Understanding Adolescent Brain Development
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Course Overview

The fascinating and mysterious human brain - the most complex organ in the human body, an organ that undergoes massive and surprising changes from birth to adulthood, the organ that dictates our mental development. Delve into a discussion of the brain. Explore the organization of the developing brain, recognizing that the brain’s greatest growth spurts occur between early adolescence and through the 2nd decade. Understand how these spurts can engender some of the most exasperating experiences and how they may hold the key to adolescent success.

Course Assignments

- Class Attendance and Participation (25%)
- Short Papers (three papers at 10% each for a total of 30%)
- Long Paper (30%)
- Presentation (15%)

Course Texts


Habermas, Tilmann. The Development of Autobiographical Reasoning in Adolescence and Beyond: New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, Number 131, 1-17.


Moody. Impulsive. Maddening. Why do teenagers act the way they do? Viewed through the eyes of evolution, their most exasperating traits may be the key to success as adults.


Why do teenagers seem so much more impulsive, so much less self-aware than grown-ups? Cognitive neuroscientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore compares the prefrontal cortex in adolescents to that of adults, to show us how typically “teenage” behavior is caused by the growing and developing brain.
**Course Schedule**

9/17: The Study of Adolescent Development

9/24 – 10/1: Biological and Cognitive Transitions

Reading:

- Jetha, et al, Chapter 1 – 2

The following readings will be made available electronically:

- “The Study of Adolescent Development” (TEXT BOOK PDF)
- “The Fundamental Changes of Adolescence: Biological Changes” (TEXT BOOK PDF)
- The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction (NIMH, 2011)
- Adolescent Brain Development: A Period of Vulnerabilities and Opportunities (Dahl, 2004)
- Development of the Adolescent Brain: Implications For Executive Function and Social Cognition (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006)
- The Teenage Brain: An Overview (Casey, 2013)
- “Development of the adolescent brain: implications for executive function and social cognition.”
- The Teenage Brain: Self Control
- The Teenage Brain: Cognitive Control and Motivation

10/8 – 10/15: Social and Emotional Transitions

- Jetha et al, Chapter 3
- Kimmel: Guyland
- Sax: Girls on the Edge

10/22 – 10/29: Experience and Expression

- Jetha et al, Chapter 4
- Habermas, Tilmann: The Development of Autobiographical Reasoning
- Wiseman, Rosalind: Queen Bees and Wannabes

11/5 – 11/19: Insight, Empathy, and Integration. What does it all mean? Why is it important?

- Simmons, Rachel: Odd Girl Out
- Wiseman, Rosalind: Masterminds and Wingmen
- Pascoe, C. J.: Dude, You’re a Fag
- Khan, Shamus Rahman: Privilege

12/3 – 12/10: Student Presentations