Psychology/ Gerontology 408: Transitions in Adult Development

Sonoma State University, Fall 2017
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Course Description:
This course surveys the major stages of adult development and the transitions that mark our passages from one stage to another. The class will explore the evolving self’s broadening experience of education, employment, career development; love, family, and parenting; aging and health; creativity and spiritual awakening.

Course Objectives:
• To understand the central stages of adult development, and to promote self-awareness of the developmental tasks of adult life.

• To familiarize you with the major theories of adult development, including the work of Erikson, Jung, Levinson, and Vaillant.

• To understand the emotional reorganizations that occur during early adulthood, midlife, and other transitions.

• To explore spiritual dimensions of adult development and to understand the role of initiation, rites of passage, dreams, and mythic symbolism during adult transitions.

• To research topics in adult development that may become a focus of your future work in various fields of human services.

• This course strives to meet these Psychology Department learning goals: To reflect on personal experience in light of psychological knowledge; to develop skills that promote behavioral change at the individual, organizational, and community levels; to know the major concepts, theories, and perspectives in psychology; and to apply psychological theories, concepts, and principles to individual experience as well as to broader social issues and social systems.

Required texts:
• Reader of selected articles. Available from College Center Copy Shop—Your Other Office, 1460 E Cotati Ave, Cotati.

Purchase books through North Lights Books, 1720 East Cotati, Rohnert Park, in the Wolf Den Plaza. You may also shop online. In addition to Amazon.com, check Chegg.com or BetterWorldBooks.com.
Course Requirements:

- Consistent class attendance (three absences maximum), and active participation in class discussions. Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.
- Complete three papers (5–6 pages), due on September 19, October 17, and November 28. Your experience in the course will be optimized if you strive to meet each of these deadlines for assignments. Please turn in a hard copy of each paper. If your paper is late, hand it in at the following class. Please don’t email me your paper. The only exception is that if your Final Paper is late you may email it to me after the final class meeting to receive credit for the assignment.
- In-class presentation. You are encouraged to work in pairs or teams to create presentations, which can include summary of research for your papers or self-expression through music, art, video, poetry, and movement. Working together on presentations should be fun and a catalyst for your learning and creativity.
- Library orientation. Learn how to use search engines such as PsychInfo for instant access to a world of knowledge and current research. Ask a librarian to show you how. This will take 5 minutes.
- Please turn off your cell phone during class. You will have several breaks during each class when you can use your phone. Students using their phones, texting, reading emails, or surfing internet sites unrelated to the course will be asked to leave class for the remainder of that class period.
- Please carefully edit and proofread all written work prior to submission. Papers are typed, double-spaced or 1.5 spaced, and written in APA style. Familiarize yourself with this style by reviewing journals such as The American Psychologist or other academic journals using APA format. An APA reference handbook is on reserve in the library. Information on style format is available from Salazar Library at http://libweb.sonoma.edu/research/default.html and at the APA website, www.apa.org.
- If you are a student with special learning needs, please register with the campus office of Disabled Student Services, Salazar 1049, phone 664-2677. They will provide you with written confirmation of your verified disability and authorize recommended accommodations. Present this recommendation to me and we'll discuss it.
- When grading your papers, I look for evidence of learning from assigned readings. However, you are not required to read everything in this syllabus. Read as much as you can absorb and show me that you're giving the ideas some serious reflection.
- Read “Bogart's Grammatical Arcana” at the conclusion of this syllabus and follow its guidelines, avoiding the common errors detailed therein.

Papers:
For this course you will write three papers, focused on developmental issues in early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later adulthood. For each paper, I want you to combine these elements:

- Discuss important transitions in adult development related to education, employment, career and financial planning, relationships, marriage, parenting, family development, group or community participation, divorce, military service, immigration, career change, stress and coping, illness and disability, mental health issues, addiction and alcoholism, death and dying, and other topics of interest to you.
- Discuss important theories and theorists relevant to that stage of life. Demonstrate your knowledge of developmental theories. Each paper must include discussion of at least three theorists.
- Discuss examples derived from biographical studies, compiled by reading biography(ies) of famous, creative, or highly accomplished individuals, from any field of life such as politics, literature, science, sports, business, or entertainment. Describe specific stages of this person's early, middle, or late-life development and interpret crucial events, transitions, and life phases.
- You may also discuss and compare the developmental paths of people known to you, including parents and relatives, friends, mentors, and coworkers. Describe this person's passage through early/middle/late adulthood and important tasks, transitions, and rites of passage.
- In your research for your papers please make appropriate references to published articles and books,
not just internet websites. If all you do is look things up on Wikipedia you will have superficial knowledge. A world of information is at your fingertips by accessing PSYCHINFO from within the SSU Library website. HINT: Students get higher grades for seeking out, reading, and referring to published books and peer-reviewed articles. Students get lower grades for only citing unpublished material from the internet. To succeed in this class you need to be an active information seeker. Your grade is largely determined by the extent of your effort in this task.
Suggestions:
- Discuss work, social roles, emotional attachment, marriage or cohabiting, divorce, parenting, creativity, vocation and professional development, community involvement, health or illness, spirituality.
- Use the description of Five Factor personality theory in Bjorklund to assess your subject(s)' personality style and how it affects their adult development.
- Describe the person’s adult attachment style and how this is reflected in personal relationships.
- Discuss how development is affected by poverty, substance abuse, trauma, bereavement, and macrosystem influences.
- Discuss what it means to be successful in early adulthood, in midlife, in old age. Discuss some major obstacles and challenges that people confront in this phase of the life cycle.
- Discuss areas of problematic adjustment. Explore how strengths in some areas offset problems in other areas of life. Envision how these issues might be addressed by professionals in the fields of Psychology/Mental Health/Social Work, Gerontology, Education, Medicine, Nursing, Law Enforcement, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences.

In-class presentations:
For each of the three papers, you will present your findings to the class. Describe your personal reaction to the readings pertaining to this stage of adulthood and to the person you studied. You will be graded on organization of the material; clarity of the presentations; and your ability to generate and guide class discussion.

Grading:
Your papers, presentations, and your attendance and participation in classroom discussions are given equal weight in determining your grade for the course. All written work and presentations are graded using the following criteria:

- **Originality:** Paper is written in your own voice and reflects your personal interests.
- **Scholarship:** Mastery of subject matter; level of analysis; research of literature. Your paper should contain references to books and published articles, not just material from Internet websites.
- **Organization of material:** Material is presented in orderly, logical sequence; drawings or illustrations used to support or promote understanding of the text.
- **Mechanics:** Your paper follows APA format; neatness, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.


Reading: Instructor’s Notes on “Major thresholds and rites of passage of adult life.”


   Victor Turner, “Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage.”
   Edith Sullwold, “The ritual-maker within at adolescence.”
   Instructor’s Notes on Daniel Levinson (1978). *The seasons of a man’s life.*
September 5: Early adulthood continued. Settling down and the midlife transition. Physical changes and theories of aging.

Reading: Bjorklund, chapter 2.
Arnett, chapters 2 & 3.

September 12: Social roles. Becoming a spouse or partner. Marriage and divorce.

Reading: Bjorklund, chapter 5.
Arnett, chapter 4.
Pamela Haag, Marriage confidential, Part I: The new norms of career and marriage.
Instructor's Notes on J. M. Lewis, “Marriage as a search for healing.”
Instructor's Notes on J. M. Gottman & N. Silver, “The seven principles for making marriage work.”

September 19: Family relationships. Parenting.

Reading: Bjorklund, chapter 6.
Arnett, chapter 5.
Pamela Haag, Marriage confidential, Part II: Parenting marriages.
Instructor's Notes on P. Daniels and K. Weingarten, Sooner or later: The timing of parenthood in adult lives.

**Paper on early adulthood due.**
Write a paper discussing early adulthood, its central tasks, rites of passage, developmental challenges, identifying factors that can delay or impede a young person’s success. Refer to theorists such as Erikson, Levinson, Arnett, Bjorklund, and Bronfenbrenner. Describe the early adulthood of a famous individual or someone important in your life.

September 26: The family life cycle. The individual in the family and in history. The changing structure of families. The self in social-historical context. The interdependent self. Issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, and disability in adult development.

Reading: Betty Carter & Monica McGoldrick, The expanded family life cycle, pp. 1–46.

October 3: Work, vocational choice, discovering a calling. Theories of personality development. Work, stress, and adaptive coping mechanisms.

Reading: Bjorklund, chapters 7, 8.
Arnett, chapter 7.
Greg Bogart, “Finding a life’s calling.”

Reading: Margie Lachman, “Development in midlife.”
Jan Stein & Murray Stein, “Psychotherapy, initiation, and the midlife transition.”
James Hall, “Personal transformation: The inner image of initiation.”

October 17: The quest for meaning. Spirituality, stages of faith, and spiritual awakening. Stress and coping.
Reading: Bjorklund, chapters 9, 10.

**Paper on middle adulthood due.**
Discuss midlife development and its interwoven issues of work, career, and emotional attachments; marriage and parenting; stress management and health; creativity and spirituality. Refer to Erikson, Levinson, Lachman, Stein, Hall, Vaillant, Maslow, and Haag. Refer to bios of famous people in midlife. Discuss what it means to be successful in midlife. Describe examples of midlife transformations.

October 24: The meaning and long-term destiny of marriages.
**Reading:** Pamela Haag, *Marriage confidential, Parts III and IV: New twists on old infidelities; and The new monogamy.*

Come to class prepared to discuss *Marriage confidential.*

October 31: Health and health disorders. Cognitive Changes. Memory. Assistive Technologies
Reading: Bjorklund, chapters 3, 4.

Reading: Bjorklund, chapter 11.
Lionel Corbet, “Transformation of the image of God leading to self-initiation into old age.” (In reader).
Jane Hollister Wheelwright, “Old age and death.”
Instructor’s Notes on Stephen Levine, *Meetings at the edge*

November 14: Student presentations.
**Reading:** Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.*

November 21: No class. Thanksgiving break.

November 28: Student presentations. **Final paper on aging and late adulthood due.**
**Reading:** Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.*

**Final Paper Due.** Discuss developmental issues of later life, including the challenges of aging gracefully. Refer to Bowlby, Bjorklund, Neugarten, Achtley, Kubler-Ross, Levine, and Grof, Sogyal Rinpoche.
December 5. Final Closing Circle.

Suggested books for additional reading on Adult Development:

**APA Format**

I will briefly summarize several features of APA format that you need to know for your papers. A detailed description of APA format is found at www.apa.org.

First, citations are made in the body of your paper. For example: (Holmes, 1993), plus the page number, if you are referring to or quoting from a specific passage—for example: (Holmes, 1993, p. 102). The full bibliographic reference with publication info appears at the end of your paper under the subheading “References.” For example: Holmes, J. (1993). *John Bowlby and attachment theory*. New York: Routledge. Copy the format used on the Contents page in the front of your Reader. That’s how your references should appear at the end of your paper.

Secondly, use subheadings throughout your paper to guide the reader through the different topics and sections of your discussion, e.g. Cognitive development; Autonomy; Attachment style. Subheadings are used to mark transitions in the text and help lend organization to the paper.

If you cite my Instructor's Notes from your Reader, please cite the original text, not my notes. For example, cite “Holmes, 1993,” not “Instructor's Notes on Holmes.” The ideas come from Holmes and Bowlby, not from me. In cases where I cite no page numbers in the Notes, none are required in your reference. You can paraphrase the original author’s ideas. If you cite an exact quotation and page number that I’ve indicated through use of quotation marks then please include the page number from the original text.

**Bogart’s Grammatical Arcana**

I. The words “that” and “which” are used differently. “That” is used in an essential clause of a sentence, meaning it is essential to the meaning of the sentence. “Which” is used in a non-essential clause of a sentence, and is preceded by a comma.

“The book that is on the table belongs to David.”

“The book, which was written by Erik Erikson, has a green cover.”

“Erikson’s book, which is sitting on the table next to David, is an inspiring treatise.”

“The chapter of Erikson’s book that you read this week is inspiring.”

“The paper [that] you turned in is brilliant.” [Here the word “that” could be omitted.]

“The paper, which answers all of the questions posed, is brilliant.”
II. Correct use of apostrophes. Please do not follow the custom, commonly used in text messaging, of omitting apostrophes from words such as “doing ones duty” (instead of “one’s”); or “my fathers job” (instead of “father’s job”). Please use apostrophes correctly in your writing.

III. The word “it’s” is a punctuation exception. “It’s” is only used to abbreviate “it is.” “It’s warm outside today.” “It’s not your fault.” To express possession in the English language, generally an apostrophe is used. “David’s car is blue.” But in the case of the word “it,” possession is expressed without the apostrophe. “I have read your paper carefully and its greatest strengths are its clear organization and concise summary of ideas.”

IV. Effect and affect. Generally, “effect” is a noun and “affect” is a verb. “The music had powerful effect on me.” “The music affected me deeply.” However, occasionally “effect” is used as a verb. “After I began hypnotherapy I was able to effect significant changes in my behavior.”

V. Subjunctive verb tense.
Incorrect: “If I would have gone to the party. . . .”
Correct: “If I had gone to the party. . . .”
Incorrect: “If you would have listened to me. . . .”
Correct: “If you had listened to me. . . .”
Incorrect: “If I would have left home earlier I would have arrived at work on time.”
Correct: “If I had left home earlier I would have arrived at work on time.”
Incorrect: “If she would have applied for the job sooner she might have gotten an interview.”
Correct: “If she had applied for the job sooner she might have gotten an interview.”
Incorrect: “If we would have discussed this reasonably then we might have reached an agreement.”
Correct: “If we had discussed this reasonably then we might have reached an agreement.”