PS 350: CHILD DEVELOPMENT
IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION
This course explores child development from conception through middle childhood (age 12), including theories and methods, heredity, prenatal development, and children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. This knowledge will be further deepened by considering the diversity, culture, and environment of each stage. Students will familiarize themselves with research methods, literature, and ethical research practices related to children. Furthermore, students will have the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of developmental progressions and disorders through in-class presentations and case studies.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: The course assumes students have taken at least one introductory course in Psychology.

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: Lectures, discussions, video demonstrations, online resources, and a course-related observation visit

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT
Students are required to complete readings, learning activities, presentations, assignments, a research and analysis paper, a midterm test, and a final exam. Reading material can be retrieved from Moodle's e-learning platform, providing the necessary knowledge to participate in class discussions and learning activities.

Class participation and discussion: 10%
Reading Responses: 5%
Oral presentation: 15%
Midterm exam: 20%
Observational Study and Analysis paper: 25%
Final exam: 25%

COURSE-RELATED OBSERVATIONAL VISIT
Observational visit to a local primary classroom

REQUIRED READING
Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

RECOMMENDED READING
Scientific articles will be shared throughout the course.

GRADING RUBRIC

A	**Excellent Performance** Demonstrates comprehensive understanding of the course material; accurately applies concepts in new contexts; makes insightful connections between topics. Work is exceptional; presentation is clear, logical, and professional. Exhibits outstanding critical thinking and analytical skills; provides insightful analysis and well-supported arguments; demonstrates original thought. Actively participates in all course activities; consistently contributes valuable insights and ideas; collaborates effectively with peers.
B	**Good Performance** Shows a solid understanding of the course material; correctly applies concepts in most contexts; makes connections between topics with minimal errors. Work is of high quality; the presentation is clear and mostly logical. Shows strong critical thinking and analytical skills; provides precise analysis and well-supported arguments; demonstrates some original thought. Participates in most course activities; frequently contributes valuable insights and ideas; collaborates well with peers.
C	**Adequate Performance** Displays basic understanding of the course material; applies concepts correctly in familiar contexts but struggles with new situations; connections between topics sometimes need clarification. Work meets basic requirements; presentation is clear but may lack logical flow. Demonstrates basic critical thinking and analytical skills; provides some analysis and support for arguments; original thought is limited. Participates in some course activities; occasionally contributes insights and ideas; collaborates with peers but with some difficulty.
D	**Unsatisfactory performance and/or comprehension of the subject matter** Demonstrates partial or inconsistent understanding of the course material; frequently misapplies concepts or fails to apply them appropriately; connections between topics are weak or inaccurate. Work is below expectations; presentation may be unclear, incomplete, or lacking structure. Shows limited critical thinking and analytical skills; analysis is superficial; arguments lack clarity or support; original thought is minimal or absent. Participates irregularly in course activities; contributions are infrequent or lack relevance; has difficulty collaborating effectively with peers.
F	**Failure to complete course requirements or inadequate comprehension of the subject matter** Demonstrates limited understanding of the course material; frequently misapplies concepts; connections between topics are largely incorrect or absent. Work does not meet basic requirements; presentation is unclear and disorganized. Lacks critical thinking and analytical skills; analysis is shallow or absent; arguments are unsupported; original thought is not evident. Rarely participates in course activities; seldom contributes insights or ideas; struggles to collaborate with peers.

CLASS PARTICIPATION
Active engagement is achieved through contributing to discussions, asking questions, listening respectfully, and participating in written responses or online forums.

READING RESPONSES
Reading responses to each chapter are to be submitted as assigned.

OBSERVATIONAL STUDY AND ANALYSIS PAPER
Based on firsthand observations and research, participants analyze the observed behavior in relation to theoretical concepts.

MIDTERM EXAM
The written exam consists of multiple-choice, true/false, and open-answer questions.

ORAL PRESENTATION
Participants choose a developmental or learning disorder to investigate and present to the class. Specific topics will be decided on in class. Presentations should summarize the most critical points about the disorder, highlighting the latest advances and techniques to support children with such disorders.

FINAL EXAM
The written exam consists of multiple-choice, true/false, and open-answer questions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of physical, cognitive, social, moral, and emotional development from conception through middle childhood (and the interplay among these)
- Recognize the role environmental and cultural influences play in development
- Identify major developmental theories and their strengths and weaknesses
- Conduct an accurate observation and analysis of child development in a natural environment
- Recognize, analyze, and utilize appropriate research methods related to children and child development
- Evaluate and present current research on major developmental issues, including developmental and learning disorders, and the possible ramifications for cultural groups

ATTENDANCE POLICY
IES Abroad Vienna requires students to attend all class sessions. Attendance will be taken in every class. Students must attend at least 60% of their class sessions to qualify for a passing grade, regardless of whether their absences have been excused. Attendance is required in person unless otherwise noted in the syllabus.

Students are highly encouraged to notify their professors of absences as soon as possible and to follow the procedures outlined in the absence policy for excused absences.

Please refer to the IES Abroad Vienna Absence Policy for a more detailed overview of all attendance policies at IES Abroad Vienna and possible grade penalties.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
At IES Abroad Vienna, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty undermines the principles of trust and fairness essential to a thriving learning community. As such, plagiarism and cheating are considered serious violations of our code of conduct, and students found engaging in such activities will face swift and severe consequences, ranging from a failing grade on an assignment to an academic review and possible expulsion from the program.

USE OF AI
As technology advances, AI platforms and software can be valuable tools for enhancing your learning experience and supporting your course assignments. However, using AI responsibly and adhering to ethical guidelines is essential. Here are some examples of how you can use AI within the context of this course:

- Use AI to brainstorm ideas and concepts related to the course's key topics. This can stimulate creative thinking and provide additional perspectives.
- Use AI to summarize personal reflections and opinions on a given topic. This can be particularly useful for organizing your thoughts and preparing content for presentations, including creating visual aids like charts, bullet points, or infographics.
- Use AI to help create an outline for your presentations. This includes structuring the content, organizing key points, and ensuring a coherent flow for effective communication.
- Use AI as a supportive tool to complement understanding and efforts. Avoid relying solely on AI-generated content and take ownership of your learning process.

It is strongly recommended that you inform your teacher if you intend to use AI for any assignment. Clear communication ensures transparency and allows for guidance or clarification if needed. If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of using AI for a specific task, consult with your teacher for guidance and clarification.

CONTENT

Week	Content	Required Reading	Assignments / Due Dates
1	**Introductions** Who we are Course structure, expectations, and impact Learning and the Brain	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapter 1	Read Chapter 1
	History, Theory, and Methods What is Child Development? Theories of Child Development Controversies around nurture vs nature issue Research methods Ethical considerations		
2	**Heredity and Conception** How heredity works Chromosomal and genetic abnormalities Heredity and environment interaction Conception process Infertility: Causes and solutions	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapters 2 & 3	Chapters 2 & 3 Reading Response due
	Prenatal development The germinal stage The embryonic stage Sexual differentiation The fetal stage Environmental influences		
3	**Birth and the newborn baby** The stages of childbirth Methods of childbirth Birth problems The postpartum period Characteristics of neonates Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapters 4 & 5	Chapters 4 & 5 Reading Response due
	Infancy - Physical development Patterns of Growth and Development Nutrition Development of the Brain and Nervous System Motor Development Sensory and Perceptual Development		
4	**Infancy - Cognitive development** Cognitive Development (Piaget's Theories) Information-Processing Approach Social Influences Individual Differences Language Development Theories of Language Development	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapters 6 & 7	Chapters 6 & 7 Reading Response Due
	Infancy - Social and emotional development Attachment Issues in attachment Daycare Emotional development Personality development Gender differences		

5	**Presentations**		**Developmental/Learning Disorder Presentation Due**
6	**Midterm test**		
7	**Early childhood - Physical development** Growth patterns Motor Development Nutrition Health and Illness Sleep Elimination Disorders **Observation Preparation** Austrian School System Observation methods Observation practice	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapter 8	Chapter 8 Reading Response due
	HOLIDAY		
8	**Early childhood - Cognitive development** Jean Piaget's preoperational stage Vygotsky's views Home environment, preschool, and media Theory of Mind Development of memory Language development **Early childhood - Social and emotional development** Influences of development Social behavior Personality and emotional development Development of gender roles and gender differences	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapters 9 & 10	Chapters 9 & 10 Reading Response due
9	**Middle childhood - Physical development** Overweight children Childhood asthma Motor development Disorders affecting learning **Middle childhood - Cognitive development** Jean Piaget: The Concrete Operational-Stage Moral development Information processing Intellectual development Language development	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapters 11 & 12	Chapters 11 & 12 Reading Response due
10	**Classroom Observations**		
11	**Middle childhood - Social and emotional development** Theories The family Peer relationships The school Social and emotional problems **Review**	Rathus, S. A., & Rathus, T. L. (2026). Childhood and adolescence: Voyages in development (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapter 13	Chapter 13 Reading Response due **Research & Analysis Paper due**
12	**Final exam**		