

PSYC 350

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Interpret and critique child development research
- Apply theories and empirical findings of developmental and social psychology to real-world issues
- Engage in class discussions, both as a leader and as a participant
- Better understand yourself and others

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Race in Developing Lives



SPRING 2026

TUES | THUR | 9:40 - 11:10 AM

Welcome to RIDL!

For children to thrive in our increasingly diverse world, they must be prepared to engage with issues of race and racism. Children need to develop healthy racial identities and learn how to navigate the racial privilege or discrimination that they will face. One of the best places for children to learn about race is from the adults in their lives, yet parents, teachers, and other caregivers often struggle with this topic. Should we teach our children to be “colorblind,” or should we teach them

to notice race? When is the right age to start these conversations? For families and teachers who are committed to equity and justice, how can we ensure that these values are passed on to our kids? As developing people ourselves, how have our racial identities formed? In this class, we will draw from developmental, educational, social psychological, and social justice perspectives to generate answers to these questions and more.



MACALESTER



Your Instructors

Cari Gillen-O'Neil

Professor (she/her)

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Olin-Rice 322



Alicia Bowling

Teaching Fellow (she/her)

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Meeting Outside of Class Time

There are three ways to meet with Cari outside of class time:

Student hours are in my office (OLRI 322) or on Zoom (email me for a link). During these hours, I am available first-come, first-served.

- Tuesdays 3 - 4 pm
- Wednesdays 10 - 11:30 am

You may call me Cari (pronounced like “carry”). If you prefer to be more formal, Dr. Gillen-O’Neil or Professor Gillen-O’Neil are also ok with me. For pronouns, I use she/hers. Please tell me your name and pronouns too!

Outside of office hours, you may **schedule appointments** with me: check my Google calendar (cgilleno) and email me a few times (M-F | 9am - 5pm) that work with both of our schedules. I will select a time and confirm it with you.

Finally, you may just **swing by** my office and see if I am available. You are welcome in my office any time the door is open!



Grading Philosophy

I *love* helping students learn about psychology and develop as scientists, thinkers, and writers. I strive to provide guidance and opportunities for students to learn new ideas, to develop useful skills, and to complete meaningful projects. My ideal classroom is one of openness, vulnerability, respect, and trust—an environment in which we all work together to learn and grow.

Too often, however, traditional grading obstructs these goals. In fact, research has shown that:

- grades *inhibit* learning, particularly deep learning of material (Rust, 2002)

- grades *hamper* growth, as students who earn low grades often give up out of frustration, and students who earn high grades think there is no room for improvement (Butler, 1987)
- grades *reduce* intrinsic motivation and create environments of compliance and competition (Blum, 2020)

So, we are left with a tension: although I would love to throw grades out altogether, I am required to assign final course grades. In this class, we will resolve this tension by avoiding grades for as long as possible. Although you will regularly re-

flect on your own learning, and I will regularly provide feedback from my perspective, grades will only come into the picture at the very end of the semester. I am hopeful that this approach will boost your engagement with the course materials, increase your agency and ownership of your education, and decrease your stress.

"If you work hard throughout the semester and meet the requirements outlined on the next page, you will earn an 'A' in the class."



Contract for A

Throughout the term, I will assess your work and give you a lot of feedback, but I will not assign grades until the end of the semester. This allows me to be your mentor without grades getting in the way. I do not expect your work to be perfect, but I do expect you to meet the basic requirements of each assignment, to work to improve



your knowledge and skills, and to fully *show up* and embrace the learning opportunities provided. If you won't be graded throughout the course, how will your final grade be determined? If you work hard throughout the semester and meet the requirements outlined on the next page, you will earn an 'A' in the class.

This does not mean that this course will be "easy"—as you'll

see on the next page, the requirements to stay "on contract" are rigorous. I hope we will challenge ourselves to work hard and learn a lot with and from each other.

As I wrote above, this system is intended to *reduce* anxiety; if you are anxious about how your work during the semester will translate into a final grade, please reach out so we can talk about it.

Course Requirements

If you stay on contract during the semester, you will earn an 'A' in this course.

If you break contract, you will move to a more traditional grading system (see page 5).

Preparation before class: For each class session, there is at least one required reading that must be completed before class begins. Read each assigned piece carefully and take notes to support your understanding and to prepare for class discussion. In addition, you will complete a brief pre-class assignment for each class period, typically tied to that day's readings and completed in your course reader. These assignments are due at the beginning of class. To stay on contract, you must thoughtfully complete at least 90% of them (23 of 26).

Attendance and active participation in class: To get the most out of this class, you must *show up*—literally in that you must be physically present, but also figuratively in that you must fully attend to the class activities, contribute to class discussions (both in small groups and with the whole class), and give careful attention to the thoughts of others (e.g., take notes, ask clarifying questions, and/or offer summaries of what others have said). We each have different ways of showing our participation, and I seek to honor your personal style and preferences. **To stay on contract, you may have two absences without penalty.** Additional absences require special circumstances (e.g., doctor's note) or flexibility tokens (described below).

Personal identity reflection final project: Throughout the semester, you will explore different facets of your racial-ethnic heritage. Every two weeks, you will submit a brief reflection of what you've learned, and at the end of the semester, you will synthesize your insights into a final project. This project will be described in detail early in the semester. **To stay on contract, you must meet the basic assignment requirements (e.g., due dates, word counts, and reference numbers), and the quality of your work should reflect substantive engagement with the course material.**

Staying on Contract & Flexibility



As you can see, staying on contract requires being an active member of our classroom community as well as a fair amount of work outside of class. I recognize that you are balancing many competing demands on your time and attention, and I want you to prioritize your wellbeing. To that end, I offer four “flexibility tokens” that allow you to stay on contract despite small slip-ups. One token may be redeemed for one additional absence or one 48-hour extension. Your four tokens may be used in any combination. Once your four tokens are gone, additional absences or extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances.

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What if I break contract?

If you choose to go off contract, your grade will be determined by the breakdown to the right. Assignments may be submitted late with a 5% grade penalty for each 24-hour period past the deadline. Typically, students who are off-contract earn between NC and B because their behavior in the course (e.g., not completing the readings, missing class, or missing deadlines) cannot justify a higher grade.

Preparation: 30%
Attendance: 30%
Final Project: 40%

A	93–100%	C	73–76.9%
A-	90–92.9%	C-	70–72.9%
B+	87–89.9%	D+	67–69.9%
B	83–86.9%	D	63–66.9%
B-	80–82.9%	D-	60–62.9%
C+	77–79.9%	F	0–59.9%

Other Course Policies

Incompletes

Macalester College strongly discourages incomplete grades. Unless a majority (at least 75%) of assigned work has already been submitted, an incomplete will not be given. If extenuating circumstances arise, I will direct you to the Dean of Students, and I will consider their advice when making decisions.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words, ideas, or work as your own—whether blatantly (copying text) or subtly (using ideas without proper citation). It violates academic honesty and will have consequences. If you're unsure about citation or paraphrasing,

please check in with me—I'm glad to help. If I suspect plagiarism, I will contact you to meet and decide next steps, which may include referral to the Director of Academic Programs. More details are on Macalester's academic integrity webpage (below).

Internet-Free Zone

Our brains were not built for the level of distraction our devices create. The pings and temptation to check all pull our attention—and over time, constant task-switching isn't great for learning or for well-being (Ward et al., 2017). This isn't about willpower; the best way to protect our attention is to remove the distraction in the first place (Duckworth &

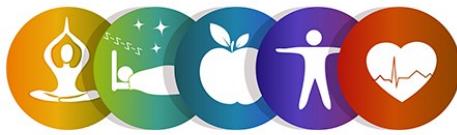
Gross, 2020). I also want this class to feel like a real community. In small pockets of downtime (e.g., waiting for class to start), most of us default to our phones. But research suggests that brief, low-stakes interactions (even slightly awkward ones!) actually increase connection and happiness (Epley & Schroeder, 2014). An internet-free classroom makes those moments more likely. Unless you have an accommodation that requires a device, this means **no laptops, tablets, or phones in the room (even before or after class)**. Please keep devices at home or in your bag. If you need to use your phone during class, please step out and rejoin us when you're done.



Your Health and Wellbeing

I encourage you to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and throughout your career at Macalester. In addition to being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academics. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on you and your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset or need some air. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others' ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course.

Outside of the classroom, sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please contact me and/or find support from other sources. I have a list of resources that may be helpful!



Accessibility Commitment

I am committed to creating an accessible and inclusive class where every student can participate fully in course activities and benefit from course materials. I would be happy to talk to you about how you learn best and how I can help maximize your experience in this class. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with your requests and suggestions.

What I will do for all students

- Post assignments at least two weeks before they are due
- Share PowerPoints and other materials used in class lectures
- Meet with you individually during office hours for extended study or discussion
- Facilitate your connection to the Academic Success Center or other campus supports

- Submit an Early Academic Warning and/or contact the Dean of Students if your performance or attendance slips
- Be as flexible as possible in the event of a crisis or emergency (provided that you have also spoken to someone in the Dean of Students office)

What you can do if your needs are not met by the above

If you know you have a disability that affects your learning process, I encourage you to meet with the Disability Services. This will allow you to receive accommodations. Disability Services will send me a confidential letter detailing your accommodation needs. We can meet after that to discuss how to ensure that your needs are met.

If you are not registered with Disability Services

If you wait to self-advocate until you are in trouble in this course, you may be out of luck. I cannot accommodate you retroactively. Without a letter from Disability Services, I cannot offer a flexible schedule of assignment deadlines or a flexible attendance policy.

Disability Services



Kagin Commons
disabilityservices@macalester.edu

Our Classroom Community

I hope that we can work together to have a meaningful experience in this class!



I look forward to building a community with all of you this term. This includes acknowledging that we all experience the current economic, health, and sociopolitical realities in different ways. I am committed to working with each of you to maximize success in this course. A core part of this is **communication**. To be a successful student, it is important to learn that it is okay to ask for help. Course deadlines and policies can be adjusted for those having difficulties. Please reach out with any requests for adjustments as soon as possible after challenges arise so that we can work together to make a plan.

Furthermore, this course aims to be an inclusive learning environment that not only respects, but also sees value in diverse perspectives, beliefs, and lived experiences. Therefore, all interactions should be conducted with **respect and humanity**, acknowledging and embracing the diversity of identities—including

race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and all other elements of one's identity. This is especially important as a large portion of the class is centered on group discussion.

As the instructor, I also welcome **respectful critique** for ensuring that my actions and course content are in alignment with these aims. Therefore, please feel free to share any concerns along these lines, or others, knowing that I am welcoming of this and that providing feedback will never impact my assessment of your performance in the class. In order to support this, I implement regular anonymous feedback surveys into the class.