

Psychology 351
Fall 2009

Childhood Peer Relations & Clinical Issues

Marlene Sandstrom, Ph.D.
Office: 315 Bronfman
Phone: 597-3659
E-mail: marlene.sandstrom@williams.edu

Welcome to *Childhood Peer Relations & Clinical Issues*! This course offers a broad examination of children's peer relationships: why they are important, how they change over the course of development, why some children are better accepted than others, and how early peer relationship difficulties produce echoing effects in adolescence and adulthood. Together, we will explore the important ways peer relationships influence children's emotional, cognitive, and social development. We will consider various aspects of childhood peer rejection, including emergence and maintenance of peer difficulty, short and long-term consequences, intervention and prevention programs. In addition, a variety of research methodologies and assessment strategies will be considered.



Requirements

Class Participation

We have a lot of important issues to discuss, and only 12 sessions to squeeze it all in....so every class session is precious! Please keep in mind that attendance is **mandatory**, and unexcused absences will adversely affect your overall grade in the class.

While I will be doing some lecturing in this course, large blocks of time (or in some instances the entire class period) will be reserved for class discussion. This will include consideration of concepts, hypotheses, methodologies and interpretations presented in (or stemming from) our reading. Given the heavy emphasis on discussion, your active partnership is crucial!

In order to help structure our discussions and to encourage keeping pace with the reading materials, a series of response papers will be assigned in which you will be invited to provide a personal response to the day's assigned readings. You may choose to offer a critique, highlight an aspect of the readings that holds special importance to you, pose some discussion questions for the group, offer further research questions, or draw connections (or disconnects) among various readings. Please do not merely summarize the readings (assume I am familiar with them), or make general comments about your likes and dislikes without following them up with specific arguments, questions, or reinterpretations. These papers are designed to be short (1-2 pages), but thoughtful. They should be submitted to Blackboard no later than 9 am on the morning of the assigned class period. Of the 10 opportunities to produce response papers, each of you will be expected to contribute 7 of these. Since some "breathing time" is incorporated into the schedule, there will be no extensions or exceptions for the remainder. Therefore you will probably want to plan your schedule carefully.



Lab Sessions

In addition to the lecture component of the class, you will be participating in weekly lab sessions. Initial sessions will focus on basic research skills (e.g., using search engines to uncover relevant articles, presenting and critiquing data, conducting behavioral observations of children). Later sessions will focus on your empirical projects, and will be conducted in small working groups. Attendance at labs is mandatory.



Midterm Exam

There will be an in-class midterm covering material from readings and class discussions. This exam will be administered during a lab session.

Empirical Project

Each of you will complete an empirical project by conducting an original research project developed as an outgrowth of class discussions and readings. Projects will be carried out in small groups (2-4 individuals) and I will serve as your research consultant. I will provide a description of a number of research ideas from which you may choose, or you may conduct studies of your own design as long as they fit within the framework of the course and are reasonable to carry out within the semester. In addition to carrying out a study, each group will be asked to present the research in the final class session (to be held over dinner at Prof Sandstrom's house). The empirical project will culminate in an APA-style final paper describing your project in detail.



Course Grading

Course grades will be calculated on the basis of **class/lab participation** (30%), **response papers** (20%), **midterm exam** (20%), **final presentation** (10%), and **final paper** (20%)