

**Psychology 377**  
**Stress and Families**  
**Moravian College**  
**Spring 2014**

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<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Michelle Stroffolino Schmidt PPHAC Room 230 610-861-1606 mschmidt@moravian.edu
<b>Meeting Time:</b>	R 1:10-3:45
<b>Office Hours:</b>	T, R 11:30-12:30; W 11:00-12:00; other times we find mutually convenient

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**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 specific objectives of this advanced seminar are as follows:

In our study of stress and families, we will pay particular attention to the various environments in which children develop. Using an ecological model as our guide, we will examine (a) environments in which children are directly involved and (b) the connections between those environments; (c) environments that children are affected by, but not direct participants in; and (d) the larger cultural, social, and economic environments that influence children's development. Topics will focus on aspects of children's families, home life, school life, and neighborhood, with particular attention to historical and global perspectives that influence our understanding of these many layers of environment. We also will consider how social policy affects children and families and how we can all be advocates for children's and family issues.

**Specific course goals:**

- Gain a better understanding of child development
- Build an in-depth understanding of ecological theory
- Enhance understanding of stressors facing families
- Enhance scientific writing skills appropriate to developmental psychology
- Improve communication skills—both oral and written
- Understand the importance of serving and advocating for children

**Required Readings**

As you will see, I have selected readings in what Vygotsky called the “zone of proximal development.” That is, the readings 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. (Eds.). (2007). *Child development and social policy: Knowledge for action*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Price, S. J., Price, C. A., & McKenry, P.C. (2010). *Families and change* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) London: Sage Publications.

Additional handouts available from the instructor.

## DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

### Weekly Work

**Participation.** This course is a seminar by design. My approach to seminars is one that includes a great deal of discussion and participation by all members of the group. As such, after laying down some foundational material at the beginning of the semester, we will venture down a pathway of reading and discussing and writing about issues pertaining to children, adolescents, and families. Discussions will focus on assigned readings and the expectation is that all students will equally lead and run discussions. Students will be assigned an individual discussion grade for each discussion day. This grade will be assigned based on both the student's own evaluation of participation and the instructor's evaluation of participation.

**Take-aways and questions.** In order to assure that everyone is prepared for discussion, you will be required to turn in a write-up each week of the semester, beginning Week 3. There will be two parts to the write-ups: (1) a list of 7 substantive take away messages from the readings that reflect your critical thinking of the readings, and (2) 3 thoughtful questions with depth to pose for discussion.

### Small(er) Assignments

**Ecological Analysis.** Papers should be typed. Subsections should be single-spaced. There will be a written component and a figure that will be created to illustrate the information. To be discussed further in class!

**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.

**Hello Herman.** The Moravian Theater Company will put on a production of John Buffalo Mailer's production, *Hello Herman*, from February 13-16<sup>th</sup> in the Arena Theater. Attendance is required. We can attend as a class on Sunday, February 16<sup>th</sup>. There will be a discussion after the play.

### Advocacy Work

**Research Paper.** Students will complete a 7-8 page APA-style literature review (not including title page and references) on a topic of their choice. The paper should investigate a topic that falls under the umbrella of "stress and families" and should focus on an issue that the student feels strongly about. The research paper will set students up for the advocacy project due at the end of the semester...so topics should represent students' **passions!** Papers must include at least 10 empirical papers on the subject (quality internet sources may only be used above the 10 required articles) and should include APA style citations and a reference page. Papers will be downgraded for poor APA style. It is highly recommended that topics be approved by the instructor.

**Advocacy Project.** At the end of the semester, students will turn in an advocacy project that follows up on their research paper. Students will need to somehow advocate for the issue that they are concerned about. An advocacy project might include an *op-ed* paper or a thorough and thoughtful letter to a Congress member. Again, it is highly recommended that students discuss their choice of advocacy project. If the project is something other than an *op-ed* paper or a letter to a congressman, students **MUST** get approval for the project.

Sample assignment:

### **Op-Ed Paper**

Each student will be required to 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.

**“Finding Your Passion” Presentation.** At the end of the semester, students will give 10-15 minute presentations to the class on their research paper and advocacy project. These will be formal presentations. Students should be dressed professionally and should have a well-prepared and timed presentation. PowerPoint, handouts, and other aids are encouraged.

### **GRADING...**

#### Learning community contributions:

Participation	15%
Write-ups	10%

#### Small papers:

Ecological Analysis	15%
Brochure	15%
Hello Herman production (Feb 13-16)	5% (attendance required)

#### Semester-long assignments:

“Research a Problem” <i>Paper</i>	20%
“Advocate to Fix that Problem” <i>Project</i>	10%
“Finding My Passion” <i>Presentation</i>	10%

Note 1: Qualitative judgment may be applied when assigning final grades.

Note 2: If students do not appear to be doing the readings for our class discussions, there will be pop quizzes in class that will be figured into participation grades.

Qualitative judgment may be applied by the instructor to final grades. Missing class, coming late to class, texting and looking at cell phones, and other factors may contribute to a lowered final grade.

## 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—cell phones ringing, texting, gum popping, etc.

### 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 will result in a 5-point deduction per absence on the final average (1 meeting time = a full week of class). A grade of zero will be recorded for class participation on any missed day or for any missed presentations. 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 (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.

**IT IS THE EXPECTATION IN THIS COURSE THAT YOU COMPLETED PS211 AND YOU ARE COMPETENT IN APA STYLE. PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE EXCUSED ON THE BASIS OF "I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WAS PLAGIARISM..."** 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. 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 that require background materials 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.

### Policy on Late Papers/Assignments

Late assignments will be accepted for 48 hours after the due date and time (1:10 pm on the due date is when the clock starts) VIA EMAIL ONLY. Within 24 hours of the due date and time, papers will be graded beginning with a maximum of 80% of the possible points. During the second 24 hour period, papers will be graded beginning with a maximum of 60% of the possible points. For example, a paper worth 100 points will be graded beginning with 80 points as the maximum number of available points within 24 hours of the due date and time, and that same paper will be graded beginning with 60 points as the maximum number of available points between 24 and 48 hours of the due date and time. After 48 hours, papers will not be accepted...do not even ask.

## **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. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

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## **Class Schedule**

*Please note that topics and readings are subject to change by the instructor, particularly given our guest speaker series.*

### **Week 1.**

1/16 Introduction to Course  
Conceptual Overview of Stress & Families F&C Ch 1

### **Week 2.**

1/23 Conceptual Overview of Ecological Theory Handout  
*Age 7/Age 14 in America—Discussion & Analysis*

### **Week 3.**

1/30 Policy & Advocacy CDSP Chs 1-3  
*United Way guest?*

### **Week 4.**

2/6 POVERTY CDSP Ch 9; F&C Ch 9  
*Waiting on the World to Change—Discussion & Analysis*  
**Ecological Analysis Due**

### **Week 5.**

2/13 The transition to parenthood & parenting stress CDSP Ch 15; F&C Ch 2  
*Parent Panel (2:30)*  
*Drs. DesJardin, Yozell, Desiderio, Shank*

**February 16<sup>th</sup>, Hello Herman, Arena Theater, discussion to follow**

### **Week 6.**

2/20 Foster care and adoption CDSP Ch 12, other  
*Sue Shotwell, MSW (2:30)*  
*Caseworker Supervisor*  
*Salvation Army*

### **Week 7.**

2/27 Marital Stress & Divorce F&C Ch 10; other  
(Devote class time to research papers and advocacy project discussion)  
**Brochure Due**

## **SPRING BREAK**

### **Week 8.**

3/13 Remarriage & Recoupling F&C Ch 11  
Everyday hassles and stressors F&C Ch 16

### **Week 9.**

3/20 Physical Illness F&C Ch 5  
Death, Dying, and Grief F&C Ch 4  
*Child Life Specialist, LVHN—to be confirmed...*

### **Week 10.**

3/27 Mental Illness F&C Ch 8; CDSP Ch 14  
Family violence F&C Ch 6; CDSP Ch 10  
**Research Papers Due**

<b>Week 11.</b> 4/3	Immigrant families African American families	F&C Ch 13 F&C Ch 14
<b>Week 12.</b> 4/10	Family, peers, & drug use <i>Guest... TBD</i>	F&C Ch 7
<b>Week 13.</b> 4/17	“Passion” presentations <b>Advocacy Projects Due</b>	
<b>Week 14.</b> 4/24	Wrapping It Up, Lessons, Intervention Affecting Policy	F&C Ch 18 CDSP Ch 16