The study of comparative human development emphasizes the interrelations of biological, psychological, and sociocultural forces at different points in the human life cycle.

Sample Courses

Cultural Psychology
Humans’ psychological nature is neither homogeneous nor fixed across time and space. In this course, students analyze the concept of “culture” and examine ethnic and cross-cultural variations in mental functioning, with special attention to emotions, moral judgment, and reasoning.

The Development of Emotional and Social Understanding
Students focus on the development of emotional and social understanding from infancy through adolescence, including such questions as: Can young children remember emotional events accurately? How does emotion reflect children’s understanding of themselves and other people?

Romantic Love: Cultural and Psychological Perspectives
This course begins by comparing representations of romantic love experiences in visual, musical, and literary arts and myths, then addresses the role and sources of nonrational experience in romantic love and the role of romantic love in modern marriage.

Primate Behavior and Ecology
Students explore the behavior and ecology of nonhuman primates with emphasis on their natural history and evolution. Topics include methods for the study of primate behavior, socioecology, foraging, predation, aggression, mating, parenting, communication, cognition, and evolution of human behavior.

Race, Ethnicity, and Human Development
Examining diverse groups, without one group as the “standard” against which others are evaluated, enhances the study of human development. Students create an encompassing theoretical framework for examining human development, while also understanding the critical role of context and culture.

The study of human development from this comparative perspective offers a unique lens through which we consider broad questions relevant to the social sciences, like the processes and impacts of social change, and the interactions of biology and culture.

Curriculum
The department offers programs of study leading to the bachelor’s degree in the areas of comparative behavioral biology, culture and community (including psychological anthropology and cultural psychology), life course development, and mental health and personality. Comparative human development majors complete a two-course introductory sequence that focuses on theories of development and on modes of research and inquiry in human development, as well as a course on the methods behind research in the field.

For more information, visit collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu
The remainder of the courses required for the major is divided among three of the following four areas:

**Comparative Behavioral Biology** includes courses on the biopsychology of attachment, evolutionary social psychology, evolution of parenting, biological psychology, primate behavior and ecology, and behavioral endocrinology.

**Culture and Community** includes courses on cultural psychology, psychological anthropology, social psychology, language socialization, and divinity and experience.

**Life Course Development** includes courses on developmental psychology, introduction to language development, psychoanalysis and child development, sexual identity, and adolescence, adulthood, and aging.

**Mental Health and Personality** includes courses on personality theory and research, social and cultural foundations of mental health, modern psychotherapies, conflict understanding and resolution, psychopathology, body image in health and disorder, and psychoanalysis.

Although completing an honors thesis is optional, many comparative human development majors have extensive research experience by the end of their third year at the College and are thus able to create exceptional papers. The preparation for an honors paper includes a seminar in which students discuss their work with each other and with their preceptors and faculty advisers. The honors paper should reflect scholarly study of a problem in understanding development in context, an ethnographic or community study, or empirical research. Likewise, undergraduates benefit from courses offered at the graduate level in the areas of comparative life: health, culture, and mental health; cultural psychology and psychological anthropology; comparative behavioral biology; and language, communication, and cognition.

Additionally, numerous departments at the University of Chicago offer workshops on topics related to comparative human development. Recent examples include culture; clinical ethnography; medicine, the body, and practice; immigration; and gender and sexuality. Each workshop brings together undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members, and alumni from all areas of the University.

Many students supplement their course work by studying abroad in one of the University’s programs in Africa, Asia, Europe, or Latin America. The Human Development Student Association provides a platform for a more coherent and unified human development voice in the University. The club also organizes social and community events related to the study of comparative human development.

**After Graduation**

Many comparative human development majors attend graduate school directly upon graduation from the College. The interdisciplinary scope of the major provides an excellent preparation for students interested in advanced postgraduate study at the frontiers of several social science disciplines; a number of students pursue PhD programs in psychological anthropology or urban sociology. Students gain a broad and integrated understanding of human experience and behavior, and many enter such career fields as mental health, education, social work, health care, human resources, and organizational work in community or corporate settings.

Undergraduate study in comparative human development provides a relevant background for several careers. Some students major in comparative human development while completing the prerequisite courses for medical school. Students interested in pursuing careers in the social services may apply to take their fourth year in the University’s School of Social Service Administration. This professional program eliminates one of the two years required for a master’s degree from the school. Students who plan to teach for some period of time may apply to take their fourth year in the University’s Urban Teacher Education Program (ChicagoUTEP), eliminating a year from graduate study in education. They may also participate in Teach for America or another teacher education program.

Other students elect careers in law and attend law school, often with a focus on such issues as social justice, juvenile justice, or family law. And a number of graduates volunteer for the Peace Corps, that provides them with further opportunity for intensive study of a culture and enables them to make an impact in community development and education.

**Faculty**

The Department of Comparative Human Development has a distinguished faculty that draws from many different areas of the University. Recent research topics include the social and phenomenological experience of mental illness, the impact of socioeconomic context on growth and development, the influence of social interaction on biological functioning, the tensions inherent in living in multicultural societies, the experience and development of psychotherapists in Western and non-Western countries, and the ways in which youth in developing countries are forging new conceptions of adulthood.