will be based on the total score on 3 major paper assignments (75%), and 10 short weekly thought papers (25%). The three major paper assignments (Observation Paper, Experimental Paper, and Final Paper) should follow APA format. A tutorial on using APA guidelines can be found at the link below (click on "View the tutorial"). I recommend viewing the tutorial before you begin the paper assignments.

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>.

For the three major paper assignments, you will work in groups of 4 to design your studies, collect and analyze your data, and write up your papers. Thus, for each of the 3 major papers, each group of 4 will hand in one paper. Thought Papers will be done individually.

### **Observation Paper**

25% of your final grade is based on the Observation Paper. In the first few weeks of class, you will observe various behaviors of the children at the RCCC. During these observations, you will choose a specific behavior to record during your sessions. You will then be expected to describe the observed behaviors in a formal paper (~4 pages in length).

1. Introduction – describe a previous (1 empirical article) that also examined the specific behavior you selected (1 page).
2. Method – describe how you identified your behaviors. Provide an *operational definition* of your behavior, and describe how you went about recording it, how many children you observed, for how long, and on how many occasions (1 page).
3. Results – provide a detail analysis of the behavior you observed. You do not have to run statistical analysis for this paper, but you should provide a mean, range, and other descriptive statistics (1 page).
4. Discussion – reflect on the meaning of the behavior you observed and why it might be important for development. Speculate on future studies that can be done using your observed behaviors (1 page).

### **Experimental Paper**

25% of your final grade is based on the Experimental Paper. For this project, you will design an actual experiment with multiple conditions that you will conduct in the RCCC classroom (~5 pages in length).

1. Introduction – describe some previous studies (2 empirical articles) that also examine the specific behavior you selected (1 page).
2. Method – include a section on participants, where you describe how many participants you tested, their ages and gender; a section on materials, where you describe any experimental materials you used; and a section on procedure, where you describe what you actually did, and what your experimental methods were (1-2 pages).
3. Results – provide a detail analysis of the responses you recorded. You do not have to run statistical analysis for this paper, but you should provide a mean, range, and other descriptive statistics for each

of the groups you measured (1 page).

4. Discussion – reflect on the meaning of your findings why they might be important for development. Speculate on future studies that might add to your findings (1 page).

### **Final Paper**

25% of your final grade is based on the Final Paper. For this project, you will design a manipulation that is aimed at enhanced a behavior in the classroom, such as learning or sharing (~8-10 pages in length). As part of your study, you will have to measure children's performance at baseline (before your un your study) and then again after your manipulation to examine whether what you did was effective in teaching the child some new and desirable behavior.

1. Introduction – describe several previous studies (2-4 empirical articles) that also examine the specific type of learning or developmental change you have chosen (2-3 pages).
2. Method – include a section on participants, where you describe how many participants you tested, their ages and gender; a section on materials, where you describe any experimental materials you used; and a section on procedure, where you describe what your manipulation, and what your experimental methods were (2-3 pages).
3. Results – provide a detail analysis of the responses you recorded. You should run statistical analysis for this paper comparing performance from baseline to test, also providing a mean, range, and other descriptive statistics for each of the variables you measured (1-2 pages).
4. Discussion – reflect on the meaning of your findings why they might be important for development. Speculate on future studies that might add to your findings (2-3 pages).

On the last day of class, you will give a 10-minute formal presentation summarizing your final project and the results. The presentation will be given in PowerPoint or Keynote and will be timed to adhere to the 10-minute limit. It should follow the format of the paper, and include slides for the Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion sections of the paper.

### **Weekly Thought Papers**

25% of your final grade is based 10 Thought Papers. Each Thought Paper should be one page in length, double spaced, 12 point font, with 1 inch borders. **Each Thought Paper should not exceed one page.** Each Thought Paper will be a reflection of what you observed or experienced at the RCCC that week. For each RCCC visit, you will be given a Thought Paper topic on the syllabus. During your RCCC visit that week, be mindful of the topic and think about how your observations of the day might answer the Thought Paper question. The written 1-page paper is due at the beginning of the next class. Each Thought Paper is worth 10 points, and will be graded on:

1. Quality, clarity, and originality of observations
2. Clarity and conciseness of writing
3. Integration of material covered in class and/or textbook

### **No Cheating Or Plagiarism**

Students who cheat or plagiarize will receive a 0 for the assignment, and I will alert your department chair and dean. Cheating or plagiarizing include: (1) copying ideas or words from another student's paper, and (2) copying ideas or words from a published source without appropriate citation. This course adheres strictly to the University policy on academic integrity.

### **Calculating Your Final Grade**

The grading scale is 89.5-100%=A, 86.5-89.4%=B+, 79.5-86.4%=B, 76.5-79.4%=C+, 69.5-76.4%=C, 59.5-69.4%=D, 0-59.4%=F. I do not grade on a curve.

The total number of points for the semester will be 400—100 points for each of your 3 papers, and 100 points for your 10 Thought Papers (10 points each).

A	358 – 400
B+	346 – 357
B	318 – 345
C+	306 – 317
C	278 – 307
D	238 – 277
F	<238

### LECTURE TOPICS & READINGS

(1) Tuesday, 1/21	<b>Introduction</b> <i>Overview of Syllabus and Class Policies and Working at Rutgers Child Care Center</i>
(2) Thursday 1/23	<b>Workshop: Searching for Empirical Articles</b> Thought Paper 1: Based on what you saw in your first observation, what are some of the challenges that you might encounter when conducting research with infants and young children? <i>Due 1/30</i>
(3) Tuesday 1/28	<b>The Study of Development and Research Ethics</b> <i>[Read Chapters 1, 9]</i>
(4) Thursday 1/30	<b>Workshop: Choosing Relevant Behaviors for Observation Paper</b> Thought Paper 2: What are some interesting behaviors that you noticed today (1) that were common among multiple children, and (2) that were unique to only one or two children? <i>Due 2/6</i>
(5) Tuesday 2/4	<b>Measurement and Observation</b> <i>[Read Chapter 4]</i>
(6) Thursday 2/6	<b>Workshop: Finalizing Data Collection Strategies</b> <i>No Thought Paper – Data Collection Week</i>
(7) Tuesday 2/11	<b>Research Design and Procedures</b> <i>[Read Chapters 2, 3, 5]</i>
(8) Thursday 2/13	<b>Workshop: Discussion of Data Collection and Summarizing Data</b> Thought Paper 3: What are some of the challenges you experienced when collecting data with the children at the RCCC? <i>Due 2/20</i>
(9) Tuesday 2/18	<b>Research Design and Procedures (Continued)</b> <i>[Read Chapters 2, 3, 5]</i>
(10) Thursday 2/20	<b>Workshop: Topic Discussion for Experimental Paper</b> Thought Paper 4: What are the potential pros and cons of the research methodology you have decided to use for your Experimental Paper? <i>Due 2/27</i> <b>Observation Paper Due</b>
(11) Tuesday 2/25	<b>Contexts for Research</b> <i>[Read Chapter 6]</i>
(12) Thursday 2/27	<b>Workshop: Finalize Topic and Discuss Method for Experiment</b> Thought Paper 5: How do you foresee a single research question being answered in different ways based on the context in which you collect data (e.g., field, or lab)? <i>Due 3/6</i>
(13) Tuesday 3/4	<b>Qualitative and Applied Research</b> <i>[Read Chapter 7]</i>

(14) Thursday 3/6	<b>Workshop: Finalize Procedure and Materials for Data Collection</b> Thought Paper 6: What are some activities that you can do with the children in the RCCC that might be beneficial in some developmental domain (e.g., learning, prosocial behavior, etc). <i>Due 3/13</i>
(15) Tuesday 3/11	<b>Statistics</b> <i>[Read Chapter 8]</i>
(16) Thursday 3/13	<b>Workshop: Going Over Data From Previous Data Collection</b> <i>No Thought Paper – Data Collection Week</i>
(17) Tuesday 3/18	<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>
(18) Thursday 3/20	<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>
(19) Tuesday 3/25	<b>Writing and Presenting Research</b> <i>[Read Chapter 10]</i>
(20) Thursday 3/27	<b>Workshop: Discussion of Potential Topics for Final Paper</b> Thought Paper 7: How would your new understanding of statistics change the way you collect data with children? <i>Due 4/3</i>
(21) Tuesday 4/1	<b>Research in Cognitive Development</b> <i>[Reach Chapter 12]</i>
(22) Thursday 4/3	<b>Workshop: Finalized Topic for Final Paper</b> Thought Paper 8: Based on your RCCC observations, discuss a few interesting research topics relevant to cognitive development. <i>Due 4/10</i> <b>Experiment Paper Due</b>
(23) Tuesday 4/8	<b>Research in Social Development</b> <i>[Read Chapter 13]</i>
(24) Thursday 4/10	<b>Workshop: Finalize Procedure and Materials for Final Paper</b> Thought Paper 9: Based on your RCCC observations, discuss a few interesting research topics relevant to social development. <i>Due 4/17</i>
(25) Tuesday 4/15	<b>Research in Infancy</b> <i>[Read Chapter 11]</i>
(26) Thursday 4/17	<b>Workshop: Analyzing Data from Final Project</b> <i>No Thought Paper – Data Collection Week</i>
(27) Tuesday 4/22	<b>Aging Research</b> <i>[Reach Chapter 14]</i>
(28) Thursday 4/24	<b>Workshop: How to Give a Formal Research Presentation</b> Thought Paper 10: <i>Discuss some final reflections on what you have learned from observing children’s behavior for a semester. Due 5/1</i>
(29) Tuesday 4/29	<b>NO CLASS – meet as a group to practice final presentations. Vanessa and Katy will have extra office hours at this time for help with presentations.</b>
(30) Thursday 5/1	<b>Final Presentations</b> <b>Final Paper Due</b>