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Advanced Child Psychopathology is a foundational doctoral level course focused on developing the critical skills and knowledge set needed to accurately diagnosis various clinical presentations. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR)*, is the reference manual that guides diagnostic decision making. A common criticism of the DSM-5-TR is that social determinants of health are often denoted separately and not interwoven in conceptualization. Similarly, courses in psychopathology often emphasize person (age, sex, race) and family (genetic predisposition) level factors over systemic and sociopolitical factors. The literature base related to the impacts of environmental racism, sustainability, and physical environment on the psychopathology of youth is scant. As such, environmental racism and sustainability are seldomly included in discourse related to child psychopathology. The Piedmont Project offered a unique opportunity to learn about sustainability and environmental justice and consider ways to incorporate these themes into foundational courses such as Advanced Child Psychopathology.

My participation in Piedmont Project pushed me to consider the lens through which I teach and the texts/assignments included in my curriculum. As such, I have modified my course description and objectives to highlight that we will think critically about what constitutes a physical environment (e.g., beyond poverty and family environment) and how structural racism impacts said environment. I have added a reading from Iruka and colleagues that emphasizes the role of environment in mental health. I will incorporate this reading into the “Setting the Framework” week, to encourage conversation throughout the semester. Information about environment and sustainability will be further incorporated into each topic, not just as an aside. The majority of readings are selected by the graduate student presenters, but I have included 3 readings (page 5) that will focus on sustainability and environmental justice.

A core class assignment (Dissemination Activity, page 4) will now require students to focus on the intersection between psychopathology, environmental justice, and sustainability. This will allow students to research this intersection in a population of interest and develop skills to communicate these issues to a range of audiences.

Additional sections of my syllabus integrate what I learned during the Piedmont Project. For example, in my section related to AI tools in this course, I added a link to research on the environmental impact AI tools have, to encourage thoughtful utilization of such tools. I have previously incorporated a land acknowledgement in my syllabi, but discussion during the Piedmont Project demonstrated ways to utilize these effectively to engage in critical dialogue about stewardship and performative action. Thus, I will be intentional about how I present this statement and ways to spark conversation related to stewardship on campus. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Piedmont Project for their thoughtful discussion and encouragement throughout this experience.

**Advanced Child Psychopathology**

**Doctoral Level Course**

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Emory University acknowledges the Muscogee (Creek) people who lived, worked, produced knowledge on, and nurtured the land where Emory’s Oxford and Atlanta campuses are now located. Emory seeks to honor the Muscogee Nation and other Indigenous caretakers of this land by humbly seeking knowledge of their histories and committing to respectful stewardship of the land. To learn more about what is being done on campus, visit: [The Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI)](https://native.emory.edu/). I also acknowledge the many centuries of unpaid labor and forced servitude of enslaved Africans and their descendants, whose unremitted labor and exploitation were pivotal to the rapid economic growth of our nation and face ongoing oppression and violence.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**This course will provide an overview of the field of child and adolescent psychopathology. It is designed to *introduce* you to the field of child psychopathology, so the emphasis is on breadth rather than depth. Assignments and presentations will allow you to delve more deeply into your specific areas of interest.

Our approach to learning about psychopathology will be guided by a biopsychosocial model, which considers how biological, psychological, and social contextual factors interact and play a role in youths’ presentations and experiences. Emory’s Piedmont Project elucidated the role that environmental racism and sustainability impact sociopolitical determinants of health. As such, we will consider the role of environmental racism, sustainability, and physical environment on the psychosocial functioning of youth throughout this course. Moreover, cultural and social factors that influence youths’ experiences, and others’ perceptions of these experiences, will be considered across **all topics**.

Current practices rely on diagnostic categories and criteria; thus, we will base discussions in the current clinical lexicon – however, we will work to think critically about symptomatology and use the DSM-5 TR as **a guide**, rather than a checklist.

Some questions we will consider in this course are:

1. What is “developmental psychopathology” and how does it differ from the traditional study of psychopathology?

2. How has the history of psychology impacted how diagnoses have been created? How might an anti-colonial mindset impact how families and clinicians conceptualize “normal” and “abnormal” behavior?

3. According to the research available to us, how do different mental health disorders develop?

4. How do we operate in a medical system that is inherently inequitable?

5. What roles do sociopolitical determinants of health and environmental racism play in the development of psychopathology?

**Course Objectives**

The goal of this course is to increase familiarity with:

* the conceptual, methodological, and historical issues concerning child and adolescent psychopathology
* the factors that contribute to risk and resilience at different stages of development
* the epidemiological, etiological, diagnostic, and course-related research for a range of childhood disorders
* the limitations of our current knowledge and diagnostic systems

**Person-Centered Commitment**

In this class, I welcome individuals of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, citizenships, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, life experiences, military status, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences. It is my intent that all students be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be honored as a resource and strength. A goal is for students in this class is to learn, with guidance from me, to recognize some of the biases that exist in psychological science. As such, these biases, and their consequences (e.g., health inequities), may be topics of discussion. It is my intent to present materials and activities, and facilitate discussion and interaction, in ways that honor diversity and name microaggressions. As always, learning is bidirectional. I always welcome your feedback and suggestions about how to improve how I demonstrate my respect for diversity as well as ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In line with my commitment to equity and inclusion, please don’t hesitate to reach out at the start of the semester if you have accommodations to request. I will be happy to work with you.

**Office hours** are an opportunity for us to connect and a chance for you to ask clarifying questions about class content and/or find support. My office hours are by appointment.

***Note:*** *If you have questions outside of class, e-mail is the easiest way to reach me. I try my best to reply within 24 hours. To ensure I can provide the most helpful response, please submit questions about assignments with ample time for me to reply.*

**READINGS**

Required Course Materials

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.).
* Iruka, I. U., Gardner-Neblett, N., Telfer, N. A., Ibekwe-Okafor, N., Curenton, S. M., Sims, J., ... & Neblett, E. W. (2022). Effects of racism on child development: Advancing antiracist developmental science. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology*, *4*(1), 109-132.

See below for weekly reading schedule. Readings are available on the course Canvas site. Students are expected to complete course readings and to be prepared to discuss the readings in class.

Recommended Course Material

* Beauchaine, T. P., & Hinshaw, S. P. (Eds.). (2017). *Child & adolescent psychopathology* (3rd ed.)*.* Wiley.

***Use university library to find and access library resources, spaces, technology and services that support and enhance all learning opportunities at the university.***

**COURSE FORMAT**

This class is primarily discussion-based and will begin with an overview of the topic, provided by me, followed by a class discussion led by a student(s). Each student will lead a class discussion. When not leading a class discussion, students are expected to come to class prepared and to engage in thoughtful discussion on the topic.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

1. *Attendance, Preparation, & Preparation.* As described above, this class is designed to meet objectives through student engagement and participation. To do that, you must come prepared for each class. What that means is that you’ve read the assigned readings, taken notes (including identifying questions you have), and are ready to discuss the day’s topic. Please do not try to multi-task during class. If you need to miss a class meeting (e.g., conference, illness) or adjust the time (i.e., leave early or arrive late) please email me and arrange for someone to share their notes with you.
2. *Reflection & Integration* *(R & I) notes*. For most class meetings (beginning 9/10), you will complete R & I notes. The goal of R & I is to help you synthesize the readings and ensure that you feel prepared each week and will have your questions addressed. In general, in the R & I you will briefly (~1 page) and informally (no references required) summarize what you thought was important in the readings, what you found confusing or frustrating, how this work connects to the day’s topic as well as other course topics and readings, and/or where the readings led your thinking. ***Your R & I should be emailed to me by 12:00 noon the day before class.*** You should turn in an R & I before every class except those classes in which you are presenting (see below). You will receive one point for each R & I that you complete, and any remaining participation points will be for general class attendance, engagement, and participation. You may miss two R & I’s without penalty
3. *Student Presentations.* Twice during the semester, you will be responsible for co-leading the class discussion. You will work with a partner to choose readings, prepare a class presentation, and develop discussion questions that foster critical thinking and integration. You should have learning goals articulated for the discussion. Goals could focus on what you want your peers to think about or walk away from the discussion knowing. For example – and this is just one of numerous examples - you might say that your goals are to: (1) help peers understand the disorder; (2) consider the etiology of the disorder from a developmental and contextual perspective; and (3) highlight one interesting method for assessing the disorder. ***Email your readings to me at least one week ahead of your presentation date. Email your presentation and discussion questions by 12:00 noon the day before class*.** I will post them to the class Canvas page.Your grades will be based on preparation and execution.
4. *Dissemination Activity – Psychopathology, Environmental Justice, and Sustainability.* In this assignment, you will complete a dissemination activity that translates scholarly knowledge about a topic at the intersection of psychopathology, environmental justice, and sustainability for a specific audience. Begin with selecting a relevant issue (e.g., psychological effects of environmental racism [e.g., lead exposure, air pollution], environmental trauma in marginalized communities, or access to green spaces and child development). Gather diverse sources, including at least one peer-reviewed article. Then, choose your target audience—such as families, educators, policymakers, or youth—and develop a product tailored to them. This could be a short presentation, flyer, infographic, one-page brief, or another creative format. In addition to stating the problem, your dissemination activity must include a sustainability measure or initiative that may help alleviate the problem. Be sure to clearly identify your audience and how your product meets their needs.
5. *Final Exam*. The final exam will utilize a mock-intake report to demonstrate your synthesize and critical thinking skills. I will provide patient data that you will to (1) utilize establish a preliminary diagnosis and (2) identify clarifying and/or follow-up questions to establish any differential diagnoses. The recommendations should include specific examples of how diagnostic and behavioral tools/methods can be used to (a) clarify the diagnosis, and (b) monitor treatment progress/outcomes.

This course emphasizes interactive learning and class participation. Students are expected to attend class, come prepared to discuss the readings, and contribute to class discussions (e.g., questions that come up from the readings, reflections on personal and clinical experiences, what you learned from the assigned projects). The direction and course of the class discussions will vary depending on what students bring to the class and the personality of the class as a whole. Please note that it is not how *much* you talk in class that is important. In fact, if you monopolize class time by focusing on irrelevant issues it could affect your class participation points. Comments that demonstrate you have done the readings and thought about the relevant issues are what is expected. Maximum class participation points will be provided to students who actively and consistently contribute to class discussions and interactive exercises by making substantial contributions to discussions and activities.

**Grading**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total Points** | **Letter Grade** |
| 90-100 | A |
| 80-89 | B |
| 70-79 | C |
| 60-69 | D |
| 59 and below | F |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Participation | 15 |
| * R & I*s* | 10 |
| * Presentation & discussion lead | 15/each |
| * Audience dissemination activity | 20 |
| * Final exam | 25 |

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Description & Content** | **Sustainability Reading** |
| 1 | Introductions, Overview, & Scheduling |  |
| 2 | Setting the Framework | Iruka, I. U., Gardner-Neblett, N., Telfer, N. A., Ibekwe-Okafor, N., Curenton, S. M., Sims, J., ... & Neblett, E. W. (2022). Effects of racism on child development: Advancing antiracist developmental science. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology*, *4*(1), 109-132. |
| 3 | Vulnerability & Risk  *First R & I due* | Ferguson, K. T., Cassells, R. C., MacAllister, J. W., & Evans, G. W. (2013). The physical environment and child development: An international review. *International Journal of Psychology*, *48*(4), 437-468.  Dushkova, D., & Ivlieva, O. (2024). Empowering communities to act for a change: A review of the community empowerment programs towards sustainability and resilience. *Sustainability*, *16*(19), 8700. |
| 4 | Trauma & Stress-Related Disorders |  |
| 5 | Anxiety, OCD, & Related Disorders |  |
| 6 | Depressive Disorders |  |
| 7 | Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  *Audience Dissemination Assignment Due* |  |
| 8 | ODD, CD, & “Risky” Behaviors |  |
| 9 | IDD & Learning Disabilities |  |
| 10 | Autism Spectrum Disorders |  |
| 11 | SUDs & Eating Disorders |  |
| 12 | Suicide & NSSI |  |
| 13 | Guest Speaker (TBD) |  |
| 14 | Health-Related & Somatic Symptom Disorders | Nejade, R. M., Grace, D., & Bowman, L. R. (2022). What is the impact of nature on human health? A scoping review of the literature. *Journal of global health*, *12*, 04099. |
| 15 | BPD & Child-Onset Schizophrenia |  |
| 16 | *Final Exam Due* |  |

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Accommodations**  
It is recommended that students with any academic adjustments or accommodations reach out to me as soon as possible to ensure that these supports are being provided. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, require that Emory provide "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must register with the Department of Accessibility Services.

**Attendance Guidance**  
Your regular attendance is important to fully benefit from the course and contribute to our shared learning environment. That said, I understand that life happens. If you need to miss class, please let me know in writing before the start of class whenever possible. If you’re feeling unwell, please prioritize your health and well-being. Absences due to sickness, as long as I’m informed in advance, will always be excused. You’ll also have the opportunity to make up participation points through alternative assignments, so you won’t fall behind.

If you find yourself struggling with attendance for any reason, I encourage you to reach out so we can talk about what’s going on and find the best way to support your success in the course.

**ChatGPT and Other AI Tools.**

In this course, my primary goal is to help you develop the knowledge and skills to understand the experiences of minoritized populations and learn how to serve them effectively as clinicians and researchers. This work requires critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to engage deeply with complex issues—skills that can only be fully developed through your own intellectual effort. To support this goal, all work submitted in this course must be your own and adhere to Emory’s Honor Code. While tools like ChatGPT can be valuable in other contexts, the focus here is on helping you build your capacity to analyze, reflect, and apply insights in a way that centers and respects the lived experiences of those you aim to serve. Think of this as an opportunity to strengthen your cognitive “muscles.” Using AI tools to bypass that effort is like using a crane to lift weights—you may achieve the outcome, but you won’t develop the strength needed for this important work. If you use AI tools and present their output as your own, it will be considered academic dishonesty, resulting in a 0 for the assignment without an opportunity to redo it. If you use ChatGPT or other AI and openly disclose it to me, you will lose points but it will not necessarily result in a 0 for that assignment. My hope is that you fully engage with this learning experience, embrace the challenges, and see this as a chance to grow as a thoughtful, skilled professional prepared to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those you serve.

Note regarding to environmental impact of ChatGPT and other AI tools: [**Article**](https://news.mit.edu/2025/explained-generative-ai-environmental-impact-0117)

**Mandatory responsibility of faculty members to report incidents of sexual misconduct**  
All employees, including faculty, department chairs and deans, are required to report any incidents of sexual assault, sexual exploitation and partner or relationship violence to the university's Title IX Coordinator.

**A cartoon of a person and a dog

Description automatically generatedAbout Professor Romo**

My name is Steph (she/ella) Romo. I graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2023 with my PhD in Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology. I completed my pre-doctoral residency at Nemours Children’s Hospital in DE, with a concentration in pediatric psychology. I stayed on at Nemours to complete a 60% clinical and 40% research post-doctoral pediatric psych fellowship focused in hematology-oncology. Currently, I am a bilingual (English-Spanish) Pediatric Psychologist at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, Aflac Blood and Cancer Center and an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine. I live in Atlanta with my dog and wife. I’m an indigenous Latina with strong passions for equity, access, and justice.

**THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

**CHECK CANVAS FOR UPDATES REGULARLY.**