Course Description:

This course will introduce human development and other graduate students to life-history theory, an evolutionary perspective central to the field of behavioral ecology, while illuminating the role of childhood experiences (e.g., poverty, harsh parenting) in shaping sexual maturation (i.e., pubertal timing) and behavior (e.g., age of first sex), reproduction (e.g., teen parenthood), as well as health and longevity (e.g., cardiovascular risk, allostatic load, inflammation, telomeres). The fundamental goal of the course is to cast childhood and adolescence in evolutionary perspective, especially with regard to how developmental experiences and contexts shape—when and if they do—individual differences in the development of reproduction and health.

The first set of readings **MUST be read prior to the first class meeting.**

Course Requirements

Students are expected to do the readings assigned each week—which will be provided electronically--and students who obviously have not done so will be asked to leave the class and perhaps withdraw from the course. This is because the class is a seminar and will be organized around discussion of the readings. Students will take turns each week raising questions to share about the readings. Each week sets of students will present the core take-home messages of the readings, along with appropriate critiques. Periodically, take-home assignments will involve answering questions raised by the readings in written form which will be reviewed in class to offer feedback on understanding and writing.

A. Evolutionary and Life-History Foundations


B1. The Development of Human Reproductive Strategies I: Role of Context


B2. The Development of Human Reproductive Strategies II: Role of Internal State


C. Testing Human Life-History Predictions: Puberty


D. Testing Human Life History Predictions: Sex and Reproduction


E. Differential Susceptibility to Developmental Influences


F. Development of Health and Longevity: Theory and Allostatic Load


G. Testing Human Life History Predictions: Health and Inflammation


H. Testing Human Life History Predictions: Health and Telomeres


