**Applied Final Project: What are the Issues – An Investigative Essay**

This assignment will leverage your curiosity and reinforce your understanding of lessons learned throughout the course. It will invite you to explore your ideas and to connect lifespan development concepts to daily living.

The What *are the Issues* paper is an integrative assignment that supports synthesis and the three learning outcomes for the course:

* apply empirical research and theories of lifespan development to enhance interpersonal, community, and organizational relationships
* apply knowledge of lifespan development to inform personal growth and communicate effectively
* use critical and creative thinking and the scientific approach to make ethical and logical decisions related to lifespan development

**Objective**: Research and report on (a) a developmental stage and (b) a developmental topic relevant to experiences and outcomes of the developmental stage. Submit a 6- to 8-page, APA style research paper, that 1) communicates how the developmental stage is defined in terms of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial domains; 2) introduces research on a developmental topic relevant to the experiences and outcomes of the developmental stage, with an emphasis on fundamental issues, questions, and controversies; and 3) presents your synthesis of lessons learned through research and the writing of the paper.

**Instructions Summary**: The principal steps for the assignment are…

1. Select a developmental stage of life you are interested in and choose a topic that intrigues you from the following list. If you want to write on a topic not listed here, get your instructor’s approval first.
2. Research the developmental topic using the UMGC library, focusing on fundamental issues, questions, and controversies that bear relevance to the developmental stage you have selected.
3. Write and submit for grading a well composed 6- to 8-page APA style formatted *What are the Issues* research paper.

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| * Free range parenting * Socialization * Nontraditional families * Birth order * Eating habits and disorders * Exposure to violence * Emotional bonding * Sleep * Gender identification * Memory * Self-efficacy * Culture |

**Requirements:**

Submit a single document that 1) introduces the developmental stage you have selected; 2) introduces research on a developmental topic, emphasizing fundamental issues, questions, and controversies that bear relevance to the developmental stage you have selected; 3) presents your synthesis of lessons learned through the research and writing of the paper; and, 4) addresses the requirements listed here.

Within the document…

1. ***Introduce***. Concisely introduced the reader to the developmental stage and developmental topic to which the paper is dedicated. Clearly define terms and theory when introduced in the paper. Anchor the paper through a well-constructed thesis statement.
2. ***Have purpose.***  Dedicate discussion to 1) current understanding of the selected developmental stage to include *physical, cognitive, psychosocial domains*; 2) the relevance of the selected developmental topic (fundamental issues/impact, questions, controversies); and, 3) synthesis of personal lessons learned. All topics are to be discussed in clear detail.

***Connect.*** Throughout the paper, support assertions made. Express interrelated ideas coherently and logically.

1. ***Include sources.***Support discussions (topics and logic) with sound research, evidenced through the integration of properly applied and cited theory and facts collected from course sources AND a minimum of **five (5) peer-reviewed professional sources from our UMGC Library**. The five peer-reviewed sources should be **new** (i.e., not included in course learning resources lists) and **recent** (within last 10 years). Sources beyond this minimum can be older.
2. ***Use Authorial Voice.*** Discuss materials in your own words and your own writing style and structure. Avoid excessive use of direct quotes. Doing so may incur a point penalty for each occurrence and will not be accepted as content towards the page count of the reflection paper.
3. ***Apply APA Style****\*\*.* Neatly and concisely present an APA formatted document containing
   * *Title Page*
   * *Introduction*
   * *Introductory paragraph(s)*

* *Developmental Stage*
* *Developmental Topic*
  + *Synthesis/Lessons Learned*
  + *References*
  + *Properly formatted in-text citations and references\*\**

\*\*Use APA style [headings](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/headings) and subheadings, double-spacing, an appropriate [serif or sans serif font](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/font) (e.g., Times Roman 12-point; Arial 11-point; Calibri 11-point), 1-inch margins (left, right, top, and bottom), page numbering, and logical flow from topic to topic. Write with clarity, paying attention to spelling, [grammar](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format), and syntax. Consult the [UMGC Citing and Writing Guide](https://libguides.umgc.edu/gethelp/writing-citing), for proper form of [APA Style](https://sites.umgc.edu/library/libhow/gethelp-citing.cfm) in-text [citations](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/citations) and [references](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references). You can also take advantage of the UMGC Effective Writing Center to gain early feedback and assistance with APA compliance.

UMGC’s Effective Writing Center: <https://www.umgc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/index.cfm>

## **Steps for Preparing the Paper**

## **Step 1: Research the Developmental Stage and the Developmental Topic**

**1. Brainstorm.** Break out paper and pencil and enjoy the exploratory process…

**Revisit the Topics:** Review the topics and learning resources we cover in class, to include the content for the week in which this assignment is due.

* As you review the topics and resources, think about your reactions to the theories, topics, and research findings covered.
* Write down connections you see between the developmental stage you are focusing on and the selected developmental topic. What do you find curious? What challenges prior perspectives that you held?
* Take note of the lessons (to include specific readings, videos, or class discussions) that may help you in the writing of your paper.

**2. Expanding Knowledge & Understanding**

**Conduct Research - Determine Theory or Empirical Underpinnings Appropriate to the Focus:** Make connections.Using the [UMGC library](https://libguides.umgc.edu/home), expand your knowledge of factors relevant to your paper’s focus.

Find a minimum of **five, new to you, recent (within last 10 years), relevant peer-reviewed articles** that help you:

1) refine your understanding of the developmental stage,

2) establish the issues that connect the developmental topic to the developmental stage, and

3) discuss within your paper factors to be taken into account. Be prepared to draw upon theory and empirical works to illustrate important points.

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| **More on Peer-reviewed Articles**  [Peer-reviewed](http://sites.umgc.edu/library/libhow/scholarlyjournals.cfm) articles are vetted for quality and adherence to editorial standards, and published in scholarly journals (such as the Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology). This link to the [UMGC library](https://libguides.umgc.edu/gethelp) provides excellent instruction, support and resources addressing scholarly articles.  Use the [UMGC library](https://libguides.umgc.edu/gethelp) database to find peer-reviewed articles.  It is your responsibility to make sure that the journal articles you select are appropriate. If you are unsure about the relevance of your articles, contact your instructor for approval.  The articles must meet the following criteria:   * [Scholarly](https://sites.umgc.edu/library/libhow/articles.cfm) – Articles should address an original research study, meta-analyses, summary, editorial or theory. * Refereed – Articles must come from peer-reviewed journals found in the UMGC library. * Social Psychology Connections – Articles must be relevant to social psychology. * Recent – Articles must have been published within the last 10 years. * For example, the following would be a relevant peer-reviewed journal article for investigating the influence of sleep in children.   Beebe, D. W. (2016). Sleep problems as consequence, contributor, and comorbidity: Introduction to the special issue on sleep, published in coordination with special issues in Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology and Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 41*(6), 583–587. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.umgc.edu/10.1093/jpepsy/jsw037>  In addition to peer-reviewed articles, you may also use, your textbook or other books. ***Magazines, newspapers, and online blogs are generally not acceptable.*** For instance, Psychology Today would not be a preferred scholarly choice. If you are not sure, ask your instructor. |

**How quality, appropriately applied peer-reviewed articles support your writing within this assignment...**

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| Number of quality, appropriate peer-reviewed articles |  | The details below assume the articles selected, and incorporated, are **relevant and appropriate** for the topic discussed within the essay. |
| 6+ | A+ | Incorporating and appropriately applying sound empirical support enables the expression of critical, careful thought.  Well placed evidence from a variety of scholarly articles will amplify your ability to provide vivid and specific examples. |
| 5 | A - B+ | The depth the assignment invites is why five peer-reviewed articles has been set as a minimum.  Five foundational, scholarly articles can support central idea development, and the presentation of relevant examples, when the five articles are strategically applied to express critical thought and analysis. |
| 4 | C | When fewer than five relevant articles are leveraged, it can become difficult to authentically develop the paper’s central idea.  This is because the scope of the paper becomes comes constrained by the lacking variety of evidence and examples to draw upon.  This in turn can potentially result in lacking support for points discussed, or excessive reliance on the four articles to carry the discussion forward. |
| 3 or less | D | When the number of peer-reviewed articles leveraged to support this assignment drops below three, it becomes more challenging to fully develop the discussion.  Central ideas may remain underdeveloped due to lacking examples or presentation of relevant evidence.  In turn, the limited number of scholarly resources make it challenging to establish a critical analysis of the topic covered. |

## **Step 2: Organize Your Research**

As you read articles and take notes, pay attention to relationships and themes that emerge. When you have a picture what are the issues (topic’s relationship/impact on the developmental stage), organize your notes and prepare to write your research paper.

## **Step 3: Write the Paper**

(Section lengths are averages noted from past student submissions. They are not absolute targets. Develop your paper to meet your message and expressive needs, while meeting assignment requirements. Write in the past tense when discussing the research conducted. The observation has concluded and you are reporting on your findings.)

The following provides a scaffold approach to writing the *What are the Issues* paper. Within the guidance you will find expectations for each section of the paper are outlined and are accompanied by occasional suggestions for success. Please read this guidance carefully before you begin writing your paper.

Do not forget: Structure your paper utilizing APA style (7th Edition) 😊

**Title Page** (follow APA guidance for student papers - <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format>) (Does not count towards the page count goal.)

**Introduction** (Approx. .5 – 1 page)

* In one to two paragraphs, briefly introduce the reader to the topics that guide the focus of the paper. Your goal is to provide a road map for the paper that frames the importance of the developmental stage and developmental topic discussed. **Define relevant concepts** in order to anchor how they will be employed throughout the document. Cite relevant sources when appropriate.

**Developmental Stage** (Approx. 1 – 1.5 pages)

Following the introductory paragraph(s), provide a dedicated discussion of the developmental stage you have selected. A core component of the paper is a thoughtful detailing of the stage. Clearly delineate relevant *physical, cognitive, and psychosocial domains* factors. At a minimum, each domain deserves a well composed paragraph. In this discussion do rely solely on the Lumen Learning materials. You are encouraged to branch out, incorporating peer-reviewed articles, and other supporting resources in order to demonstrate the unique characteristics of the developmental stage.

**Developmental Topic (Approx. 2 - 4 pages)**

Following the discussion of the developmental stage, introduce the reader to the focal developmental topic. This is the focal point of the paper. It should be a thoughtful discussion of the issues surrounding the topic within the context of the developmental stage. Rely on relevant literature to help you paint the picture. The peer-reviewed articles, and other supporting resources, should be carefully incorporated into your writing, building a case for why the topic matters. This can be achieved when you:

* + Dedicate discussion to the background and scope of the issue, and to its connections to the developmental stage.
  + Introduce prior investigations relevant to the developmental topic and share your thoughts on the accuracy and relevance of that research.
  + Describe key issues or debates found in the literature addressing the topic within the context of the developmental stage.

**Synthesis/Lessons Learned** (Approx. 1 page)

Clearly state what you have discovered through your investigative research.\* Reflecting on the information conveyed within the body of the paper, what are your thoughts on the issues captured? What did you find interesting, inspiring, confusing and/or troubling? What insights or takeaways have you gained? Provide details on why you arrive at these conclusions, demonstrating skeptical inquiry and critical thinking. Explain linkages to theories, principles, or research that mold the lessons learned. [Reminder: provide appropriate attribution to sources used.]

**References** (Does not count towards the page count goal.)

References will begin on a new page and will follow the Conclusions section of your paper. Include in this refence list only the articles cited within the body of the proposal. If you have questions about how to format the references, please refer to your copy of the APA Publication Manual, the UMUC writing resources provided within the course, the [UMGC Library Get Help: Writing and Citing](https://libguides.umgc.edu/gethelp/writing-citing?_ga=2.106146627.1703001357.1616764688-775224745.1616764688), the [UMGC Effective Writing Center](https://www.umgc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/index.cfm), or ask your instructor for assistance.

## **Step 4: Submit the Paper**

**EVALUATION CRITERIA CHECKLIST:**The following criteria, along with the assignment’s requirements, will be considered in the evaluation of your paper. Please review the Applied Final Project Rubric that accompanies the instructions Assignments for point allocations.

1. **🞏 Accuracy—**Are your stated facts or ideas, correct?
2. **🞏 Clarity—**Is your research paper clear and easy to follow? You may want to read your paper out loud to yourself. This will help you catch incomplete sentences or lapses in logic.
3. **🞏 Depth—**Are the issues and implications well thought out and explored?
4. **🞏 Originality—**What is your thesis (the main point of your paper)? Have you stated your own views and articulated them well? Use your own words.
5. **🞏 Supporting evidence—**Are your ideas supported with empirical evidence? This is a crucial part of any well-written research paper. You may support your ideas with theories, previously conducted research, or other information you encounter in the text and other sources (journal articles, books, etc.). Part of the supporting process is providing proper attribution. Cite sources.
6. **🞏 References—**Did you use appropriate sources to support the main points of your paper? Be sure you have the articles you cite on hand, and make sure that your references relate to the in-text citations made.
7. **🞏 Writing mechanics (form, composition, spelling, grammar)**—Is your paper neat and error-free? It helps to run spellcheck before submitting your work and to have a colleague or friend read over your work.
8. **🞏 APA style—**Did you follow the formatting rules of the American Psychological Association (APA)? You may want to visit the APA Web site, the APA Tutorial in the PSYC Learning Tools in the Course Content Area of your classroom, the [*UMGC Guide to Writing and Research*](https://sites.umgc.edu/library/libhow/gethelp-citing.cfm)*,*and/or UMGC's library Web page.

**Help Structuring the Document**

The writing of the paper will employ [APA formatting standards](https://libguides.umgc.edu/apa-examples). Because the elements of the report are somewhat unique for our purposes, the foundational breakdown of the Applied Final Project is as follows. You may add Level 3 and 4 headings as you deem necessary to clearly communicate the unique qualities of your observation paper.

**Sections included in 6- to 8-page count.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Heading Level** | **Starts on** | **Points** |
| **Title Page** |  | **Page 1** | **(APA Style)** |
| **Title of Your Study**  ***Introduction*** *- Begin your introduction immediately below the Title of the Paper, which is a Level 1 heading placed at the top of Page 2. Do not create a heading titled, “Introduction.”* | **1** | **Page 2** | **10** |
| **Developmental Stage** | **2** | **Continue** | **20** |
| **Developmental Topic** | **2** | **Continue** | **30** |
| **Synthesis/Lessons Learned** | **1** | **Continue** | **20** |
| **References** | **1** | **New Page** | **(APA Style: i.e., citations, references, etc.)**  **5** |
|  |  |  | **Organization**  **5** |
|  |  |  | **Writing Mechanics**  **5** |
|  |  |  | **Five peer-reviewed articles incorporated**  **5** |

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| **Heading Level** | **APA Heading Formats** | **Text in Paper Begins** |
| **1** | **Center, Bold, Title Case Heading** | Text begins on a new line as a new paragraph, following a Level 1 heading. |
| **2** | **Flush Left, Bold, Title Case Heading** | Text begins on a new line as a new paragraph, following a Level 2 heading. |
| **3** | ***Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading*** | Text begins on a new line as a new paragraph, following a Level 3 heading. |
| **4** | **Indented, Bold, Title Case Heading, Ending With a Period.** | Text begins on the same line as the Level 4 heading and continues as a regular paragraph. |
| **5** | ***Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading, Ending With a Period.*** | Text begins on the same line as the Level 5 heading and continues as a regular paragraph. |