This course will review research findings from the study of cognitive development, particularly the development of thinking in the first decade of life. The goal of the class is to further our understanding of what is known about cognition in children, how changes in children’s thinking occurs, and how knowledge about changes in children’s thinking can be applied to improve children’s well-being.

The fact that this is a relatively small class, rather than a large lecture, presents us with some opportunities and some risks. The opportunities are for people to express themselves actively on a regular basis, rather than sitting back and just taking in what a lecturer tells them. The risk is that with no one giving a two-hour lecture, the quality of the class depends at least as much on what you do as on what I do.

For this reason, we need some ground rules to help us meet our goals. First, everyone should attend each class meeting. (If you experience a true emergency, let me know beforehand that you won’t be attending class.) Second, everyone is expected to actively participate in the discussion. This is essential if the class is to be a true seminar, rather than degenerating into a rotating lectureship. Third, everyone is expected to be at class on time.

Grades in the course will be based on class participation (30%), two take-home midterms (30%), and a take-home final (40%).

Class participation. Each of you will present and lead a discussion of two focus articles on a contemporary problem in cognitive development. The typical presentation is 15 minutes long and contains at least 5 substantive slides. Additionally, each of you should send discussion questions for each class to me and to the discussion leader at least 24 hours prior to class. The key criteria for my grading class participation will be high quality and reasonable quantity of contributions when you are not leading the discussion and posing important and stimulating questions and leading an interesting discussion when you are.

Midterms and final. The midterms and final will be based on the readings and the discussions. The midterms will include 5 short essay questions, each worth 20 points; the questions will be taken from the questions posed in the class, both by me and by you. The final exam will be similar to the midterm, but it will include 10 questions. Among these, 7 will be specific to the material after the midterm and 3 will be on material covered before the midterm. Due dates of midterms are indicated below.

Primary Text:

Academic Misconduct: It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentsaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).