Overview. This is an upper-division, writing-component course on parent-child relationships. It is designed to help you understand, critically evaluate, and write about parenting and it role in child development. I want you to understand the principal ideas, methods, and findings in the scientific literature on parenting and be able to apply them to realistic parent-child interactions. To this end, I ask you to read, discuss, and write about scientific articles covering diverse aspect of parenting. Class time combines lectures about, and discussions of, these articles.

Brief Schedule of Topics and Assignments

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ESSAY #1 is due Thursday, October 17th, at the beginning of class
ESSAY #1 CRITIQUE is due Thursday, October 24th, at the beginning of class
ESSAY #1 REWRITE is due Thursday, November 7th, at the beginning of class

Grading

There are six graded components of the course (with percentage each counts toward final grade)

(1) Essay #1 20%
(2) Rewrite of Essay #1 20%
(3) Critique of another student’s Essay #1 5%
(4) Essay #2 20%
(5) Weekly quizzes 25%
(6) Attendance and class participation 10%
Reading Assignments

Required readings can be found either (a) in a course packet that you will need to purchase at Paradigm Books (24th Street in the first block west of Guadalupe) or (b) on the Course’s website on Blackboard. To prepare each week, read all assigned readings prior to Tuesday’s class. Each Tuesday be prepared to take a brief quiz that asks you to write about some variant of these four questions:

(a) What is good and bad parenting according to each reading?
(b) By what process does each author think that good or bad parenting affect children?
(c) What outcomes in the child does each author stress that good or bad parenting affects?
(d) What’s the unique point of view that distinguishes each paper from each other paper?

If you can answer these questions, you will be in a good position to ace the quizzes and write effective essays. My advice is that you attempt to answer these four questions right after you finish reading each paper. It will take you perhaps 15 minutes a week and is guaranteed to improve your grade. We discuss readings in terms of the unique points of view associated with each author, so it will be helpful to you to memorize the name of the first author of each reading. We tend to discuss these many papers by referring to the first author, as in “What would Patterson argue… It’s Grusec’s main point that …”. Knowing the first author will improve your grade by improving your comprehension in class.

Schedule of Readings

WEEK 1  Aug 29  Introduction

WEEK 2  Sep 3-5  Security, Attachment, and Emotion Regulation


WEEK 3  Sep 10-12  Emotion, Sensitivity, and Early Parent-Child Relationships


WEEK 4  Sep 17-19  The Development of Children’s Autonomy and Control


**WEEK 5  Sep 24-26  Children's Temperaments and Individual Characteristics**


**WEEK 6  Oct 1-3  Teaching, Guidance, and Self Regulation**


**WEEK 7  Oct 8-10  Socialization I: Parental Control and Punishment**


**WEEK 8  Oct 15-17  Socialization II: Emotion-Based and Relationship Approaches**


**ESSAY #1 IS DUE THURS., OCTOBER 17th AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**

**WEEK 9  Oct 22-24  Socialization III: Integration and the Concept of Socialization Domains**


PEER CRITIQUE OF ESSAY #1 DUE THURS, OCTOBER 24th, AT BEGINNING OF CLASS

WEEK 10 Oct 29-31  Goals: What Do Parents Want When Interacting With Children?


WEEK 11 Nov 5-7  Cognitive Processes That Regulate Parenting


ESSAY #1 REWRITE DUE THURS., NOVEMBER 7th, BEGINNING OF CLASS

WEEK 12 Nov 12-14  Parents’ Emotions and Motivation


WEEK 13 Nov 19-21  Parents’ Reactions to Children’s Emotions


WEEK 14 Nov 26  Dysfunctional Family Interaction I: The Development of Aggression


**WEEK 15 Dec 3-5 Dysfunctional Family Interaction II: Child Abuse**


**ESSAY #2 IS DUE THIS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6th, BY 5:00pm**

**ESSAYS**

**Essays #1 and #2**

Each of the two main essays comprise 20% of your grade. An additional 20% depends on your rewrite of Essay 1. These three essay assignments are the essence of the course. They should be about 7 pages long (8 pages maximum), doubled-spaced (no 1/2 line spacing, please), use 12-point Times-Roman font, and have 1-inch margins on all sides. Because this is a substantial writing course, essays are graded both for knowledge of course material (80%) and quality of writing (20%). Good writing is rewriting. It is important that you edit your writing carefully, several times after you’ve more or less completed the paper. Essays emphasize articles either from the first (Essay 1) or second (Essay 2) half of the course. You do not need to use references other than those required for the course, although feel free to do so (if references are not on the syllabus, please include a bibliography that lists them in detail).

In your essays, cite the major ideas and studies that we have read and discussed. It is your clear presentation and use of formal ideas and data from readings that are the basis for evaluating your essays. It is particularly important that you discuss the underlying processes stated or implied in each article, that is, that you discuss the mechanisms by which parents influence children or by which variables influence parenting! The importance of this cannot be overstated! This is the focus of the course. A student is failing to discuss mechanisms, for example, if they state that strict parenting is associated with low internalization in children without discussing why; that poor child management practices lead to aggression in children, without discussing why; or that parents who use scaffolding have children who are more competent, but without discussing why. *Always discuss why! Always discuss process!*

Here are four guidelines for ensuring that your papers will be substantive, accurate, and process-oriented:

1. **Depth and accuracy of your understanding of each article’s unique perspective.** The papers are about applying and communicating accurately the unique points of view presented in each article. Much of this rests on how well you explain underlying processes. Note not only surface characteristics of articles or points of view, but their complexity. This aspect of your writing reflects your depth or *level of understanding*. At its most simplistic, an author’s point of view is presented in such a global, undifferentiated way that it would be difficult to distinguish it from the points of view in other articles. The statement, “sensitive parenting promotes healthy development,” even if true, is an underlying part of many articles assigned for the course and is not a specific point of view about how an individual author views sensitivity and development. At its most sophisticated, a point of view is precise and represents one particular article and author. For example, a point of view specific to control theory is that, “sensitive parenting gives children control over events, which helps them develop a sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy in turn promotes children’s exploration and full engagement of the environment.” Notice how much clearer and more specific this is than simply saying that sensitivity promotes development. There is something unique about the perspective of each article, and though that perspective may relate closely to others, you have not understood an article until you understand the specific, unique contribution of that article. If you can articulate the unique perspective of each article, you are likely to learn a great deal. You will do well in the course.
Consider five levels of understanding for Lepper’s analysis of internalization.

1) Minimal understanding. Lepper “believes that parents should use low power.” This is correct, but is a surface feature of Lepper’s analysis. We don’t know why Lepper thinks that low power is good. We don’t understand the mechanisms or processes Lepper thinks are responsible for this. Furthermore, this general point of view is present in many articles, some of which are quite contrary to what Lepper believes.

2) Low understanding. Lepper, “believes that parents should use low power so that children don’t act simply to avoid external sanctions.” This is better, more complex, and differentiates Lepper from some others who think parents should use low power. It explains one part of why Lepper believes in low power. But it’s still only partial understanding.

3) Moderate understanding. At then next level, a student might cover the simpler ideas in Levels 1 and 2, but specify further that Lepper, “believes specifically in minimally sufficient power.” This is a unique component of Lepper not present in other papers – although we still don’t know why, by what process.

4) Good understanding. At the next level a student might cover all of the preceding ideas and note that Lepper, “believes in minimally sufficient power so that children will both comply and, upon doing so, will attribute their compliance, not to external sanctions, but to internal preferences and motives.” This is getting at the depth and detail in Lepper’s analysis and specifies the processes Lepper stresses.

5) Excellent understanding. Finally a student might add the implications of this perspective for effective parenting and how parents should act with children. “Thus, parents need to frame interactions in ways that emphasize internal reasons, such as reasoning and discussion, give children choices, and make what power they use low in salience.”

As you proceed up these levels, you move from simple, general, and descriptive to complex, specific, and explanatory. You move from, ‘many authors could say this’ to ‘Lepper’s theory specifically proposes this.’

Essays are graded on the basis of the extent to which you explain ideas at higher levels.

2) Breadth. It is important that you discuss most of the key ideas that you’ve read and we’ve discussed, not simply a small subset of them. The only way that I know that you understand an article is for you to present it effectively in your essay. If you write about internalization but leave out, for example, Lepper’s analysis, I can only assume that you didn’t read his article or didn’t understand its importance to your essay. Try to incorporate most of the principal ideas we discuss into your papers.

3) Scientific focus. Be sure to maintain a focus on scientific theory and data and have read about and discussed in class. Your essays should contain very little unsubstantiated personal opinion. Instead, your essays should be well-argued and should be supported by references to the scientific literature. Remember, in science your opinion is important only if you can support it.

4) Originality and critical analysis. You essays will succeed if you present scientific points of view well (the first two criteria). However, I am also interested in whether you can critically compare, synthesize, and evaluate issues and theories. This means discussing relations among readings. The highest level of understanding occurs when you, not only can discriminate each point of view, but you can compare, synthesize, and evaluate these points of view.

Because this is a writing component class, you need to attend to the quality of your writing. Be sure to re-read, check, and edit your writing to ensure that your essays are clear, concise, well organized, and in line with principles of writing we discussed in class. The writing component of essay grades will be based on writing guidelines covered in class. These include:

1) Overall paper structure [e.g., inclusion of clear introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs],
2) Effective thesis or unifying theme
3) Effective use of topic, transition, and concluding sentences
4) Focused, integrated paragraphs
5) Clarity, particularly clarity of main points
6) Effective argumentation from theory and data
Effective general essay construction, sentence construction and editing
(a) Being concise (omit needless words)
(b) Avoiding run-on sentences
(c) Using specific, concrete language and avoiding vague writing
(d) Using correct spelling and punctuation
(e) Maintaining subject-verb agreement and noun-pronoun agreement
(f) Using of active voice
(g) Expressing action in verbs, not nouns
(h) Using positive form
(i) Using of parallel form

Late Papers
I have to reserve the right to lower grades on papers that are late without medical or Dean’s Office documentation. Grades may be lowered one letter grade for each week that the paper is late. I prefer not to have such a policy, but given the pressures on you from other courses, large numbers of papers are late when deadlines are not firm. This leads to problems grading and returning papers efficiently and to getting behind in the course. If you are unable to finish a paper on time, please discuss it with me or the teaching assistant. If your reasons can be foreseen, try to let us know ahead of time.

The Essay Questions
The two essays should be carefully argued responses to the following questions.

Essay 1. Discuss the principal issues in the development of children in the first three to four years of life, with particular attention to (a) the role parents play in this development and (b) the specific processes that are responsible for parents’ impact on early development. Consider, for example, such constructs as attachment, autonomy, parental sensitivity, self regulation, discipline, reciprocal relationships, and the regulation and communication of emotion.

Essay 2. Discuss problematic and dysfunctional parenting and its role in the development of behavior problems and poor internalization of values. Consider, for example, why and how parenting become destructive to children, what processes in parents and children are involved, and how they work?

Essay #1 Rewrite
Three weeks after you turn in Essay #1, I’d like you to turn in an improved, rewritten version. Because improvement based on feedback is the reason that rewriting is crucial to good writing, the Essay 1 rewrite will be evaluated a bit differently than the initial version. Key to the rewrite is use of feedback to make substantive changes that improve the paper. Papers that make minor, cosmetic changes are not likely to be significantly improved or to reflect thorough use of feedback. A paper that was fairly good initially is not a good rewrite if it doesn’t use feedback to improve significantly. In contrast, papers that undergo substantial change and improvement will be clearer, more accurate, and better argued. The Essay 1 rewrite will be evaluated on the basis both of the paper’s final overall quality and on its effective and thorough use of feedback given for the initial draft.

Peer Critiques of Essay #1
You will need to turn in two copies of Essay #1. The first copy is for me. The second copy is for another student in the class. Each student will write a critique of another student’s essay. Use the writing guidelines discussed in class to write a one- to two-page (double spaced) analysis of the other student’s paper. Critiques should emphasize writing. They should address such questions as: Is the paper clear and well organized? Where are the unclear or disorganized parts? Are topic, transition, and concluding sentences being used well? Which ones need improvement? Do paragraphs hang together? Which ones seem to cover more than one idea? Are there run on sentences? Redundancies? You need to be specific about exactly where the problems are so that the author can understand where improvements are needed. For example, saying the paper is vague or unclear without specifying where is unhelpful. Although you are primarily evaluating writing, note that, when you have only the written
document to assess someone’s understanding, it is impossible to separate how well they communicate an idea from how well they understand it. In peer critiques I am looking for thoughtful, specific, and detailed analysis that links writing principles covered in class to the writing you are evaluating.

**Quizzes**

On most Tuesdays, there will be a quiz on the readings assigned for that week. I will ask you to explain briefly the main ideas in one or two of the assigned readings for that week. Although unpopular among some students, these quizzes are absolutely critical to how much you will learn in this class. They help you stay on top of the many complex readings, focus you on parts of readings that are important, and enable class discussions to be informed by thorough knowledge of the points of view being discussed. Many students have told me that across the semester they came to understand the value of these quizzes. Your final quiz grade is the average of your 10 best quiz grades (there will probably be 12 quizzes. Do not count on a quiz every week). All quizzes are required; there are no make-up quizzes. If you are sick or for other reasons miss a quiz, it will mean that your final quiz grade will be the best 10 out of only 11 rather than out of 12.

**Attendance/Class Participation**

Much of what’s valuable about this course happens in class. The classroom learning cannot be duplicated by work outside of class. Because these are primary source readings, students do not understand them prior to our discussing them in class. Students who come to class prepared, who understand the material, and who are thinking carefully about it during class are doing important work. They should receive credit for their attendance and participation in this aspect of the course. Of course, there are circumstances that you cannot control that may require that you miss class. You can miss three classes without it affecting your grade. After three absences, I will deduct class participation points. Please don’t misunderstand this requirement. I recognize that speaking during class is difficult for some of you. To do well, you don’t have to speak a lot, but I do want you to attend class and make some contribution to class discussions.

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty**

All written work must be your own; it must be written in your own words. If you take phrases or sentences from someone else, you must place quotation marks around the material and indicate the source and page number from which it came. Changing a few words is inadequate. Representing others’ words as your own -- that is, using other’s words without giving them credit or citation -- is a serious ethical problem. It is the equivalent of cheating on an exam. It can result in a grade of zero for a paper or referral to the University for academic dishonesty. When in doubt about whether it is OK to use particular words or information, discuss it with me or the teaching assistant. We can help you get the job done without plagiarizing. Of course, it also violates the University’s policies on academic dishonesty to use words from fellow students or from papers downloaded from the web.

**A TIP ON AVOIDING PLAGIARISM.** Many students try to write papers with the article about which they are writing sitting open on the table next to them. They read a section of the article and then write a paragraph based on that section. They think that this ensures that they will represent the ideas in an article accurately, but for many students, because they end up using authors’ words and structure, this invites disaster. One method for avoiding plagiarism is to learn the main points that you want to use, take a few notes, put the article away, and then compose your own paragraph or ideas about the article. If you are looking at an article while composing your presentation about that article, it can be difficult to avoid using the author’s words.