

Autism: Insights into Mind & Development

SPHR 2133
3.0 Credits
FUNGER HALL 210

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Required Texts: [EE] *Autism: Explaining the Enigma, 2nd Ed. (Uta Frith)*
[AI] Autism: A very short introduction (Uta Frith)
[PDF] Selected Readings (Found in BlackBoard)

Course Description

This course will explore the various facets of Autism Disorder and related spectrum disorders including, Asperger's and Rett's Syndrome, and Disintegrative Disorder. The course will emphasize the relationship between typical and atypical cognitive development throughout the lifetime and how the study of autism and its related disorders may shed light on the characteristics of mind. Some specific questions that will be explored in the course include: definitions of typical versus atypical development, the architecture of mind, the problems with the "Autism" and "deviance" concept, the broad characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including cognitive, behavioral and neural features, the difficulties associated with diagnosis and treatment and the differences between ASD and related disorders.

Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to (1) identify atypical cognitive development, (2) know how to recognize the characteristics of ASD; (3) summarize the DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria for Autism, Disintegrative Disorder, and Rett's and Asperger's Syndrome; (4) name the unique cognitive and behavioral profile of ASD, (5) deliver a presentation on a selected topic relating to Autism and Development, (6) learn how individuals with autism may be identified and diagnosed using the Childhood Autism Rating Scales (CARS) and the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS).

Course Requirements

Discussion: Students are required to bring to class at least **one question or comment from each assigned readings**. Students are also expected to

include an answer to the posted question or comment for class discussion. Students should expect to be called in class randomly and pose their question/comment and lead discussion along with the instructor.

Mid-Term Exam: This mid-semester exam will cover important historical facts and the diagnostic criteria of autism and related spectrum disorders. Make-up exams will only be considered with a doctor's note (which must include a contact number). Any reason (other than a medical emergency) must be discussed with the instructor **at least two weeks before the exam**. There will be no exceptions to this rule; particularly after the exam has been administered.

Quizzes. There will be a total of four quizzes throughout the semester, each worth 10 points. Quizzes will not be cumulative; covering only the material *after* the *last* quiz. Quizzes will be administered in the *FIRST* 15 minutes of class. Dates are identified by an [*] on the syllabus.

Presentation. Students will form groups (determined first day of class). Groups will have 15 minutes (max) to present. Each group member must participate. Presentations should focus around a theme that may be taken from any of the lectures. In consultation with the Professor they should select 2-3 papers on the same theme to discuss. Presentations and presenters should address the following: (i) What is the main question/theme of the presentation and why was this theme chosen? (ii) Introduction to the specific papers chosen by the group to present identifying the main question and hypotheses being tested. (iii) What were the primary methods used in each of these papers to address the central question and theme? (iv) What were the results? (v) What are the general conclusions? Do the results support or the reject the entire hypothesis (or hypotheses) or support/reject a portion of the hypothesis? See rubric below for specific scoring. **ALL GROUPS MEMBERS MUST MEET WITH ME ONE WEEK BEFORE THEIR PRESENTATION.**

Grading: (1) Questions & Discussion: 15%, (3) Presentation: 15%, (4) mid-term exam: 30%, (5) Quizzes: 40%

Grading Policy. The following point distribution will be used to assign final grades:

A 100 – 94	B 86 – 84	C 76 – 74	D 66 – 64
A- 93-90	B- 83 – 80	C- 73 – 70	D- 63 – 60
B+ 89-87	C+ 79 – 77	D+ 69 - 67	F < 60

Course Schedule

1. Mon., Jan 14: *What is Autism*, Reading: AI & EE, Ch. 1
2. Wed., Jan 16: *Cognitive Development*, Readings: PDF

Mon., Jan 21: No Class: MLK Day

3. Wed., Jan 23: *Communicative Development*, Readings: PDF
4. Mon., Jan 28: *Models of Cog. Dev.*, Reading: PDF
5. Wed., Jan 30: *Babies*. In-class Movie
6. Mon., Feb 04: *Defining "Normal,"* Reading: PDF
7. Wed., Feb 06: *The Enchantment of Autism*, Reading: EE Ch. 2*
8. Mon., Feb 11: *Lessons from History*, Reading: EE Ch. 3
9. Wed., Feb 13: *Changing Definitions*, Reading: AI Ch. 2

Mon., Feb 18: No class: Prez Day

10. Wed., Feb 20: *Autism Epidemic?* Reading: EE, Ch. 4
11. Mon., Feb 25: *Autism Disorder** Reading: AI Ch. 4 & PDF
12. Wed., Feb 27: *The Other PDDs* Reading: PDF
13. Mon., Mar 04: *Asperger Disorder & HF Autism*, Readings: PDF
14. Wed., Mar 06: *The New ASD* Reading: PDF

Mon., Mar 11 & 13: Spring Break

15. Mon., Mar 18: **MID-TERM EXAM**
16. Wed., Mar 20: *Autistic Brains* Readings: PDF
17. Mon., Mar 25: *ToM 1: Mind-blindness*, Reading: EE, Ch. 5
18. Wed., Mar 27: *ToM 2: Aloneness*, Reading: EE, Ch. 6
19. Mon., Apr 01: *Autistic Language*, Reading: AI Ch. 5 & EE, Ch. 7
20. Wed., Apr 03: *Autistic Intelligence*, Reading: AI, Ch. 6 & EE, Ch. 8
21. Mon., Apr 08: *The World in Fragments*, Reading: EE. Ch. 9, 10*
22. Wed., Apr 10: *Case Study: Imitation & Autism*, Reading: PDF
23. Mon. Apr 15: *Autism in the World* Readings: PDF
24. Wed., Apr 17 & Mon., 22: *"Autism is a World" Assessment Practicum* Readings: PDF. In-class movie
25. Wed., Apr. 24: *Treatments of Autism* Reading: AI Ch. 7, PDF
26. Mon., Apr. 29: *Presentations 1*
27. Tue., Apr. 30: *Presentations 2*
28. Wed., May 1: *Overview**

CLASS POLICIES

Late work: Loss of 1/3 grade point (e.g., A -> A-), for every calendar day late. Exceptions granted for documented medical or family emergencies, and religious holidays (with prior notification).

Make-up quizzes and exams: Permitted only in case of documented medical or family emergency.

Religious holidays: Absence for class and late submission of assignments permitted with at least one week's notice.

Attendance: Attendance is *NOT* required, and actually *discouraged in the event that the student has symptoms of the flu*. Absent students must let the instructors know *ahead of time* that they will not attend a class. Absent students should keep up with the readings, lectures, and assignments by consulting the Blackboard course website, and e-mailing the instructors.

For university policies on teaching, see:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~academic/Teaching/main.htm>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is the University's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in class activities and assignments. Students with disabilities should contact Disability Support Services (994-8250) to obtain assistance with arranging the necessary accommodations and must notify the instructor of the course by first week of class if accommodations are required. No special accommodations are possible without DSS approval.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner and is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The George Washington University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Penalties for academic dishonesty are outlined in the *Code of Academic Integrity* (www2.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html) and may lead to disciplinary sanctions including a failing grade for the course.

To Report an Emergency or Suspicious Activity

Call the University Police Department at 202-994-6111 (Foggy Bottom) or 202-242-6111 (Mount Vernon). If the line is unavailable or you are calling from another University location, dial 911.

Shelter in Place – General Guidance

Although it is unlikely that we will ever need to shelter in place, it is helpful to know what to do just in case. No matter where you are on campus, the basic steps of shelter in place will generally remain the same:

- If you are inside, stay where you are unless the building you are in is affected. If it is affected, you should evacuate. If you are outdoors, proceed into the closest GW building or follow instructions from emergency personnel on scene.
- Shelter-in-place in an interior room, above ground level, and with the fewest windows. If sheltering in a room with windows, keep away from the windows. If there is a large group of people inside a particular building, several rooms maybe necessary.
- Shut and lock all windows (locking will form a tighter seal) and close exterior doors.
- Turn off air conditioners, heaters, and fans. Close vents to ventilation systems as you are able. (Facilities staff will turn off ventilation systems as quickly as possible).
- Make a list of the people with you and call the list in to UPD so they know where you are sheltering.
- Visit GW Campus Advisories for incident updates <http://campusadvisories.gwu.edu> or call the GW Information Line 202-994-5050. If possible, turn on a radio or television and listen for further instructions. If your e-mail address or mobile device is registered with Alert DC, check for alert notifications.
- Make yourself comfortable and look after one other. You will get word as soon as it is safe to come out.

Evacuation

An evacuation will be considered if the building we are in is affected or we must move to a location of greater safety. We will always evacuate if the fire alarm sounds. In the event of an evacuation, please gather your personal belongings quickly (purse, keys, cell phone, GWorld card, etc.) and proceed to the nearest exit. **(INSERT TWO WAYS OUT OF THE BUILDING HERE)**. Do not use the elevator.

Once we have evacuated the building, proceed to our primary rendezvous location **(INSERT PRIMARY INDOOR RENDEZVOUS LOCATION HERE)**. In the event that this location is unavailable, we will meet at **(INSERT SECONDARY INDOOR RENDEZVOUS LOCATION HERE)**.

Alert DC

Alert DC provides free notification by e-mail or text message during an emergency. Visit GW Campus Advisories for a link and instructions on how to sign up for alerts pertaining to GW. If you receive an Alert DC notification during class, please share the information immediately.

GW Alert

GW Alert provides popup notification to desktop and laptop computers during an emergency. In the event that we receive an alert to the computer in our classroom, we will follow the instructions given. You are also encouraged to download this application to your personal computer. Visit GW Campus Advisories to learn how.

Additional Information

Additional information about emergency preparedness and response at GW as well as the University's operating status can be found on GW Campus Advisories <http://campusadvisories.gwu.edu> or by calling the GW Information Line at 202-994-5050.

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Assessment of Presentation

Last Names of Group Members: _____

Title of Presentation: _____

Grading Key: 0 = Not Present, Poor or Incomplete / .5 – 2.5 = Fair, Partially complete / 3-5 = Good-Excellent

Clear *question and theme* (1.5), including discussion of why it was chosen (3) with background information and citations (5). _____ (Initials of presenter)

(.5) (1.5) (2.0) (2.5) (3.0) (3.5) (4.0) (4.5) (5.0)

Clear and succinct *introduction* to the specific papers chosen by the group to present (1.5) identifying the main question (3) and analysis of hypotheses being tested (5). _____ (Initials of presenter)

(.5) (1.5) (2.0) (2.5) (3.0) (3.5) (4.0) (4.5) (5.0)

Overview of *methods and procedures* used in each of the papers (1.5), identification of similarities and differences between the procedures used (3.0) and linking each of these procedures/methods to specific hypotheses and questions being addressed by the papers (5)? _____ (Initials of presenter)

(.5) (1.5) (2.0) (2.5) (3.0) (3.5) (4.0) (4.5) (5.0)

Summary of *results* (1.5) using graphs, figures and tables (3.0) to illustrate specific tests of specific hypotheses (5)? _____ (Initials of presenter)

(.5) (1.5) (2.0) (2.5) (3.0) (3.5) (4.0) (4.5) (5.0)

What are the general *conclusions* (1.5)? Do the results support or the reject the entire hypothesis (or hypotheses) or support/reject a portion of the hypothesis (3)? What is the take home message or what is left to be done or what is left unanswered by the study (i.e., limitations) (5)? _____ (Initials of presenter)

(.5) (1.5) (2.0) (2.5) (3.0) (3.5) (4.0) (4.5) (5.0)

Total: _____