HDSP-351
Interparental Discord and Child Development:
Theory, Research and Social Policy
Monday 9:30 AM-12:20 PM, Annenberg 317

Instructor: Patricia Pendry
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Office Hours: Monday 12.30 – 1.30
or by appointment
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Course Description

This course provides an in depth analysis of research on the impact of interparental conflict on
children. Emphasizing developmental and family systems perspectives it investigates a range of important
issues, including the processes by which exposure to conflict may lead to child maladjustment, the role of
age, gender and ethnicity in understanding the effects of conflict, the influence of conflict on parent-child,
sibling and peer relations, and interparental conflict in divorced and stepfamilies. It also addresses the
implications of this research for prevention, intervention and social policy. Each week we will examine
relevant conceptual and methodological questions, review pertinent data and identify avenues for future
research. As such this course serves to both describe the state of the art of the field and chart a course for
continued investigation into the links between marital and child functioning.

Course Requirements, In-class Activities, and Assignments

The course is intended for advanced undergraduate students who have taken 1) one introductory
course in human development, child development, psychology or other related field and 2) one
introductory course in (experimental) statistics or regression analyses. The course is designed as a
seminar, favoring discussion over lecturing. In addition, the course is designed to maximize student
participation in the learning process by requiring you to engage in the skills and activities common in the
culture of academe and applied developmental practice (e.g., engaging in group discourse, conducting
research, writing scholarly papers, peer review, leading discussions, collaborating with others).

Requirements and Grading:

Class Participation and Discussion Leading (10%)
This is a seminar course that requires active participation from each member of the class during class lecture and discussion, and during in-class activities, which may include conducting a brief presentation on an assigned reading or participation in student-led debate on a controversial topic or question. You will be assigned several readings over the span of the course for which you will come prepared to lead the discussion. Typically, presenting a brief integrative overview/organizational framework of the reading in question combined with bringing good discussion questions and provocative personal reflections will be required. Your participation grade will be based on the quantity and quality of your verbal and written participation in all of these weekly class activities. Obviously, if you are not in class (for whatever reason - even good ones), you cannot participate that day and your participation grade will be affected.

**Reflection Papers (20%)**

Each week, starting with the second week of class, you will turn in a brief integrative summary of the main arguments presented in the readings for that week, as well your personal reflections on these readings. The goals of this activity are 1) to serve as a mechanism for you to process and integrate the reading, 2) to give you an opportunity to think critically and reflectively on the articles, 3) to serve as a base of ideas from which we can start our class discussions each week, and 4) to give you multiple opportunities for feedback on your writing.

**Midterm: Mini Applied Project, peer review and response (30%)**

**Brochure/Pamphlet.** You will create an information brochure/call-for-action pamphlet for a lay audience (e.g., parents, teachers, policy makers, clergy) on any topic related to interparental discord and child development. The product should include background statistics on the problem/issue, what the audience should know about the topic, what they can do about the problem, referral sources, references, and recommended readings. Content needs to be accurate, appropriate, and research-based; presentation needs to be clear, well-written, free of jargon.

**Peer review and response.** You will conduct a blind peer review and write a comprehensive, critical, commentary on the work of a fellow student’s midterm project. In addition, you will be asked to
respond to comments made by your peers regarding your own work in the form of revised (final) submission of your brochure/pamphlet, along with a cover letter addressing comments made by your peers and providing rationale for revisions (or lack thereof). Guidelines for conducting such peer reviews and responses will be discussed in class.

**Final: Group Research Proposal (30%) and Oral Presentation (10%)**

You and two fellow classmates will work together throughout the quarter to write a research proposal. You and your classmates are free to pursue ANY research question provided it is novel and testable (and related to our topic). You will be asked to model your proposal after a proposal format from Northwestern University’s Internal Review Board (IRB). We will discuss details of writing each section of the proposal (e.g., Background/Rationale, Methods, Analyses, Significance) during class and during informal meetings with the instructor. To facilitate step-by-step progress and feedback, you will hand in intermediate drafts of your proposal which I will review and comment on. During exam week, you will present and defend your final research proposals to the class using a PowerPoint presentation. Other class members will provide feedback which may be incorporated into the final written proposal which is due at the end of exam week. Your final proposal should be 8-10 pages long, including all figures, tables and references.

**Grades**

Grades are based the following system:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**Course Policies**

Students with documented disabilities should contact the instructor at the beginning of the quarter to discuss any special arrangements that may be required. If students are unable to complete required assignments by the due date or attend scheduled presentations for any reason (even good ones), the instructor must be contacted **beforehand**. In the case of an illness a signed physician's note must be provided. Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will only be granted in extreme cases.

Plagiarism and Scholastic Dishonesty will result in a failing grade or other sanctions. Please see NU’s principles regarding Academic Integrity ([http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/uniprin.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/uniprin.html)) and “Academic Integrity at Northwestern, a Basic Guide”, available from the SESP Office of Student Affairs.

**Required Course Book (available at the Norris Bookstore)**

New York: Cambridge University Press (2001)

HDSP 351 - Course Packet

**Course Readings**

**Week 1: Introduction to Marital Discord and Child Development**

**Required:**


**Highly recommended as a “developmental” refresher!**


**Week 2: The American Family in the Historical and Social Context**

**Required:**


**Week 3: Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodological Issues**

**Required:**


**Week 4: Child Development, Assessment and Adjustment**

**Required:**

Papp, L.M., Cummings, E.M., & Goeke-Moray, M.C. (2002). Marital conflict in the home when the children are present versus absent. *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 774-783


Each student will choose one additional reading for this week from a list presented in class
Week 5: Mediators: The role of social-cognitive processes, emotion and emotion regulation

Required:


Note: You may choose 1 of the following 2 articles:


Week 6: Mediators: Biological and physiological processes

Required:


Note: You may choose 1 of the following 2 articles


Week 7: Moderators: Gender and Intrapersonal Characteristics

Required:
Each student will choose one additional reading for this week from a list presented in class

Week 8: Moderators: Ethnic Minority Status

Required:


Week 9: Interparent Conflict and the Family System

Required:


Week 10: Applications: Prevention, remediation and social policy

Required:

