Course Instructor: Maria Legerstee, Ph. D. – Office visits by Appointment
(E-mail: legerste@yorku.ca)

TA: Elissa Rodkey
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:15-2:15 pm. Office: BSB 072E
York email: erodkey@yorku.ca

How to get in touch with us

The professor and TA’s each have office hours. Please use office hours to get
clarification on material taught in class and written in the book. You can also ask
questions during and after class.

Please check information about the course on Moodle.

Correspondence by email

In order to correspond by email you need a York e-mail address. No answers will be
provided to students with other e-mail names.

Please write the course number in the subject line of your e-mail when corresponding
with us and give your student number as well.

Be considerate when using email to contact us. You may have ONE message, but we
have 300 students.

Purpose of the course

In Developmental Psychology you learned about the infant’s physical, social, emotional
and cognitive development. That is, how does the infant grow, and how does the infant
begin to feel and think. In this course we study how infants get to know other people,
their feelings, emotions and their thoughts. We will focus primarily on how infants
become aware that other people have a mind, or ‘mental states’ and that these mental
states drive their actions. Because the developmental changes through which children
develop in their understanding of people’s minds (mental states) mimics actual theory
changes, this phenomenon has been called the child’s Theory of Mind.

Although much research has focused on ToM abilities in children, there is little
knowledge on what precedes an understanding of the mind. In an effort to reveal the
developmental process and the mechanism that affect this process we will examine how
infants communicate with people during the first two years of life.
The development of communication has traditionally been divided into three major areas, each signaling an important developmental milestone in the child’s awareness of the mental states of people.
During the first, infants engage in dyadic interactions that are typified by proto-communications (social interaction with emotional content and turn-taking structure). Infants have a special attraction for people because they communicate with people and not with inanimate objects. Infants also appear to have expectations about the structure of communication, because they get upset when people violate these expectations. These early attention biases for people would seem prerequisites for the development of a theory of mind.

During the second phase infants engage in triadic interactions. Infants begin to coordinate attention between people and objects, enabling them to communicate about things in the environment. During these interactions 5-7 month-old infants monitor people’s gazes to disambiguate people’s goals, and use people’s gazes and facial expressions as cues to infer when people are teasing in humorous interactions. Such an understanding can be seen as a foundation to the infant’s later understanding that others are behaving in ways that do not match with reality. Between 9 and 12 months, infants use facial expressions and gazes as cues to infer what people want. This kind of primitive understanding of desires of others is a first step in understanding how such cues may be used to predict other’s actions and potentially their internal mental states.

The third phase in the ontogeny of communication is called symbolic communication where infants use symbolic gestures or words to direct people’s attention to events. We will examine experimental findings that show that between 12 and 14 months infants begin to point to affect another’s mental state.

We will look at how the quality of maternal interactions influences the infants’ inclination to monitor gazes and emotional expression of others in the context of face to face interaction at 1 and 3 months; engage in joint attention between 5 and 7 months, and reference people’s attention and emotions in order to infer what they want (primitive-desires) by 12 months.

In summary, by studying how infants communicate we learn about the process of how an awareness of mental states develops in infants, and by studying the interpersonal interactions and its effect on the development of communication, we learn about the mechanism that promotes the development of a Theory of Mind in infants.

The course aims to foster discussion and critical evaluation of the contemporary research into the development of intentional nonverbal communication in human infants. We will examine in detail the following content areas:

- Definition of Intentions and Theory of Mind
- Infants’ preference for Human stimuli, (endogenous and exogenous factors)
- Animate/Inanimate distinction
- Development of an awareness of self
- Dyadic and Triadic Communication,
- The development of attention following and sharing
- The influence of maternal affective behavior

These areas will be discussed from various theoretical perspectives such as: Classical Developmental theories (Piaget, 1954), Nativist (Baron-Cohen, 1995), Learning theory (Skinner), Social Interactions theories (Fogel, 1993; Hobson, 2002, Reddy; 1991; Vygotsky, Trevarthen, 1979; Tronick, 1981), and Constraint Constructivism (Legerstee).

Evaluation

Two midterms (25% each = 1.5 hour exam). First midterm will be given before the drop date (Drop date is November 11, without receiving a grade), the 2nd exam is a month later and the final exam (50% = 2.5 hour exam) will be scheduled by the registrar.

EXAMS ARE BASED ON POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS, TEXTBOOK, ASSIGNED READINGS AND FILMS.

Each 1.5 hour exam will involve a choice of 6 out of 8 questions. Answers to questions cannot be in point form, nor can they exceed one page. The final 2.5 hour exam will be 10 out of 12 questions.

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 6, etc.) Assignments and tests will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g., A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.) For a full description of the York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar (http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)

Please refer to Moodle for instructions regarding missed exams. Make-up exams are possible according to the guidelines of the Senate (e.g., note from doctor, etc.). Make up exams will be scheduled at the end of the semester after the exam period.

Textbook


Copies of the book will be on reserve in the Scott Library (Call Number: BF 723 S6 L44 2005)

Supplementary articles can be obtained on Moodle.

Academic Integrity
All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents)
http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm

- York’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity website
- Ethics Review process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation
Wednesday, September 12, 2012

Introduction

Wednesday, September 18, 2012

Ch. 1: Brain, Mind, Theories of Piaget
Theories: Piaget vs. Constraint Constructivism vs. Nativism
PPT: Do Intentions Matter – 2006 – Kyoto

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

Ch. 2: Biological underpinnings of socio-cognition:
Endogenous and exogenous processes
Film: Infant Methodology

Wednesday, October 3, 2012

Ch. 3: The animate/inanimate distinction
PPT: – Variation in imitation
Film: Person-object differentiation in normally developing
infants and infants with Down syndrome

Wednesday, October 10, 2012

EXAM I – 1.5 hour exam covering chapters 1-3

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

Ch 4: Self and consciousness
Film: look up – something about the first 6 months and a self

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

Ch. 5: Dyadic interactions
Ch. 6: Triadic interactions
PPT: Jealousy
Film: The baby’s brain: Wider than the sky (Call Number: Video 6436)
(October 31-November 2 CoCurricular Days)

Wednesday, November 7, 2012
**EXAM II – 1.5 hour exam covering chapters 4 - 6**

(November 9, 2012 final day to drop course)

**November 14, Ch. 7:** Social influences on infants’ developing sense of people  
**Attachment** - Harris  
**Film:** Harlow monkeys "Mother love" (Call number: Video 2319)

Wednesday, November 21, 2012  
**Chapter 8:** Affect attunement and **prelinguistic communication**  
**PPT** – Harris  
**Film:** *Out of the Mouth of Babes* (Call number: Video 3529)

Wednesday, November 28, 2012  
**Chapter 9:** The quality of social interaction affects infants’ primitive desire reasoning  
**Chapter 10:** Social cognition, affect attunement, and imitation  
**Overview of the Course**

**Dec 3rd END OF CLASSES**

**FINAL** 2.5 hour exam is during the exam period which falls between December 5-21, 2012, as scheduled by registrar – covers chapters 7-10