

## Draft Syllabus: Adult Development

**Instructor:** Dr. Nicky Newton

Office hours: TBA; my office is TBA

Phone: TBA

E-mail: [nicky.newton@northwestern.edu](mailto:nicky.newton@northwestern.edu) (best way to get in touch)

**Course Description:** This course examines theories and research concerning adult development, focusing on the psychosocial processes inherent in aging.

**Course website:** TBA

The aging process begins the day we are born. Put another way, we all develop and grow as people across the life span. This class focuses on one particular period of development: adulthood, a period that encompasses many changes and transitions. In this course, wherever possible, we will be specifically looking at adult development through the lenses of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation. We will also emphasize the social context by framing adult development within historical and social role domains. We begin with basic theories of adult development and aging, move on to how various social influences and life events can affect development, and how different social identities such as gender or race influence our experiences of aging. This is an interdisciplinary course; that is, mirroring the subject of the course, readings are drawn from psychology, sociology, women's studies, and gerontology. Along with the course readings, we will view installments of the BBC documentary series titled "7-Up," and use these to help illuminate and flesh-out course material.

**Course goals:** By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and describe the ways in which adult psychological development occurs in the domains of health, personality, sexuality, relationships, social roles, and work. Students will also be able to connect theories of psychosocial adult development to concrete applications, and to identify influences that can affect adult development.

### Course requirements (All must be completed to pass this course)

#### 1. Attendance and participation (10%)

To receive full participation marks, you will need to be present at every class, and contribute to the discussion. Attendance is also critical for group feedback discussions.

#### 2. Reaction Papers (10%)

Each week, a 1- page (maximum), single-spaced reaction paper should be submitted by midnight the night before class. There are 10 weeks when a reaction paper is required; see following schedule for details. These are intended to keep you on-track with your reading and identify issues you might have. These can be written in bullet-point form, and should include a question, and observations or criticisms about the readings for that week. If I use a question from your paper to stimulate class discussion, you will receive a bonus point.

#### 3. Presentation/Leading class discussion (20%)

You will sign up to present and lead class discussion of a certain week's theme. These will occur weeks 3 to 6, and 8 to 11 (inclusive); each group should be about five people. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the course website.

- The presentation should summarize one aspect or concept of the week's class materials, followed by your well-argued opinion concerning this concept, as well as an example of a real-life application. You should also prepare to lead the class

in a discussion of this one aspect. I suggest using group members' reaction papers as a basis for your presentation and subsequent discussion. I also encourage you to be creative - while remaining on-topic - and include such things as short media articles or comics/clips.

- The presentation can be PowerPoint or written, but copies of the presentation should be made available on the class Blackboard site after your presentation in class, so that we can all have access to the materials.
- Peer assessment: group members will grade each other on contribution, ideas, preparation, etc., and I will calculate a composite grade from these. A detailed grading rubric will be made available to you in class.

#### **4. Term Paper Due in the final class meeting (25%)**

A 10-12 page paper is due (excluding references) which uses the 7-Up series to illustrate any of the main principles covered during the course of the topic.

- In week 3's class, we will watch the first episode assigned for this class ("21-Up") and you will choose one male and one female character to follow in the coming episodes, and on whom your term paper will focus. You will be required to link their adult development to class materials (e.g., their personality development, relationships, social roles, etc., over time) and be able to identify where and when gender, race, class, or sexual orientation might influence the characters' particular development. Some suggested issues to consider might include how they deal with social networks, work, health, and family.
- At various points throughout the semester, writing assignments in support of the finished term paper are scheduled. This is a cumulative project, and each assignment builds on the previous one. Your peer group of about five people will provide feedback at each point. I will assign the grade for your final paper.
- APA citation format should be used, 12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.
- If you have questions or wish to discuss your ideas for your paper, please drop by my office hours.

#### **5. Exams (35%)**

**Midterm (20%).** Will cover material from weeks 2-6. (a) Multiple choice and matching questions; (b) Five short-answer questions requiring about 2-3 sentences to adequately answer the question (choice of eight).

**Final (15%).** Non-cumulative, i.e., material from mid-term forward only to be tested; same format as midterm.

**Extra credit opportunities will be announced throughout the semester. Stay tuned!**

#### **Grade Scale**

A = 90% - 100%

B = 80 – 89%

C = 70 – 79%

D = 60 – 69%

F = 59% or lower

#### **Class Policies**

- No late individual term paper assignments permitted, given the peer assessment procedure.
- For the final paper, I will deduct a half step for each day (including weekends) that it is late (i.e., an A- paper will receive a B+).

- Some basic courtesies:
- Please, turn off cell phones, take off headphones, no extraneous reading material while in class. The use of laptops should be restricted to taking notes.
- Respect others' potentially differing opinions and their right to express them. Fully engage in listening to their ideas; critique the ideas, not the person.
- Relate your comments to the material covered in lecture and readings; provide a rationale and base comments on evidence and support.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty consists of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, deception, or in any way obtaining an unfair advantage. Examples include using someone else's work as your own without correct citation, cheating, lying about non-completion of work, or obtaining previous assignments or exams. The bottom line is that academic work is expected to be your **own** original thoughts and ideas. If suspected of academic dishonesty, or of assisting in academic dishonesty, you will be penalized accordingly: assignments will receive an "F" for the assignment; cheaters on an exam will receive an "F" for the entire course. Additionally, all incidents of academic dishonesty will be documented, and a referral set to the University Committee on Academic Dishonesty.

### **Disability Statement**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University procedure, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me privately within the first week or class to discuss specific needs.

## **Required Readings**

**Class text** is Whitbourne, S. K., & Whitbourne, S. B. (2010). *Adult Development and Aging: Biopsychosocial perspectives*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. This is a general text regarding adult development, so you will also have readings that deal specifically with the topic assigned for each week.

**Supplemental readings** will be available in the "Readings" folder of the course website. All readings should be completed before class. Questions to guide your reading of research/theory articles:

- What is/are the author/s main question of interest? (Introduction)
- How is/are the author/s testing the question? (Sample and method)
- What are the findings/outcomes? (Results)
- How does the author explain the findings, and relate them to previous research and/or real life? (Discussion)
- Reading tip: Often the abstract and the first few paragraphs of the discussion section will give you a general sense of the paper. Don't get too bogged down in the details (although they are important too!)

### **Required viewing**

Each installment of the BBC's "Up-series" will be available for viewing before class meets. During class, we will discuss and review certain aspects of each episode, and how they relate to the topic for that particular week.

## **Weekly Schedule**

**Note: This schedule is tentative, and any changes will be announced in class.**

**Week 1: Overview and Introduction**

- From class text: Chapter 1: Themes and issues in adult development and aging
- Chapter 2: Models of development: Nature and nurture in adulthood
- MacArthur Foundation Research Network on an Aging Society. (2009). Facts and fictions about an aging America. *Contexts*, 8, 16-21.

**Week 2: Some Specific Theories of Adult Development (Reaction paper 1)**

- From class text: Chapter 14: Successful aging
- Baltes, P. B. (1997). On the incomplete architecture of human ontogeny: Selection, optimization, and compensation as foundation of developmental theory. *American Psychologist*, 52(4), 366- 380.
- Erikson, E. H. (1982). *The life cycle completed*. New York, NY: Norton. (Selection TBA).

**Week 3: The Social-Historical Contexts of Adult Development (Reaction paper 2)**

- Elder, G. H., Shanahan, M. J., & Clipp, E. C. (1994). When war comes to men's lives: Lifecourse patterns in family, work, and health. *Psychology and Aging*, 9, 5-16.
- Pettit, B., & Western, B. (2004). Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class inequality in U. S. incarceration. *American Sociological Review*, 69, 151-169.
- Stewart, A. J., & Healy, J. M., Jr. (1989). Linking individual development and social changes. *American Psychologist*, 44 (1), 30-42.

**\*\*\*\*Watch 21-Up. Choose 2 people (1 male, 1 female) on whom your paper will be centered\*\*\*\***

**Week 4: Spotlight on Erikson's Eight-stage Theory (Reaction paper 3)**

- Arnett, J. J. (2011). Emerging adulthood(s): The cultural psychology of a new life stage. In L.A. Jensen (Ed.), *Bridging cultural and developmental psychology: New syntheses in theory, research, and policy* (pp. 255-275). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Horst, G. A. (1995). Reexamining gender issues in Erikson's stages of identity and intimacy. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 73(3), 271-278.
- Hart, H. M., McAdams, D. P., Hirsch, B. J., & Bauer, J. J. (2001). Generativity and social involvement among African Americans and White adults. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 35, 208-230.
- Kivnick, H. Q., & Wells, C. K. (2014). Untapped richness in Erik H. Erikson's rootstock. *The Gerontologist* Vol. 54(1), 40–50 doi:10.1093/geront/gnt123.

**\*\*\*\*Watch 28-Up\*\*\*\***

**Week 5: Personality (Reaction paper 4)**

- From class text: Chapter 8: Personality and patterns of coping.
- Srivastava, S, John, O. P., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2003). Development of personality in early and middle adulthood: Set like plaster or persistent change? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (5), 1041-1053.
- McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3), 233–238.

**\*\*\*\*Watch 35-Up\*\*\*\***

**Week 6: Social Roles (Reaction paper 5)**

- Diekmann, A. B., & Eagly, A. H. (2008). Of men, women, and motivation: A role congruity account. In J. Y. Shah & W. L. Gardner (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation science* (pp. 434-447). New York: Guilford.
- Wood, D., & Roberts, B. W. (2006). The effect of age and role information on expectations for big five personality traits. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(11), 1482-1496.
- Coall, D. A., & Hertwig, R. (2011). Grandparental investment: A relic of the past or a resource for the future? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20, 93-98.

**Week 7: In-class Mid-term (No reaction paper this week)**

**Week 8: Relationships and Social Networks (Reaction paper 6)**

- From class text: Chapter 9: Relationships.
- Antonucci, T. C., Ajrouch, K. J., & Briditt, K. S. (2014). The Convoy Model: Explaining social relations from a multidisciplinary perspective. *The Gerontologist Vol. 54(1)*, 82–92 doi:10.1093/geront/gnt118.
- Warren-Findlow, J., Laditka, J. N., Laditka, S. B., & Thompson, M. E. (2011). Associations between social relationships and emotional well-being in middle-aged and older African Americans. *Research on Aging*, 33(6), 713-734.

**\*\*\*\*Watch 42-Up. Due today: Outline of paper (feedback in groups)\*\*\*\***

**Week 9: Sexuality (Reaction paper 7)**

- Hyde, J. S., & Oliver, M. B. (2000). Gender differences in sexuality: Results from meta-analysis. In C. B. Travis & J. W. White (Eds.), *Sexuality, Society, and Feminism* (pp.57-77). Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association.
- McHugh, M. C. (2007). Women and sex at midlife: Desire, dysfunction, and diversity. In V. Muhlbauer and J.C. Chrisler (Eds.), *Women over 50: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 26-52). New York: Springer.
- Schope, R. D. (2005). Who's afraid of growing old? Gay and lesbian perceptions of aging. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 45 (5), 23-39.

**Week 10: Health (Reaction paper 8)**

- From class text: Chapter 5: Health and prevention.
- Moen, P., & Chermack, K. (2005). Gender disparities in health: Strategic selection, careers, and cycles of control. *Journals of Gerontology*, 60B, 99-108.
- Verbrugge, L. M., & Yang, L. (2002). Aging with disability and disability with aging. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 12(4), 253-267.

**\*\*\*\*Watch 49-Up\*\*\*\* Due today: How your chosen characters relate to the class materials covered up until this week (inclusive). Feedback in groups\*\*\*\***

**Week 11: Work and Retirement (Reaction paper 9)**

- From class text: Chapter 10: Work, retirement, and leisure pursuits.
- Shultz, K. S., & Wang, M. (2011). Psychological perspectives on the changing nature of retirement. *American Psychologist*, 66, 170-179.

- Carr, D. (2004). Psychological well-being across three cohorts: A response to shifting work-family opportunities and expectations? In O. G. Brim, C. D. Ryff, & R. C. Kessler (Eds.), *How healthy are we?: A national study of well-being at midlife* (pp. 452–484). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**\*\*\*\*Watch 56-Up\*\*\*\***

**Week 12: The Oldest Old (Reaction paper 10)**

- From class text: Chapter 12: Long-term Care
- Chapter 13: Death and Dying

***Due today: Draft term paper (feedback in groups)***

**Week 13: Final class wrap-up**

- Review of overarching class themes
- Discussion of how the 7-Up series relates to class themes

**\*\*\*\*Final term paper to be submitted during this class\*\*\*\***

**Week 14: Final Exam**