



KIIS Austria Program, Summer 2027

PSY 299-2 Topics: Cross-Cultural Development: History, Adversity, and Childhood

Professor: Dr. Alison Heck

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

Course Description

This course examines how development across the lifespan is shaped not only by the cultural context but also the historical context in which we live. In addition to broader conversations about developmental psychology as a field, you will explore how trauma and major economic and political upheavals, such as the Great Depression and World War II as well as current events, transform everyday developmental experiences. Topics will include parenting practices, emotion socialization, play and leisure, academics, and other aspects of one's identity (e.g., religion, gender). You will also discuss the roles in which state-sponsored youth organizations and other embedded cultural systems play in the lives of children and adolescents both historically and today. Through site visits, guided activities, and conversations around historical materials, you will connect classroom concepts directly to your observations while living and traveling in Austria and surrounding areas. By integrating developmental science with historical and cross-cultural perspectives, the course will help you understand how context powerfully shapes our lives across time.

Major Topics Covered in the Course

Major theoretical approaches in developmental psychology; nature vs. nurture debate; emic vs. etic perspectives on culture; qualitative and quantitative methods for studying cross-cultural development; cross-cultural comparisons in: cognitive development; socioemotional development; parenting; family and peer relationships; play and leisure; prosocial behavior and morality; mental health. A schedule will be provided once excursion and class dates are finalized.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will...

1. **Compare developmental processes across historical and cultural contexts**, using both historical and modern examples from Austria, the surrounding region, and other world cultures to explain how context shapes childhood experiences.
2. **Analyze core domains of child development** (e.g., play, parenting practices, emotion socialization, education) through a cross-cultural lens, identifying both culturally specific patterns and potential universals.

3. **Critically evaluate developmental theories and research methods**, including the field's reliance on WEIRD populations, and assess how cultural assumptions influence psychological knowledge.
4. **Apply cross-cultural research and observational methods to real-world settings**, using field observations, site visits, and cultural artifacts to support evidence-based reflections on development.

Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

Required Readings and Materials

Readings will be provided to students prior to the beginning of the course. Students will need to have the readings available (either as hard copies or digital copies on a laptop or tablet) when we cover them during the program. Readings will include academic sources of development across cultures, including within Austria and the surrounding region, and other reputable non-academic sources.

In addition to the provided readings described above, all students will be required to read one of the following books:

Zusak, M. (2006). *The book thief*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Frank, A. (1989). *The diary of Anne Frank*. Longman.

Note: *The diary of Anne Frank* is also called *The diary of a young girl*

Instructional Activities

There will be several categories of instructional activities during your time in Bregenz for this class. Each assignment will be detailed more fully below, but a bulleted list is provided below:

- Attendance and Class Participation
- Weekly Reflection Journal
- Field Observations & Artifact/Site Analyses
- Book Review
- Pre- and Post-Quiz
- Cross-Cultural Development Presentation

Attendance and Class Participation

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

In addition to being required to attend all classes and excursions, you will be required to actively participate in the classroom discussions and activities each day. This may include small- or large-group discussions, daily reflections submitted at the end of the class period, and/or other types of activities during the class period or excursion.

Readings

During the program, you will be assigned required readings that relate back to the topics we will be discussing during our time in Austria. All readings will be provided before our journey so that they can be downloaded ahead of time. Reflections/discussions will occur during class sessions.

Field Observations & Artifact/Site Analyses

In addition to the time spent "in class," we will also be visiting different sites around Bregenz and the surrounding region. These will be rich opportunities for us to actively observe developmental phenomena in Austria (e.g., observing parent-child interactions in public spaces) as well as consider how development may have looked historically.

Weekly Reflection Journal

Throughout the program, you will keep a short reflection journal focused on your personal reactions and comparisons as you experience daily life in Bregenz. These entries are meant to help you reflect on what you notice here vs. your own upbringing, family experiences, and cultural expectations around childhood and development. Rather than formally analyzing observations or artifacts (see below), your journal entries should emphasize questions, surprises, moments of connection or discomfort, and shifts in perspective.

Book Review

All students will be required to read, review and present on a book that directly relates to child and adolescent development during WWII/The Holocaust. Options include *The Book Thief*, by Markus Zusak (fiction) or *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (non-fiction). These books offer different perspectives (i.e., one from the perspective of a young German girl growing up in Nazi Germany and the other, of course, is from the perspective of a young Jewish teenager, Anne Frank, who goes into hiding).

Pre- and Post-Quiz

This is an assessment that will be given during our first and last class days – you will be asked questions about developmental psychology and cross-cultural psychology that will be relevant to the material we will be covering during the program. This will assess whether the key learning outcomes have been achieved by the end of our time in Austria.

Cross-Cultural Development Presentation

As a culminating project for the study abroad course, you will deliver a 5–10 minute presentation examining one developmental domain (e.g., parenting, emotion socialization, identity development, education, play, or peer relationships) through either a historical or cross-cultural lens. You will explore how cultural, social, political, and historical contexts shape developmental experiences, drawing connections between course concepts, observations from Austria and surrounding regions, and relevant research. Presentations should incorporate visual media and be supported by at least five sources, including a minimum of three scholarly sources. The goal is to demonstrate how context influences human development across the lifespan. The presentations will occur during the last class day(s).

Grading

Course grades will be based on the total number of points earned on each of the activities. Letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

90-100% of the total points available = A

80-89% of the total points available = B

70-79% of the total points available = C

60-69% of the total points available = D

0-59% of the total points available = F

Source of Points	Percentage of Total Grade
Attendance and Class Participation	15%
Readings & Reflections	15%
Field Observations & Artifact/Site Analyses	10%
Weekly Reflection Journal	20%
Book Review	10%
Pre-/Post-Quiz	10%
Cross-Cultural Development Presentation	20%

Late Work/Make-up Work

Late work or make up work will be given at the discretion of the instructor. The validity of an excuse given as a reason for missing an exam or assignment will be determined by the instructor with consultation from the program director if needed. The instructor reserves the right to not allow late work or make-up work, or to give late or make-up work which is more difficult, less convenient, or in a different form than the original.

Class Preparation

- The reading for the day (can be electronic version or paper).
- Laptop, tablet, phone, camera, or any device that can access the web and take pictures.
- Something to write with and on.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism (copying, paraphrasing, or otherwise stealing another's words, ideas, or idea process without proper citation) and cheating of any kind that attempts to pass off another's work as your own. Consequences for academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the assignment in question or the course.

Generative AI Policy: Use of AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways. Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can "hallucinate" (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI can be found at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc]."

Disability Accommodation: KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot

guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment: Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors.

Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to

WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.