Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology
The Graduate Center of the City University of New York

Lifespan Psychology
Course # 72000.16172
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Professor: Arietta Slade, Ph.D.
E-Mail: arietta.slade@gmail.com
Phone: 860-350-8789
Day & Time: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00p.m.
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:
The general focus of this course is the development of the individual across the life span. I teach the course from the perspective that multiple strands come together across a range of developmental stages to create the individual, and thus, that psychological development must always be seen in the context of an individual’s biology, her unique relational environment, her cognitive capacities, her social world, her community, and her culture. Each of these factors combine to give the infant, child, and adult his or her individuality and unique humanity.

The course is organized (unsurprisingly) developmentally, and begins with infancy continuing through the toddler and preschool periods, middle childhood, adolescence, parenthood, and midlife.

The orienting frameworks for this course are those of attachment and contemporary psychodynamic theory. These theories are unique in their emphasis on the importance of early experience and particularly early relationships in shaping an individual’s ways of being and knowing, of regulating affect and other elements of self experience, and of developing and maintaining crucial ties to others throughout life. These theories also provide a framework for incorporating recent advances in the study of the brain, of evolution, and of the mind, into a coherent and integrated theory of psychological development.

Course Organization:
The course covers Infancy and Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Adolescence, and a number of core issues in adult development: Adult Attachment, Pregnancy, Parenting, Romantic Relationships, Midlife and Aging. Readings are listed below, as are key concepts to be addressed in each lecture. The written assignment for the course are listed at the end of the section on readings.

Grading: Class Participation: 40%, Final paper: 60%
Note: I have listed films to accompany many of the lectures. All are available on Netlix. {PEP} refers to the database Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing, which can be accessed through the CUNY library.

Weekly Reading Assignments and Class Topics:

Session 1: Introduction to the course

IN CLASS FILM: BABIES (Documentary by Thomas Balmes, 2010)

MODULE 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD (Birth through five years of age)

Session 2: Contexts for development

Key concepts: Biology, temperament, genetics, developmental neuroscience, and culture


Additional readings:


Session 3: Theories of emotional development in infancy

Key concepts: The development of the self in relationships: Separation-individuation theory, mutual regulation model, intersubjectivity


Tronick, op. cit., Chapters 13 & 20.


IN CLASS FILM: MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTION TAPES FROM MY FILES

Additional readings:


**Session 4: Attachment and Evolutionary Theory**

**Key concepts:** The evolutionary foundations of attachment theory, the attachment-behavioral system, the exploratory system, adaptation and its role in the organization of attachment


**IN CLASS FILMS: JOHN BOWLBY AND MARY AINSWORTH**

**Additional readings:**


**Session 5: Individual differences in attachment organization**

**Key concepts: The antecedents and sequelae of individual differences in attachment organization; secure, insecure-organized and disorganized attachment**


**IN CLASS FILM: STRANGE SITUATION TAPES**

**Additional readings:**


**Session 6: Toward autonomy: Language, symbols, and play**

**Key concepts: The development of language, symbolization, play, and representational intelligence**

Shonkoff, et al., Chapter 6 (Communicating and learning)


**Additional readings:**


Winnicott, D.W. (1971), op. cit., (Chapters 1 & 4) [PEP]


Stern, D.N., *Diary of a Baby*, Parts IV & V


**MODULE 2: MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (Age 6-12)**

**Session 7: Morality, theory of mind, and Oedipus**

**Key concepts:** The development of a theory of mind, of a moral sense, and the experience of triangulation.


Additional readings:


**Session 8: The widening world of middle childhood**

**Key concepts: Attachment in middle childhood, gender development, peer relationships**


Shonkoff & Phillips, c. 7 (Making friends and getting along with peers)


**Watch the film Seven Up by Michael Apted (available on Netflix)**

*I also recommend Seven Up in South Africa (hard to find)*

**IN CLASS FILM: CHILD ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW**


Additional readings:


**MODULE 3: ADOLESCENCE (Age 13-19)**

*Session 9: Adolescence*

**Key concepts: Cognitive, neurobiological, emotional and sexual development in adolescence**


**Additional reading:**


*Watch the film 7 Plus Seven by Michael Apted (available on Netflix)*
MODULE 4: EARLY ADULTHOOD

Session 10: Adult attachment

Key concepts: Adult attachment organization as reflected in narrative and memorial processes; defensive processes reflected in language; the intergenerational transmission of attachment


Watch the film 21 UP by Michael Apted (available on Netflix)

Review Adult Attachment Interview transcripts

Additional readings:


Session 11: Adult romantic relationships

Key concepts: The foundations of the development of adult romantic and sexual relationships; object relations, attachment, and the capacity to love.


*Watch the films 28 UP by Michael Apted (available on Netflix)*

**Session 12: Pregnancy and the transition to parenthood**

**Key Concepts: The multiple contexts of becoming a parent**


**FILM: JANET DEAN’S DELIVERY ROOM TAPES**

*Watch the film Juno (2007)*

**Session 13: Parenthood and intergenerational transmission**

**Key concepts: Psychological dimensions of parenting, parental reflective functioning, the caregiving system and its distortions**


Review AAI/PDI pairs

Additional reading:


MODULE 5: LATE ADULTHOOD (Midlife and aging)

Session 14: Midlife


Watch the films 42 Up and 49 Up by Michael Apted (available on Netflix)
Session 15: Aging

Key concepts: Productivity and generativity in the face of the physical and psychological transitions of the later years.


Additional Readings:


Watch the film Away From Her (2006)

Written Assignments:

The assignment for this course is aimed at getting you to contrast and compare developmental stages and to consider issues of intergenerational transmission across the lifespan. I would like you to observe a child and interview one of his/her parents using the Parent Development Interview (Slade, Aber, Berger, Bresgi, & Kaplan, 2003), or interview a parent/child pair across any period in the lifespan (adolescent child/adult parent, adult and his or her parent, etc. You may use a combination of the PDI and the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996). You may also of course add questions that will fill out your sense of the individual you are interviewing in terms of his/her life course.

You are then going to write a commentary, 20-25 pages in length, that examines a) the salient life course issues/tasks for each of the individuals observed/interviewed, and b) the continuities (patterns of intergenerational transmission of attachment, etc.) and discontinuities you observe in the dyad. Please refer both to the sources we have read in class, as well as to other sources relevant to the developmental stages you are examining. Please consider not only the family context, but the social and community context as well.
Your observations/interviews and commentary papers will be due the last day of class; they can be sent to me electronically. We will review the formats for interviewing and observing in Session 5.

I do not accept late papers except in cases of bona fide medical emergency. You must inform me immediately of any such circumstances.

ENJOY THE SEMESTER!