

Introduction to Human Development

Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

Course prefix: PSYC

Course number: 2103

Section: B&D

CRN (you may add up to five):

31756 31771

Instructor First Name: HSIAOWEN

Instructor Last Name: LIAO

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course introduces key concepts, fundamental issues, and empirical research on the development and changes in physical, cognitive, and socioemotional functioning over the human life span with joint consideration of contextual factors that shape development and adaptation. We take a multi-dimensional approach to learning in which various methods are used to convey information (e.g., lectures, readings, videos) and assess knowledge acquisition (e.g., exercises, quizzes, exams, written assignments). The introductory course is aimed to enhance students' critical thinking in two broad ways: to advance their ability to (1) apply the learned knowledge to everyday life, putting their own development and life circumstances into perspective, and (2) articulate factors that contribute to individual differences in developmental trajectories from multiple perspectives. Course contents are personally relevant and highly applicable to all college students from across disciplines.

Course learning outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to (a) articulate the essential life-span developmental principles that govern human development, (b) acquire a general understanding of major developmental issues and theories, and (b) analyze individual and contextual factors that shape human development and adaptation.

Required course materials:

Santrock, J. W. (2024). Life-Span Development, 19th Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Grading policy:

The final grade is a composite of the following course requirements:

1. Exams 210 points (42%)
2. Quizzes 50 points (10%)
3. Exercises 120 points (24%)
4. Written Assignments 120 points (24%)
5. Extra credit 5 points (+1%)

Point values will be used to calculate final grades:

- 450-500 = A (90% and higher)
- 400-449 = B (80 - 89%)
- 350-399 = C (70 - 79%)
- 300-349 = D (60 - 69%)
- 299 and below = F (59% and lower)
- The passing grade for this course is a D for 60-69% if the S/U grading is elected.

Attendance policy:

Attendance is required and expected. The instructor reserves the right to add pop exercises/activities for students who attend classes to earn extra points throughout the semester. If you miss a predetermined in-class exercise due to unexcused absence, you should accept the consequence and utilize other opportunities to makeup the points missed (e.g., research participation). No makeup exams are allowed without approved documentation. Please see <https://registrar.gatech.edu/info/institute-approved-absence-form-for-students> for more information about approved absences. Any letter for Institute approved absences (e.g., conference presentations, athletic events or competitions, religious absences, and/or health emergencies) should be emailed to the instructor as soon as possible. If you are requesting an absence due to religious observations, those could be made informally with the instructor or via the request form submitted to the registrar. These religious absences should be requested within the first two weeks of the semester.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which manages the due process, including collecting relevant information from all parties, and if responsibility for a violation is found, identifying the appropriate penalty. All students are assumed to have read the [GT Academic Honor Code](#) and the [student Code of Conduct](#) and have consented to be bound by it.

- <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code>
- <https://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/student-conduct>

For this class, specific examples of academic misconduct and dishonesty include:

- Plagiarism: the unattributed use of words and/or ideas of another person or generative AI. Examples include, but are not limited to: words written by another person (including yourself for a previous class) or generative AI or lifted from the internet with and without proper citation; ideas taken from another person without proper citation.
- To avoid plagiarism, a simple solution is to always describe answers in your own words when writing essay assignments and responding to open-ended questions
- Unauthorized collaboration: working with someone else on graded work (e.g., assignments, exams, or presentations) without explicit permission from the instructor
- Use of unauthorized aids (including, but not limited to, online 'homework' help sites, generative AI) for written assignments.
- Submission of an engagement assignment by a student not in the class session

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion