

HDFS 3123-001: Child Development
Spring 2026
Department of Educational Psychology
University of North Texas

Instructor: Jason Chiang, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11AM-5PM (zoom meeting also available upon request)

Classroom: WH 216

Meeting Time: MW 12:30PM - 1:50PM

Phone: 940-565-3962

Pre-requisites, co-requisites, and/or other restrictions: none.

“Having children is like living in a frat house- no body sleeps, everything is broken, and there’s a lot of throwing up.” — Ray Romano

Required Textbook: Levine, L.E., & Munsch, J. (2021). Child development: An active learning approach (4th edition)

Course Description: Study of the physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development and learning of children and adolescents, ages 3 through 18

Course Objectives:

The learner will be able to...

1. Discover important influences that affect child development.
2. Realize the importance of the study of child development.
3. Use theories and research to guide practice when working with children.
4. Recognize the impact of culture upon child development, family interactions, and child rearing.
5. Use critical thinking and reflection to assess information, examine personal assumptions, and gain skills essential for lifelong learning.

Course Requirements/Methods of Assessments

Exam 1	20 points
Exam 2	20 points
Exam 3	20 points
Final Exam	25 points
Letter to My Future Self	15 points

100 points

Grades

Here's how your grade will be calculated ... Your score out of 100 will be divided by 100, yielding a percentage. For example, if your points add up to 93, you would have earned a 93%.

A: 90-100%, B: 80-89%, C: 70-79%, D: 60-69%, F: below 60%

Only percentage equal or greater than 0.5% will be rounded up (e.g. 79.5% will be rounded up; 79.4% will not)

- **Attendance**

Regular attendance is expected. **Since this is not an online class, attending class virtually (e.g. via Zoom) WILL NOT be an option** unless an accommodation has been arranged through Dean of Students Office. We cover a lot of material in class, and it will be much easier for you to keep up if you attend class regularly. Research has shown that students who attend class regularly are more likely to be successful. You should attend every class unless you have a university **excused absence** as stated in the [Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy \(PDF\)](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudAttnandAuthAbsence.Pub2_.19.pdf) (https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudAttnandAuthAbsence.Pub2_.19.pdf)

An absence may be excused for the following reasons:

1. religious holy day, including travel for that purpose;
2. active military service, including travel for that purpose;
3. participation in an official university function;
4. illness or other extenuating circumstances;
5. pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and
6. when the University is officially closed.

Accordingly, **24 hours written notice (email) AND supporting documents** are required for any excused absence (e.g., doctor's note).

I understand occasional tardiness and absences may occur. If you are late to class, please drop me an email to let me know the circumstances. If you must miss a class, please let me know **prior to your absence** (AND provide a supporting document for the absence to be considered excused). If you have a problem that will affect your attendance, please come to me immediately to discuss it.

- **Exams (85 points)**

There are **4** exams in this class. Exams consist of true/false, multiple-choice, and short answer questions. They are expected to be taken on assigned dates on February 9 (tentative), March 4 (tentative), April 6 (tentative), and April 29 (tentative). **All exams are due by 6:00 PM** on the dates listed above. The first three exams are **non-cumulative**. The final exam is **cumulative and covers the entire course material**. Exams cover material presented in lectures, textbook readings, and media presentations. Missing exams without a valid reason will receive a grade of zero (0). Legitimate reasons for missing exams include serious medical, judicial, or serious personal events that

prohibit you from taking the exam. **If you miss any exam, you will be required to provide** written notice AND supporting documents by the end of the next business day. For example, if you miss an exam on 2/9, the written notice AND supporting documents should be provided by 2/10. You get only one attempt for each exam. Opening the exam counts as using your one attempt, even if you do not finish it. No retakes or do-overs will be allowed for any reason, including technical problems such as computer crashes, internet loss, or power outages.

- ***Letter to My Future (15 points) due April 22 @ 6 PM***

You are expected to write a letter to your future self based on what you have learned this semester about child development:

1. You will be gathering information throughout the course on concepts/ theories that you find useful in your future career or your role as a parent. Concepts are vocabulary words or terms or theories that you have learned in this class. Some examples include egocentrism, attachment styles (four styles together are considered as one concept), experience-dependent brain development,... There are many others. Think of what interests you or catches your attention as you go.
2. Make sure to clearly define (in your own words) each concept.
3. Please decide your future role in the letter (i.e. are you a parent, teacher, social worker, or camp counselor?). For the purpose of simplicity, you may choose only one role.
4. Create a real-life situation and/or scenario for **each concept** of child development for a total of **three** concepts. Apply each concept to the scenario. This should be an application to your future career or parenting scenario. Think about how you can use what you have learned. Be creative and thorough. Show me that you understand the concept as you illustrate its use. Here is an example: As a straight A student, Kevin (your eleven-year old son) will ask you....
5. Page numbers in your textbook should always be provided as sources of **reference** and **in-text citation** (i.e. Levine & Munsch, 2021, page number).
6. Check your word count. Your entire letter should be no less than **500 words**. Points will be deducted if your letter is too short.
7. Your letter should be double spaced, in Times New Roman, with font size 12.
8. Make sure to check grammar and spelling.
9. Do not use quotes. This letter is to be in your own words.
10. Do not write a research paper. This is a letter that serves as a reminder for the future you!
11. For guidance on what is expected for full credits, please read the **rubric** posted on the bottom of the assignment page on Canvas

- **Extra Credits:** We will complete extra-credit activities in class throughout the semester, and the dates will NOT be disclosed in advance. Only those showing up **in-person** (i.e. not through zoom) AND participating in activities will receive extra credits. This means that **even if you have an excused absence on the day of an activity, you won't be eligible for the extra credit**. These are bonus credits, not mandatory components of the

course. The in-class activities offer a chance to enhance your grade but will not negatively impact your grade should you miss the day of an activity.

TIPS FOR SUCCEEDING IN HDFS 3123

1. LOG IN to CANVAS regularly. <https://unt.instructure.com/> and CHECK your UNT email each day. View any/all Announcements each and every day.
2. READ the syllabus, the assignment guidelines, and the rubrics carefully. If you read and follow all instructions carefully, you will complete all the major requirements for the course. Everything you need to know about the class is provided in the syllabus.
3. MEET all deadlines. This class is more fast-paced than you think! Plan ahead to be sure that your assignments post in advance of the due date/time. I strongly urge you to get ahead on the assignment. Waiting until the night before an assignment is due to begin working on it is an invitation to trouble.
Computer/internet issues, work/family commitments, or travel plans will not be considered valid reasons for missing the deadlines.
Working ahead of schedule will prevent you from missing the deadlines. Deadlines are real; please ensure you complete the tasks on time.

Know the due dates for assignments is the key ingredient for success in this course!

4. CONTACT the UNT help desk with any questions related to Canvas and/or technology. <http://it.unt.edu/help-desk-resources-students>;
<http://it.unt.edu/helpdesk>

Still reading? Take a deep breath and visualize an A for the semester. Only a few more pages left...

COURSE POLICIES

- Late Work
 - All assignments are due at 6 pm on the date assigned.
 - Late assignments: assignment turned in 30 minutes after the due date will lose 10% of the available points; work turned in after 3 hours will lose 20% of the available points; work turned in after 6 hours will lose 40% of the available points; work turned in after 24 hours will lose 60% of the available points; work turned in after 36 hours will lose 80% of the available points. No late assignments will be accepted 2 days (48 hours) past the due date.
- Missing Exam
 - Missing exams without a valid reason will receive a grade of zero (0). Legitimate reasons for missing exams include only those listed on page 2 of the syllabus for

excused absences. If you miss any exam, you will be required to provide written notice AND supporting documents **by the end of the next business day**. For example, if you miss an exam on 2/9, the written notice AND supporting documents should be provided by 2/10.

- You get only one attempt for each exam. Opening the exam counts as using your one attempt, even if you do not finish it. No retakes or do-overs will be allowed for any reason, including technical problems such as computer crashes, internet loss, or power outages.
- Regarding Bringing Children (or Other Non-Enrolled Individuals) to Class
 - Only individuals who are officially registered for the course or have received explicit written approval from both the department chair and the dean to audit may attend class sessions. This policy helps maintain an effective learning environment and protects the safety and privacy of all students.
- Course website and Canvas
 - PowerPoint Slides are posted on Canvas website after the conclusion of each chapter. Grades for all assignments and exams are posted on Canvas. Students should also regularly check their University of North Texas email account for announcements and updates.
- Communications Policy
 - Check for email announcements often
 - Contact me (by email) for questions about the course that cannot be answered by reading the syllabus (i.e., requirements, assignments, exams, or grades). My goal is to respond to messages within 10 hours between 8 am and 6 pm, Monday through Friday. **Please note that emails received after 6 pm might not be addressed until the following day.** While I strive to meet this response time, unforeseen circumstances can arise. If you do not receive a response back within the 24-hour time frame between Monday and Friday, please resend the message as it may have gotten lost in cyber space. I usually reply to emails within 24 hours during the weekend.
- Submission of Assignments
 - All assignments will be submitted via Canvas. Assignments should be submitted prior to the due date to avoid any technical and/or personal issues that may arise. **Computer/internet issues, work/family commitments, or travel plans will not be considered valid reasons for missing the deadlines**
 - Assignments should be saved as .DOC or .DOCX files for access. Please note that assignments submitted via email will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Technology Use (in the classroom)
 - Using electronic recording or any other communications devices (such as MP3 players, cell phones, pagers, recording devices, etc.) in the classroom to record lectures or take notes via artificial intelligence software without the explicit permission of the instructor is strictly prohibited. If you are caught doing so, you will be asked to leave the classroom and will not be granted points for any assignments or exams that are associated with that day. Exceptions will be made for students that have a note from the Office of Disability Access and consult with the instructor ahead of time. If this policy is violated by more than one student, the use of computers and phones will be prohibited in the classroom altogether.

- A Grade of Incomplete
 - A status of incomplete is rarely granted. To receive an incomplete, a student must have an extenuating circumstance, be up-to-date on their coursework, and have a grade of "A" in the class at the time the request for an incomplete is made. To request an incomplete a student must reflectively determine if they meet the criteria previously stated. If the student determines they meet the criteria it is his or her responsibility to write the instructor with a detailed reason and need for an incomplete in the class. The instructor will determine if the student's need is extenuating, if the student is up-to-date in their coursework and if they have a current grade of "A" in the class. If these criteria have not been met, the instructor will decline the request.
- Inclusive Learning Environment
 - We (instructor and students) strive to create an inclusive environment where all voices are valued, ideas are welcomed, and a sense of belonging is cultivated.
- Please ask for assistance in a **timely manner** (i.e., not hours before an assignment is due, and definitely not after the assignment is past due).
I am here to help you...just reach out!

ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES

American with Disabilities Act accommodation statement

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing

or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be referred to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION & PROCEDURES. UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS. Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING (SPOT). Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

SUCCEED AT UNT. The University of North Texas endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grown. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go to <https://success.unt.edu/>

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

	Topic	Readings
Unit 1 (January 12- February 9)	Issues and Themes in Child Development	Chapter 1
	Theories of Development	Chapter 2
	How Children Develop: Nature Through Nurture	Chapter 4
Exam 1: February 9 (tentative)		
Unit 2 (February 11 – March 4)	Prenatal Development, Birth, and the Newborn	Chapter 5
	Physical Development: The Body and the Brain	Chapter 6
	Cognitive Development #1 Piaget	Chapter 7
Exam 2: March 4 (tentative)		
<i>Spring Break: March 9-15</i>		
Unit 3 (March 16 – April 6)	Cognitive Development #2 Memory	Chapter 7
	Language Development	Chapter 9
	Emotional Development and Attachment	Chapter 10
Exam 3: April 6 (tentative)		
Unit 4 (April 8 – April 29)	Intelligence	Chapter 8
	Identity: The Self, Gender, Adolescent, and Moral Development	Chapter 11
	Social Development	Chapter 12;
	Parenting and Sibling Relations	Chapter 13; Chao (1994); Lansford et al. (2004); Chiang et al. (2024)
Letter to My Future Self due April 22		
Final Exam: April 29		

LINKS FOR SUCCESS

CANVAS: <https://unt.instructure.com/>

UNT Student Help Desk: 940-565-2324; <https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk>

Library: <http://www.library.unt.edu/>If you are unfamiliar with the UNT library system, electronic databases, etc., consider attending a library tour and orientation. Please check the UNT library website for scheduled times: www.library.unt.edu.

Student Counseling Services: <https://learningcenter.unt.edu/> (General)

<http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-testing-services#programs> (Other programs and services)

Student Learning Center: <https://learningcenter.unt.edu/> (General)

<http://learningcenter.unt.edu/studentresources> (Student resources)

UNT Food Pantry: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>

Dean of Students Office: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources> DOS lists a range of resources available to Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents! Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support.

UNT Writing Center (Sage 150): 940-565-2563 <https://writingcenter.unt.edu/welcome-unt-writing-center>

Opportunities to Learn More About Children and Families

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY): <http://hippy.unt.edu>

Zero to Three: www.zerotothree.org

First3Years: www.first3yearstx.org

National Council on Family Relations: <https://www.ncfr.org/>

Key Dates for the Semester (Add/Drop/Withdraw) can be found here:

<https://catalog.unt.edu/content.php?catoid=37&navoid=4321>