MEET YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Suzanne Freedman, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

Dr. Freedman has been teaching in the Educational Psychology and Foundations Department at UNI since 1994. Originally, from New York, Dr. Freedman came to the Midwest to do her graduate work. She received her Master’s and Ph.D. in Human Development at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dr. Freedman teaches the following courses on campus: Dynamics of Human Development, Psychology of Adolescence, Exploring Teaching, and Development of the Middle School Child. She currently teaches the Psychology and Education of Forgiveness as a guided correspondence course and is excited about teaching the Studies in the Development of the Middle Level Child class as a guided correspondence course as well.

In addition to teaching, Dr. Freedman conducts research on the process of forgiveness. She has been studying the topic of forgiveness for 20 years and her doctoral dissertation was based on a forgiveness intervention program with incest survivors. She received an award for her dissertation from the American Psychological Association. Dr. Freedman is interested in how the process of forgiveness affects individuals who have been deeply hurt. In addition to her work with incest survivors, she has studied at-risk adolescents, junior high school students who experienced a hurt related to their parents’ divorce, Holocaust survivors, and elementary school students. Dr. Freedman has presented her work on forgiveness at many national and international conferences and has numerous published articles and chapters on the topic.

Dr. Freedman is married and has three children- one son and two daughters who all greatly contribute to her knowledge of child development. In her free time, she enjoys running, biking, traveling, reading and watching movies.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The Development of the Middle School Child class is an important course for teachers who teach or plan to teach middle school or junior high and other individuals who coach or interact with early adolescents in any way.

Early adolescence begins at about age 10 and lasts until age 14. We think of the stage of early adolescence as encompassing 5th or 6th through 9th grades. It is important to note that more changes occur during early adolescence than at any other stage of development (Vernon & Al-Mabuk, 1995). Although parents and individuals who work with early adolescents often feel like they do not have much influence on kids this age, Stepp (2000) points out that adults do have influence on early adolescent development and states that "Biology is not destiny" Stepp (2000) also emphasizes the fact that parents, teachers, coaches,
etc. must board early to be the most help to adolescents. It is also true that the majority of early adolescents navigate through adolescence without resorting to drug abuse, delinquency, school failure, sexual acting out, or other self-destructive behaviors (Vernon & Al-Maubk, 2005).

According to a recent article in the New York Times (January 3, 2007), educators across the nation are struggling to rethink middle school and how best to teach early adolescents at this transitional time where they are experiencing changes in all areas and are beginning to develop their identity (Gootman, 2007). Well-documented slumps in learning among early adolescents as well as middle school crime rates and increasing high school drop out rates have made this a serious concern for educators across the country (Gootman, 2007). What they have found is that teachers in the middle school often lack expertise both in subject matter and early adolescent development. According to Stepp (2000), a good middle school teacher has to know both his or her content area as well as a great deal of information about early adolescent development. Unfortunately, the preparation for teaching middle school is often lacking.

My primary goal for this course is to provide up-to-date information on selected aspects of the middle school child’s life, suggestions for understanding these early adolescents and their problems, and ideas for making their lives more meaningful in a time when societal difficulties and too many options are sources of stress. We will focus part of our time exploring how adolescents in middle school negotiate their worlds including family, peers, and school. We will explore how the study of early adolescent development is important for middle school teachers and how it can inform their understanding of human beings. Considerable attention will be given to the implications current research has for educational practice. The second goal is to help students develop and refine some of the skills necessary for successful graduate and professional careers.

**Specific goals and objectives for the course include the following:**

- Students will understand basic developmental principles and the manner in which genetic and environmental factors interact.

- Students will identify and describe the behavioral characteristics that are associated with physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of the middle school aged child.

- Students will understand how factors such as the family, peer group, school, and mass media act as facilitators or inhibitors of the development of early adolescents.

- Students will develop an appreciation for individual differences in human development.

- Students will gain an understanding of the ways in which development is influenced by historical and cultural contexts.
Students will explore a topic of their choice related to early adolescent development.

We begin in Assignment 1 with a focus on the development of early adolescents and what to expect during this period. Social contexts of development are also discussed. Assignment 2 introduces you to the organizing framework we will use to help us better understand the development of early adolescents and the obstacles that get in the way of optimal development. You will have an opportunity to apply this framework to the first case study in the book, Our Last Best Shot. In Assignment 3, we will read about the stress that high achieving students may experience as well as body image issues that affect early adolescents and dietary choices of early adolescents. In Assignment 4, we turn our attention to puberty and physical development and read about two early adolescent females from OLBS who are similar in some ways but also different. In Assignment 5, we focus specifically on brain development and behavior of early adolescents. Articles in this assignment describe the biology of risk taking, what makes teens tick, and medication for certain disorders. Assignment 6 focuses on the importance of peers with three different case studies from Our Last Best Shot. Assignment 7 addresses schooling issues for early adolescents and in Assignment 8, the emphasis is on factors related to academic achievement and cognitive development and education. Identity and Social-Emotional Development is the focus in Assignment 9 and articles address the topics of empathy, social-emotional learning and sleep needs of early adolescents. In Assignment 10, family relationships are discussed using two case studies and several articles talk about how parents’ behavior affects the development of their children. Eating disorders is the topic of Assignment 11 and alcohol and risk taking is the focus of Assignment 12. In Assignment 13 you will read various articles that focus on early adolescence and sexuality, including one on the issues that gay and lesbian students face. Assignment 14 addresses some problem behaviors you may see in early adolescents and ways to address them as well as societal issues that affect students. Lastly, in Assignment 15, we will conclude our study of early adolescents with a focus on what we need to do to most effectively interact with and teach early adolescents.

I hope you find this course interesting, challenging and informative. You will have a variety of ways to illustrate your understanding of early adolescents and your mastery of certain academic skills. Please contact me if you have any questions, concerns or need clarification on a certain topic or assignment. I look forward to reading all of your coursework.

Textbooks:


This course requires that you purchase a course packet. Course packets are available from Copyworks. Call 319-266-2306 to order your course packet over the phone with a credit card. Packets are available
COURSE ORGANIZATION

This course will be delivered over the World Wide Web, utilizing web pages and a learning management system (eLearning). The course is divided into 15 Assignments. All written assignments will be typed using a word processing program and saved as a file. If you are using a word processing program other than Microsoft Word, then please save the file as Rich Text Format.

Introduction Section Written Assignments:

As noted above there are 15 Assignments in this course; for 5 of the 15 Assignments I would like you to answer the questions in the body of the Introduction section of the Assignment. The questions will be denoted in the assignments so you know which questions to specifically address. Some assignments have more than one question to answer. Please answer all the questions for the assignment that you have chosen. You have a choice of which five assignments you want to respond to and each Introduction Section Written Assignment is worth 10 points for a total of 50 points.

Not all of the 15 Assignments have questions to answer. The following assignments have questions in the Introduction section that you may respond to and turn in for the 5 required Introduction Section Assignments: Assignment 1, Assignment 3, Assignment 4, Assignment 7, Assignment 8, Assignment 9, Assignment 10, Assignment 11, Assignment 12, Assignment 13, Assignment 14, and Assignment 15. Please choose only 5 assignments to respond to and respond to all the questions in the Introduction section for that assignment. Please identify the Assignment # in your response.

Submit your assignment by clicking on the Introduction Section Assignment Submission link in the Course Content menu on the left and uploading your assignment. Need help? See the eLearning Tutorials for instructions on how to submit an assignment.

Required Written Assignments:

Five Assignments (Assignment 1, Assignment 2, Assignment 3, Assignment 6, and Assignment 7) have 25-point Required Written Assignments to complete. Type these assignments using a word processing program and save as files. If you are using a word processing program other than Microsoft Word, then please save the files as Rich Text Format.

Submit your assignment by clicking on the Required Assignment Submission link in the Course Content menu on the left and uploading your assignment. Need help? See the eLearning Tutorials for instructions on how to submit an assignment.

Additional Required Written Assignments:

The following three assignments are not attached to any specific Assignment and
can be turned any time during your time working on the course. You can choose to save them until you are done with the 15 Assignments and other assignments or you can work on them at the same time.

Brief Annotated Bibliography – 50 points
Book or Movie Review and Analysis – 50 points

Interview of a Middle School Aged Child – 50 points

**GRADING**

Grades will be based on the number of points earned.

- Five Introduction Section Written Assignments (10 pts each) 50 points
- Five Required Written Assignments (25 pts each) 125 points
- Brief Annotated Bibliography 50 points
- Book or Movie Review and Analysis 50 points
- Interview of a Middle School Aged Child 50 points
- Total 325 points

Please note that UNI Guided Independent Study requires that you complete all the required assignments to receive a grade in the course.