

FIU – Department of Psychology – DEP5058 – U01  
Biological Basis of Behavior Development

---

**INSTRUCTOR**

Dr. Eliza Nelson  
Office Hours: By appointment (DM 201A)  
Email: [elnelson@fiu.edu](mailto:elnelson@fiu.edu)

**NOTE: For a timely reply, email me directly. Do not send me a message via Blackboard.**

---

**PREREQUISITE**

Graduate standing or permission of instructor.

---

**CLASS MEETINGS**

Tuesdays 9:30 – 12:15 pm GC 271A

**NOTE: Arriving late, leaving early, or skipping class is not acceptable and will adversely affect your grade in this course.** Make-up work is only permitted for excused absences with dated documentation including, but not limited to, doctor's excuses (for yourself or immediate relatives), athletic events, FIU-related scholarly events (e.g., conference), death in the family, religious observances, or auto accident. Vacation, weather, traffic, and parking are not excused. For all other cases, contact me directly by email ([elnelson@fiu.edu](mailto:elnelson@fiu.edu)) to discuss your situation. **Do not wait until the end of the semester to discuss an issue affecting your performance.**

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course will survey advances in biological sciences that inform how we approach the study of behavioral development. The goal is to provide a foundation in developmental psychobiology that can be integrated into any program of research. No prior background in biology is required.

---

**REQUIRED READING**

- *The Developing Genome: An Introduction to Behavioral Epigenetics*, David S. Moore ISBN-13: 978-0190675653|ISBN-10: 0190675659 [Kindle version available via Amazon]
- Other selected readings from the primary literature will be posted to Blackboard

---

**RECOMMENDED READING**

- Articles selected by your peers as supplemental readings will be posted to Blackboard

---

**GRADING**

<i>Component</i>	<i>Point Value</i>	<i>% of Final Grade</i>
Attendance/Discussion	70	14%
Reading Responses	130	26%
Lesson Leader	75	15%
Lesson Wrapper	75	15%
Blitz Talk	50	10%
Take-Home Final	100	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	

To determine your final letter grade, use the conversion chart below:

#### LETTER GRADE CONVERSION

---

A: 95-100%	A-: 90-94%	B+: 87-89%	B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%
C+: 77-79%	C: 70-76%	D: 60-69%	F: 59 & below	

NOTE: Standard math is use to round up or down to the nearest percentage for final grades. There is no rounding to the next letter grade, and no opportunities for extra credit in this course.

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

---

Any instance of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, collusion, academic dishonesty) will be reported to the University for further action. Please refer to your graduate student handbook, or ask me if you are unsure about what constitutes misconduct. Additional details are available at this website: <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/academic-misconduct.shtml>

#### ATTENDANCE/DISCUSSION

---

Attendance is required in this course. You will be asked to sign in weekly. There are 14 required class meetings. Attendance at each class meeting is worth 5 points (70 points/14% of grade). Class does not meet during Spring Break (3/13) or Finals Week (4/24). Arriving late or leaving early without an excused absence will result in a 0 for the day. All students are expected to contribute to the discussion at each class meeting by drawing on their reading responses. Please bring your reading responses to class, and have pen/paper available for activities.

#### READING RESPONSES

---

Short reactions (2-3 paragraphs) to the assigned readings are due by **noon on Sundays**. Responses should be sent via email ([elnelson@fiu.edu](mailto:elnelson@fiu.edu)). Please copy and paste your response into the body of your email – do not send an attachment. Your responses should be purposeful. Do not simply summarize the reading. You could choose to identify strengths/weakness of the author(s)' argument, relate the work to your own research interests, evaluate the reading in context of prior readings/knowledge, pose a next step for the author(s), or frame questions for class discussion. Do not focus on one chapter/paper. The first reading response is a reflection on the material from the first class meeting, and should be turned in as its own separate reaction with the second response. You are responsible for 13 reading responses in total (130 points/26% of grade). On-time responses are credited 10 points. Late responses are credited 5 points. Any response that does not meet expectations will be penalized 2 points, whether it's on-time or turned in late. The goal of these assignments is to offer students a low-stakes opportunity to write down preliminary ideas that can be refined during class meetings. Reactions may help advance your research ideas for thesis/dissertation/independent projects.

#### LESSON LEADER

---

Students will be assigned via lottery to lead the class one time during the semester. As lesson leader, the student should know the readings for that week in depth and have also chosen one additional paper to supplement discussion. This paper should be sent via email prior to class ([elnelson@fiu.edu](mailto:elnelson@fiu.edu)), and will be posted as recommended reading on Blackboard. The job of the lesson leader is to direct the discussion of the weekly reading and the supplemental reading, and answer any questions posed by the class. Students will be evaluated out of 75 points, and will receive written feedback on their performance in this role. The goal of the assignment is to provide students with the opportunity to shape the class by tailoring discussion to their ideas. Students are encouraged to use the assignment to gather feedback on their research interests. The lesson leader assignment is worth 15% of your grade.

## LESSON WRAPPER

---

Students will be assigned via lottery to serve as lesson wrapper one time during the semester. As lesson wrapper, the student should take detailed notes during class discussion and offer some take-away points at the end of class (the last 15 minutes will be devoted to wrapping up). The lesson wrapper is also expected to provide a 1-page max synthesis (in any format of their choosing) that will be posted on Blackboard. Possible formats include essay, outline, study guide questions, concept map, graphical abstract, PowerPoint slide, or other creative medium. The synthesis is due prior to the start of the next class meeting, and is worth 75 points. The goal of this assignment is to help students collect their thoughts in preparation for the take-home final. Students will not serve as lesson wrapper on the same day as lesson leader. The lesson wrapper assignment is worth 15% of your grade.

## BLITZ TALK

---

You will present on a topic of your choosing during the final class meeting that incorporates something you learned in the course. A separate handout will be provided for this assignment. Talks should be 5 minutes in length with 2 minutes for questions. You will be asked to evaluate your peers, and these scores will be part of the grade. Students are strongly encouraged to use a current or future research project as the basis for this assignment. The goal of this assignment is for students to demonstrate their potential to apply the course material to their real world interests, and to get feedback on their ability to deliver a concise academic elevator pitch.

**Presentations will take place in class on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Email slides before the start of class.**

## TAKE-HOME FINAL

---

Students will be given 24 hours to complete the take-home exam once the questions have been distributed (date TBD by class). The exam will be essay format with a choice of questions. A separate handout will be provided with the details for this assignment. The take-home final is worth 100 points (20% of grade). Late submissions will be penalized 10 points per day.

## LECTURE SCHEDULE

---

Subject to change. All readings due on the date indicated. Responses due by noon Sundays. M = Moore textbook. B = required PDF reading on Blackboard.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Material</u>
Week 1: Introduction	01/09	B1A, B1B
Week 2: Context, Phenotypes, Development	01/16	M1, M2, M3
Week 3: DNA, Regulation	01/23	M4, M5, M6
Week 4: Regulation, Epigenetics	01/30	M7, M8, M9
Week 5: Experience, Primates	02/06	M10, M11, M12
Week 6: Memory, Nutrition	02/13	M13, M14, M15
Week 7: Nutrition, Inheritance, Multiplicity	02/20	M16, M17, M18
Week 8: Evidence, Grandparents, Caution	02/27	M19, M20, M21
Week 9: Hope, Conclusions	03/06	M22, M23
Week 10: <b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b>	03/13	---
Week 11: Genes	03/20	B11A, B11B
Week 12: Brain Development, Plasticity	03/27	B12A, B12B
Week 13: Intelligent Systems, Cognition	04/03	B13A, B13B
Week 14: History, Systems	04/10	B14A, B14B, B14C
Week 15: <b>BLITZ TALKS</b>	04/17	---