From Huck Finn to Columbine:

*Understanding Disruptive Behaviors and Psychopathy in Children and Adolescents*

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Studies
College of Arts & Sciences
Spring 2018
Mondays & Wednesdays, 4:55pm to 6:10pm
Silver 411

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**Course Description:**

What makes kids do bad things? Who is accountable for their acts? How can we prevent childhood violence? In this course we will explore these questions and seek to understand the spectrum of "bad" behavior from biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives. We will address broad topics ranging from the nature vs. nurture debate to biased media reporting to medicating disruptive behaviors. We will examine the increase in media violence and its influence on children and adolescents; how the criminal justice system responds to delinquent behavior; and gender differences in disruptive behavior. We will study atrocities
perpetrated by children and adolescents, the growing scientific literature detailing neurodevelopment as it relates to behavior, and historical descriptions of disruptive behavior and delinquency. Students will analyze case studies, debate controversial issues (e.g., the influence of violent gaming), and review scientific and media sources in an effort to determine sensible efforts aimed at prevention and treatment.

**Course Objectives:**

_Students will learn key aspects of:_

- Historical, scientific, and cultural perspectives on behavioral problems in childhood
- Contemporary biological, psychological, and social perspectives on childhood disruptive behavior
- Current evidence regarding the diagnosis and treatment of disruptive behavior disorders in children
- The impact of disruptive behavior in children and adolescents on the individual, family and society

_By the end of this course, students will be able to:_

- Review and integrate diverse theoretical perspectives on childhood disruptive behavior
- Apply and discuss concepts of disruptive behavior as directly related to current events and clinical case material
- Discuss controversies and limitations in our current understanding of childhood disruptive behavior
- Describe goals for further study and research

**Texts:**


Readings from these texts will be supplemented by readings posted on the course site at NYU Classes (http://newclasses.nyu.edu) as listed below.

**Grading:**

Your class grade will be composed of:

- **20%: Weekly Quizzes**
  
  o In-class quizzes will be given based on the main themes from the pre-readings for that week’s unit. The weekly “Learning Objectives and Terms to Know” guide your preparation for these quizzes. Most units will begin with a quiz promptly at 4:55PM, lasting ~10 minutes.

- **10%: At the beginning of each unit, you will take an individual quiz without assistance from assigned readings, notes, other resources, or peers. This quiz will be graded for accuracy and the average of these weekly individual quizzes will comprise 10% of your total grade. You may drop one quiz without penalty as there are no make-up quizzes and quizzes handed in after the ~10 minute quiz period will not be accepted for credit.**
• 10%: At the conclusion of each unit, you will take a group quiz in assigned teams as part of a Team-Based Learning format. This team quiz will also be graded for accuracy, and each team member will receive the same score based on this submitted team quiz. As above, the average of these weekly team quizzes will comprise 10% of your total grade.

• 20%: Response Papers

  o Five 2-3 page papers or projects in which course themes are applied to problems in sociology, law, clinical psychology, public policy, etc. See writing and grading guidelines below. Papers will be submitted to TurnItIn services via the NYU Classes Course Site in order to insure Academic Integrity.

• 25%: Midterm Examination

  o Online, timed, closed-book exam applying foundational course themes to clinical case material. A brief review will be conducted during the class prior to the midterm.

• 35%: Final Examination

  o Online, timed, closed-book exam applying foundational and topical course themes to clinical case material. A brief review will be conducted during the class prior to the final.

• Extra-Credit: For up to 3 extra-credit points added to your Midterm Examination score, you may turn in a Disruptive Behavior Journal at the end of the course. You must submit at least 14 entries describing disruptive behaviors you observe (in yourself, friends, family, strangers, the media, or
anyone!). You must reference themes AND a source(s) from the course or related materials in *each* entry in order to receive the extra credit (see citation rules below). Entries need not be more than 2-3 paragraphs each.

**Class Schedule:**

Readings for each lecture will be posted on NYU Classes by the week prior to class. You will be expected to have completed the readings *before* class and the main points of the readings will be covered in the quizzes given at the start of each class (see schedule below).

1. **Unit 1 (Mon. 1/22/18 & Wed. 1/24/18): Introduction to Disruptive Behaviors in Childhood & Adolescence**
   a. Individual Quiz 1/22/18
   b. Group Quiz 1/24/18

**Pre-Reading:**


*Optional:*

2. **Unit 2 (Mon. 1/29/18 & Wed. 1/31/18): Historical Perspectives on Childhood Disruptive Behaviors**
   a. Individual Quiz 1/29/18
   b. Group Quiz 1/31/18

   **Pre-Reading:**
   2. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) descriptions of Disruptive Behavior Disorders from DSMI through DSM5.

   **Optional:**
   1. Watch *The Bad Seed*. 1956. Dir. by Mervyn LeRoy. Available on Amazon, Netflix, iTunes. Note in this historical period how the protagonist’s disruptive behavior is portrayed: what is normal vs. pathological? What are the implied origins of bad behavior? What perpetuates bad behavior? Who is responsible for children’s bad behavior? What treatments are suggested?

3. **Unit 3 (Mon. 2/5/18 & Wed. 2/7/18): Presentation and Course of Juvenile Disruptive Behaviors**
   a. Individual Quiz 2/5/18
   b. Group Quiz 2/7/18
Response Paper #1 Due: Please submit your paper to TurnItIn via the NYU Classes Course Site (under Assignments) by 4:55PM on 2/7/18.

Pre-Reading:

4. Listen to the segment, “The Psychopath Test,” from NPR, posted on the course sidebar. This is a lighthearted take on the development and use of Hare’s Psychopathy Checklist. [http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/436/the-psychopath-test](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/436/the-psychopath-test)

Optional:

2. From *The Mask of Sanity* (Hervey Cleckley), the cases of "Roberta" (pp. 46-54), "Milt" (pp. 159-167) and "Gregory" (pp. 167-174).

Unit 4 (Mon. 2/12/18 & Wed. 2/14/18): The Biological Basis of Childhood Disruptive Behaviors

a. Individual Quiz 2/12/18
b. Group Quiz 2/14/18

Pre-Reading:
1. In the Connor textbook, *Aggression and Antisocial Behavior in Children and Adolescents*, read chapter 6 (Psychobiology), only these pages: 163-168 (neuroanatomy, IQ), 171-182 (frontal lobes, electrodermal activity, heart rate) and pages 191-196 (pain sensitivity, brain imaging, minor physical anomalies).


***Optional***:


3. Anderson, Steven; Becchara, Antoine; Damasio, Hanna; Tranel, Daniel; and Damasio, Antonio. "Impairment of social and moral behavior related to early damage in human prefrontal cortex." *Nature Neuroscience* 2.11 (1999): 1032-37. Here, focus on the case studies and Discussion from the original article (NY Times editorial describing the research included above).

4. Read the NY Times editorial describing the research from Anderson et al. (full citation below). Blakeslee, S. “Study Links Antisocial Behavior to Early Brain Injury That Bars Learning.” *NY Times*, October 19, 1999.

5. Suomi, S. “Risk, Resilience, and Gene-Environment Interplay in Primates”: This is an overview of important research on epigenetics.
6. Also in Connor, read chapter 7 (Neurobiology), only these pages 197-206 (cortisol, androgens) and 225-244 (biobehavioral systems model, traumatic stress, brain injury, epilepsy).
7. Capadoccia et al. “Contextualizing the neurobiology of conduct disorder in an emotion dysregulation framework”: This is a recent general review of biological factors in conduct disorder. The introduction and discussion sections have the most useful information and ideas.

5. **Unit 5 (Mon. 2/26/18 & Wed. 2/28/18): The Social Ecology of Childhood Disruptive Behavior**
   a. Individual Quiz 2/26/18
   b. Group Quiz 2/28/18
   c. Response Paper #2 Due: Please submit your paper to TurnItIn via the NYU Classes Course Site (under Assignments) by 4:55PM on 2/28/18.

**Pre-Reading:**

2. Keisner, J. et al. Chapter 10. A reinforcement model of conduct problems in children and adolescents: advances in theory and intervention. In Hill, J., & Maughan, B (Eds.). *Conduct disorders in childhood and adolescence* (Read only pp 264-271 and 273-277; the rest of the chapter is optional though recommended.)
3. Watch the movie *NEDS* (Non-Educated Delinquents) by director Peter Mullan with particular attention to sociologic factors influencing the protagonist’s disruptive behaviors. Available on Amazon, Netflix, etc.

**Optional:**
1. **Recommended:** Stern, Jessica. "Flights of Fancy; Many Muslim Youth Espouse Jihad as a Fad." *Globe and Mail*, June 12, 2006.

6. **Unit 6 (Mon. 3/5/18 & Wed. 3/7/18): The Psychology of Juvenile Disruptive Behaviors**
   a. Individual Quiz 3/5/18
   b. Group Quiz 3/7/18
   c. In-Class Midterm Examination Review and Feedback 3/7/18

   **Pre-Reading:**
   4. Listen to the entire NPR segment included on the course site sidebar labeled “Attachment Therapy.”

   **Optional:**
5. “Sigmund Freud and the classical psychoanalytic tradition,” from *Freud and Beyond* by Stephen Mitchell and Margaret Black.

7. Wed. 3/21/18: Midterm Examination (via NYU Classes)
   a. No readings or quiz

8. Unit 7 (Mon. 3/26/18 & Wed. 3/28/18): Disruptive Behavior in the School Setting
   a. Individual Quiz 3/26/18
   b. Group Quiz 3/28/18
   c. Response Paper #3 Due: Please submit your paper to TurnItIn via the NYU Classes Course Site (under Assignments) by 4:55PM on 3/28/18.

    Pre-Reading:

5. Listen to the 2-part NPR segment posted on the course site sidebar and labeled School Violence and School Violence II. This describes the effects of gang violence on a Chicago high school.


*Optional:*


9. Listen to the 3rd NPR segment on the course site sidebar from the episode entitled, "The Cruelty of Children”—the segment to listen to is Act 3: Human Nature, A View from Kindergarten.

10. Check out these sites on bullying prevention and education:
   a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9d1_ZKILR98 (further details the story of Alex Libby from the film *Bully*

11. Fredland, N. *Nurturing hostile environments: the problem of school violence.* Family & Community Health, 3(1S), S32-S41.

9. **Unit 8 (Mon. 4/2/18 & Wed. 4/4/18): The Role of Contemporary Media in Juvenile Disruptive Behavior**
   a. Individual Quiz 4/2/18
   b. Group Quiz 4/4/18

**Pre-Reading:**

2. Jones, G. Violent media is good for kids. *Mother Jones*.

**Optional:**

1. Ferguson, CJ; San Miguel, CS; Garza, A; Jerabeck, JM. “A longitudinal test of video game violence influences on dating and aggression: A 3-year longitudinal study of adolescents.” *Journal of Psychiatric Research, 46* (2012), 141-146. **Focus on the Introduction and Discussion sections.**

10. **Unit 9 (Mon. 4/9/18 & Wed. 4/11/18): Gender and Youthful Disruptive Behavior**
   a. Individual Quiz 4/9/18
   b. Group Quiz 4/11/8
   c. Response Paper #4 Due: Please submit your paper to TurnItIn via the NYU Classes Course Site (under Assignments) by 4:55PM on 4/11/18.
Pre-Reading:


Optional:

1. **Recommended:** Watch the films *Heathers* (1988) and/or *Mean Girls* (2004), noting examples of stereotypic girl aggression.

11. Unit 10 (Mon. 4/16/18 & Wed. 4/18/18): Dramatic Acts of Violence in Youth

   a. Individual Quiz 4/16/18
   b. Group Quiz 4/18/18

Pre-Reading:


5. Choose one of the following films to watch depicting a Dramatic Act of Violence perpetrated by youths: *Elephant* (Gus Van Sant, 2003, a fictionalized depiction of a school shooting similar to the events at Columbine), *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (Lynne Ramsay, 2011, based on the novel by Lionel Shriver), or *Heavenly Creatures* (Peter Jackson, 1994, a dramatized version of an actual parricidal event). Focus on the biopsychosocial factors depicted as contributing to each act of violence with consideration of who would have been best positioned to intervene.

Optional:

1. *A Clockwork Orange*. Available on Netflix, Amazon, iTunes. Watch Stanley Kubrick’s 1971 film, focusing on how the intervention to correct Alex’s disruptive behavior is designed and implemented. What principles are involved and where does it succeed and fail?

   a. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/magazine/greg-ousley-is-sorry-for-killing-his-parents-is-that-enough.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/magazine/greg-ousley-is-sorry-for-killing-his-parents-is-that-enough.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss)


12. **Unit 11 (Mon. 4/23/18 & Wed. 4/25/18): Disruptive Behavior and the Law**
   a. Individual Quiz 4/23/18
   b. Group Quiz 4/25/18
   c. Response Paper #5 Due: Please submit your paper to TurnItIn via the NYU Classes Course Site (under Assignments) by 4:55PM on 4/25/18.

   **Pre-Reading:**


   **Optional:**


14. **Unit 12 (Mon. 4/30/18 & Wed. 5/2/18): Prevention and Treatment of Childhood Disruptive Behavior**
   a. Individual Quiz 4/30/18
   b. Group Quiz 5/2/18
   c. In-Class Final Examination Review 5/2/18
   d. Disruptive Behavior Journals Due. Please submit your journal to TurnItIn via the NYU Classes Course Site (under Assignments) by 4:55PM on 5/2/18.
Pre-Reading:


Optional:


10. Connor textbook, Chapters 11 (Psychosocial Interventions) and 12 (Psychopharmacological Treatments)


15. Mon. 5/7/18: Final Examination (via NYU Classes)
   a. No quiz, no readings

Writing Tips for Response Papers:

1. The paper should have an introductory paragraph and thesis statement to let us know the focus of the paper.
2. The subsequent paragraphs should be clearly related to your thesis statement, offering support for your argument. Every paragraph should be easily connected to the previous one.

3. Every paper should cite at least 2 sources to support/define your argument. Appropriate sources include textbooks, journal articles, or scientific writing from the media. While blogs, opinion pieces, course lectures, and media samples (TV, movies, music, etc.) are excellent to support your arguments, they do not count toward your citations.
   a. Citations to materials from the course (textbooks, articles) or otherwise should be included parenthetically with author and page number within your paper, e.g., (Connor, 254). Course lectures may be cited but do not count toward your minimum of 2 references.
   b. Citations from course and non-course materials should also be listed with full citation information in a reference/bibliography list at the end of your paper. Use APA or MLA style for these citations. If the reference information is not listed, you will not get credit for the citation.

4. The paper should be 2-3 pages with 1” margins and double-spacing. If you list your references/bibliography on a separate page, it does not count as part of the 2-3 pages.

5. We strongly suggest that you proofread the paper for grammar, spelling, and readability. If that is not your forte, get help from friends, family, the University Learning Center, etc.

6. Some of the assignments offer less traditional options (rather than a written paper) for addressing the prompt. Nonetheless, be sure to clearly reference course themes and resources in your work and include at least 2 citations in order to receive full credit. If you have created a media or creative project and are unsure whether references to course themes and citations are evident, please also submit a brief (1-3 paragraphs) description of your project on NYU Classes with citations and explanation of how it relates directly to course materials. As NYU Classes will only allow one upload, you can send your creative project by the assignment deadline over email if you are uploading a description.

**Grading Rubric for Response Papers:**
1. 2 points for clear writing (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling, clear sentences, no typos) and/or communication of themes
2. 2 points for organization (e.g., clear thesis, supporting arguments linked together, conclusion summarizes); credit for creativity/originality included here
3. 2 points for incorporation of resources, references, and ideas/sources from the course (at least 2 citations with reference information required for full credit)
4. 2 points for adequately and clearly addressing the assignment prompt in 2-3 pages or in a creative format
5. Papers that are turned in late will lose 2 points for each day that they are late. Students requesting an exemption from the late submission policy must present a written note from a school Dean, Academic Advisor, or personal physician justifying the late submission, which will then be considered by the instructor.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All students at NYU follow an honor code and rules of conduct and policies of academic integrity (http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity). Students violate academic integrity when they: (1) cheat on exams; (2) submit work that is not their original work; (3) submit the same work from two different courses without permission from their professors; (4) receive help on a take-home exam without the knowledge of their professor; or (5) plagiarize. Plagiarism occurs when students do not properly give credit when reporting information or ideas from papers, documents, presentations, musical scores, the internet or other materials, and thus attribute others’ work and ideas as their own. Examples of plagiarism include: (1) copying verbatim from a book, article, presentation, or other documents, without providing a proper attribution, citation or quotation; (2) paraphrasing an article, chapter, presentation or other materials without giving attribution or citation, or providing quotation marks; (3) copying from a classmate
or allowing a classmate to copy from you, or submitting another student’s work with your name on it; (4) collaborating between two of more students without the professor’s permission, and then submitting the paper individually; (5) purchasing an assignment or paper, and submitting it as original work.

**Students are expected to submit original work and ideas for all assignments, and to follow the rules of conduct and policies of the honor code and academic integrity.** Students can avoid plagiarism by: (1) providing citations and attributions for information and ideas drawn from outside sources and (2) submitting original work. Details on how to cite articles and others’ work are provided on the Course Site (see tips on the American Psychological Association’s referencing guidelines under “Assignments”). If you have any questions regarding academic integrity and proper attribution of others’ work, please set up an appointment with your professor. In the event that a student violates academic integrity or plagiarizes, the professor will follow the rules and policies set forth by NYU and the College of Arts and Sciences. If any violations occur, as per the University’s policies, this may result in a lower grade or failure in the course. For more information on Academic Integrity and the Honor Code, please see: [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity).