

Psychology 377
Stress and Families
Moravian College
Spring 2008

Instructor: Dr. Michelle Schmidt
PPHAC Room 230
610-861-1606
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Meeting Time: F 12:50-3:10

Office Hours: MW 11:20-12:45; Fridays, immediately after class (for this class only)

Goals and Objectives:

This course examines how developmental theory and methodology can be used to understand stress, risk, and resiliency in the family unit. Students will examine how various researchers define and measure stress; explore how different stressors effect child and family functioning; and discuss the individual and societal implications of stress from the perspective of developmental science. The specific objectives of this advanced seminar are as follows:

- ◆ To teach students advanced skills in thinking critically about complex theoretical, methodological, and/or applied issues within the context of a subdiscipline or psychology as a whole.
- ◆ To promote critical thinking about advanced theoretical, methodological, and/or applied issues through reading of primary source articles, chapters, and/or texts.
- ◆ To provide students with a critical perspective of developmental psychology's role within the larger discipline of psychology, and the role of psychology within the larger liberal arts community.
- ◆ To teach students advanced skills in scientific writing, with specific emphasis on the canons of scientific writing associated with a specific subdiscipline.
- ◆ To promote the oral expression of students' critical thinking both inside and outside of class on issues of theoretical, methodological, historical, and/or philosophical importance to either subdiscipline or to psychology as a whole.

Required Readings

As you will see, I have selected readings in what Vygotsky called the “zone of proximal development;” that is, readings that contain some concepts with which you are familiar, but also for which you must reach to comprehend new ideas and research methods. My expectation is that your work for this course will successfully integrate the concepts and issues addressed in the assigned readings.

Aber, J. L., Bishop-Josef, S. J., Jones, S. M., McLearn, K. T., & Phillips, D. A. (2007). *Child development and social policy: Knowledge for action*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

McKenry, P.C., & Price, S.J. (Eds.) (2000). *Families and change: Coping with stressful events and transitions* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Additional handouts available from the instructor.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is best conceptualized as consisting of two parts, which will be completed concurrently.

Component A. The first component of the course will focus on a broad yet intensive consideration of how stress, risk, and resiliency shape development during childhood and adolescence. Weekly readings on topics such as divorce, race issues, and mental illness will provide the groundwork for discussion on the impact of stress on the individual and joint members of the family structure. Your specific requirements for this section of the course involve reading all assigned materials and doing the following:

Discussion leader.

You will be required to lead two class discussions, in pairs, on our assigned readings. It is your responsibility to plan 45-minutes of discussion. You must discuss the reading(s) of the day. As a pair, you should provide the class with a list of thinking points related to the chapter (these can be statements as well as questions). **THE DISCUSSION SHOULD NOT BE ONLY ABOUT PEOPLE’S OWN LIFE EXPERIENCES; IT SHOULD FOCUS ON THOUGHTFUL REFLECTION ON THE TOPIC AT HAND.** Discussion leaders’ grades will be based on how well the class discussion reflects the issues in the readings and how well the discussion leaders motivate the class to discuss the topic.

Reaction papers.

Beginning in week 2, we will cover 20 chapters in our two readers. For 15 of the 20 chapters that are assigned to you, you are required to write a one-page reaction paper to the reading—this includes the two times you are discussion leader and do not have to write a reaction paper and three “bonus” misses. Even on days when you do not turn in a paper, you are required to read and be prepared for discussion. If I notice a pattern of being unprepared on the days that you do not write papers, I will discuss it with you.

Papers will be turned in at the start of class, but I recommend also bringing a copy for yourself to consult during discussion. Papers should include a 1-paragraph summary of the main point of the chapter and then follow with 1-2 paragraphs of reaction to the information. Papers should be typed, double spaced, and error-free. Each paper will be graded on a 10-point scale. Papers will be graded based on how well students synthesize the information they read and how well they provide thoughtful feedback on the chapters.

Participation.

As this course is an advanced seminar, you should be actively engaged in discussing the course material whether you are the discussion leader or not. Your level of participation will be evaluated during each class period, both by students and by the instructor.

Component B. The second component of the course will involve creating a parent-training workshop to be presented to local parents. Throughout the semester, we will discuss many topics that are relevant to parents, children, and families. We also will spend time discussing the specifics of parent training programs. Your mission, in small groups, will be to create a parent-training program targeted at parents of high-risk 4th and 5th graders. You will want to research other programs and look at books that focus on parent training programs in general.

The parent workshop at Moravian College will be held on Saturday, March 15th from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. You should look at your calendars now—if this date poses a problem for you, then an alternate assignment will be designed on an individual basis. If I do not hear from you immediately, then participation will be expected. **After the first week of class, the only way out of this course requirement will be a very serious, unavoidable, unexpected, documented emergency (e.g., death, serious illness).** Keep in mind that your group will be counting on you, the parents will be counting on you, and your behavior will be a reflection of The Learning Connection, the Psychology Department, and Moravian College. If an acceptable, documented emergency arises, the instructor will create an alternate research paper on an individual basis. Otherwise, failure to participate will result in a 0 for a total of 35% of the course (i.e., for all aspects of the parent training requirement). I do not make exceptions to this rule.

The audience will consist of parents of high-risk 4th and 5th graders from the Bethlehem School District. Saturday workshops are held monthly through The Learning Connection at Moravian College. We will discuss as a class exactly how we want to structure the workshop and what topics we wish to cover.

Although you will be expected to meet with your groups outside of class on a regular basis, we will use the last 30-40 minutes of each class as planning sessions.

As a follow-up to this Parent Workshop, we will use our class time on March 28th to review the Parent Workshop experience. We will discuss what went well and what did not go well; the impact that we had on the parents; the potential impact that we might have on the children; and students' emotional, academic, and personal reactions to the experience.

Your specific requirements for this section of the course involve working in groups to complete the following:

Group Proposal

As part of the preparation process, each group will be required to turn in a written proposal of their parent training session. This proposal will include the following: Statement of the topic, rationale for the topic (e.g., how it relates to stress and families and the population we will serve through the workshop), outline of plan, and a sketch of the specific responsibilities of each member of the group. Proposals will be downgraded 10 points for each partial or full day late beginning at the start of class on the due date.

Parent Training Workshop Participation

As stated above, each student will be required to participate in the Parent Training Workshop held on Saturday, March 15th (see penalties above for non-participation). Each student in the group will be expected to contribute an equal amount to the group effort. The instructor will sit in on individual workshops and consider feedback from the group members for grading purposes.

Parent Training Workshop Report

Each student will prepare a report that includes the following: (a) an overview of the “issue” being addressed in the parent training workshop, (b) the specifics of your program, (c) an evaluation of your program, and (d) copies of handouts or any other materials that were used in your program. APA citations and references are required. A detailed “guidelines” sheet will be distributed for this assignment. Sample papers are available from previous semesters. Papers will be graded on the quality of the presentation and the thoroughness of the content. Reports will be downgraded 10 points for each partial or full day late beginning at the start of class on the due date.

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

Op-Ed Paper

Each student will write an op-ed paper on an issue relevant to stress and families. You should look at both local newspapers (e.g., The Morning Call) and national newspapers (e.g., The New York Times) in order to get an idea of what is included in an op-ed piece. In a nutshell, these papers should present a position on a topic with background information to support the position. APA citations and references are expected—you should use at least 5 sources to write this paper. Specifics of this assignment will be discussed in class. Op-ed papers will be downgraded 10 points for each partial or full day late beginning at the start of class on the due date.

Brochure

Students will create an informational brochure/pamphlet for a lay audience on a topic of concern to the audience that is related to child or adolescent development. The target audience may be parents, teachers, policy makers, or the children/adolescents themselves (if you choose this option, be sure that the brochure is developmentally appropriate for the target age). The brochure should include background statistics on the problem, what the audience should know about the topic, what they can do about the problem, referral sources, references, and recommended readings. Citations throughout the brochure and references at the end of the brochure are required. Brochures will be downgraded 10 points for each partial or full day late beginning at the start of class on the due date.

GRADING

Discussion leader	10%
Reaction papers	15%
Class participation	15%
Parent Training Session	
Group Proposal	5%
Participation in Workshop	15%
Final Report	15%
Op-Ed Paper	15%
Brochure	10%

CLASS POLICIES

Civility

There is an expectation in this course that students will be respectful of one another. So, please don't do things that interrupt with the learning process. If your cellular phone rings, I will answer it; if you pop your gum, I will confiscate it! So, please do us all a favor and either leave it at home or turn it off when you get to class. Be respectful of one another.

Attendance Policy

As Moravian College's Attendance Policy in the Student Handbook states, "students are expected to attend classes regularly." If you have an unavoidable situation that prevents you from being in class, please advise the instructor before the class meeting. Excused absences will require appropriate documentation (e.g., doctor's note). Otherwise, your attendance will be expected. Unexcused absences will be handled on an individual basis, and may result in a 5-point deduction per absence on the final average. **Remember, we only meet one time per week, so each class day is a week's worth of work.** A grade of zero will be recorded for class participation on any missed day. Whether excused or not, if you are absent, it is your responsibility to get missed material from a classmate.

Academic Integrity

The Policy on Academic Honesty (see Student Handbook) states, "Moravian College expects its students to perform their academic work honestly and fairly." Therefore, students are expected to be honest in all matters pertaining to this class, without exception.

All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be original work. It may not be "borrowed" from another student, a printed source, or online source without proper credit as outlined by the APA Manual 5th ed. (available in the Reference section of Reeves Library). Please note that no part of your assignments may be shared with other students in this class or with students in future classes, and you may not refer to papers from previous classes. All papers submitted for this class must be original work completed to meet the requirements of this class.

Students may not plagiarize. The Moravian College Student Handbook states, "[w]hen students use the specific thoughts, ideas, writings, or expressions of another person, they must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution to the source." Failure to do so is plagiarism, a major form of dishonesty. Specific procedures for attribution for this course are outlined in the APA Publication Manual (5th ed.) (three copies are available in the reference section of the library). If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, please set up an appointment with the instructor. Otherwise, adherence to the guidelines set forth by APA will be expected. Students must turn in copies of all sources used for all graded assignments and are expected to "keep all notes, drafts, and materials used in preparing assignments until a final course grade is given." A student judged to have violated the policy on academic honesty will receive a grade of zero for the relevant assignment or a failing grade for the course, at the discretion of the instructor. Any such violation will be reported in writing to the office of the Academic Dean. Students are responsible for adhering to all policies outlined in the Student Handbook.

Learning Services Office

The Learning Services Office provides assistance to students who are experiencing academic difficulties. If you feel you need special services through this office, you may call 610-861-1510 or visit their offices.

A final note...

The bar will be set high in this course, and I hope that the assignments and discussions will challenge you to think in critical and creative ways. I encourage you to ask questions and comment at any time. I expect you to engage actively with the material in the course and to be an integral part of our collaborative learning environment by participating in learning both within and outside the walls of the classroom.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan 18	Introduction to Course Families and Stress Discussion Leader: <u>Schmidt</u>	FC Chapter 1 CDSP Chapter 1
Jan 25	Parent Education (1:00-1:45) Discussion Leader: _____ Family support (1:55-2:40) Discussion Leader: _____ Parent training workshop prep time: 2:40-3:10	CDSP Chapter 13 CDSP Chapter 15
Feb 1	Immigrants Diversity (Discussion Leader: <u>Schmidt</u>) Age 7 in America Age 14 in America Parent training workshop prep time: 2:40-3:10	FC Chapters 12 FC Chapters 13
Feb 8	Economic Stress (1:00-1:45) Discussion Leader: _____ Poverty and Child Development (1:55-2:40) Discussion Leader: _____ Parent training workshop prep time: 2:40-3:10	FC Chapter 9 CDSP Chapter 9
Feb 15	Violence, Abuse, and Neglect (1:00-1:45) Discussion Leader: _____ Alcohol and Substance Abuse (1:55-2:40) Discussion Leader: _____ Parent training workshop prep time: 2:40-3:10 BROCHURES DUE 12:50pm	FC: Chapter 6 FC: Chapter 7
Feb 22	Mental Illness (1:00-1:45) Discussion Leader: _____ Mental Health (1:55-2:40) Discussion Leader: _____ Parent training workshop prep time: 2:40-3:10	FC Chapter 8 CDSP Chapter 14
Feb 29	Relationship Stress (1:00-1:45) Discussion Leader: _____	FC Chapter 14

Everyday Hassles and Family Stress (1:55-2:40) FC Chapter 15
Discussion Leader: _____

Parent training workshop prep time 2:40-3:10

March 14 Children in Foster Care (1:00-1:45) CDSP Chapter 12
Discussion Leader: _____

Final planning for PTW (reminder of class time)

SATURDAY, MARCH 15TH: PARENT TRAINING WORKSHOP (HUB)

March 28 Discussion of PTW (1:00-1:30)

Video: *Teens and Sex* (1:30-2:30)

The Sexually Mature Teen (2:30-3:00) CDSP Chapter 11
Discussion Leader: Schmidt

PARENT TRAINING WORKSHOP REPORTS DUE 12:50pm

April 4 Video: *Preschool...America's Best Investment*

Head Start to Early Head Start and Beyond (1:30-2:15) CDSP Chapter 5
Discussion Leader: _____ Handouts

Overview of Op-Ed Papers (2:30-3:00)

April 11 Divorce (1:00-1:45) FC Chapter 10
Discussion Leader: _____

Remarriage and Recoupling (1:55-2:40) FC Chapter 11
Discussion Leader: _____

Return PTW Papers and discuss (2:40-3:10)

April 18 Families, Stress, and Intervention (1:00-1:45) FC Chapter 17
Discussion Leader: _____

Presentation of Op-Ed Papers (5-10 minutes per student...until 3:10)

OP-ED PAPERS DUE 12:50pm

April 25 Video: *The Killer at Thurston High*
Discussion Leader: Schmidt

NOTE: ADDITIONAL HANDOUTS WILL BE GIVEN OVER THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER.