

Psychology 3000A: Lifespan Development of Women

Fall, 2017

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Teaching Assistant

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to changes that occur in women over the years of their lives. This course builds on the understanding of the developmental processes in the early years gained in Psychology 2110 but extends it across the lifespan and narrows it to the female sex. Women today have complex, rich and busy lives, yet no two take the same developmental pathway through their life. Our society is fast-paced and fast-changing, so the social roles and expectations are changing almost under our feet. In addition, many of the theorists in this area developed models that fit males, so a skeptical approach to the psychological literature is appropriate.

Course goals:

The *American Psychological Association* has developed five goals for teaching of undergraduates in Psychology, and the course should therefore try to fit these goals.

- 1) The first is *knowledge*: to understand the basic concepts in the development and psychology of women.
- 2) The second is *Critical Thinking*, the ability to evaluate, reason systematically and argue well in support of deserving ideas (also see the U. of L. Calendar).
- 3) The third is to acquire *literacy* and *communication* skills.

Literacy is the ability to read and interpret texts from diverse media, discourses and genres, and to express oneself in writing. *Oral expression* is the ability to listen and understand oral messages, and to express oneself effectively in a wide range of

interpersonal contexts (U.of L. Calendar).

4) To prepare the characteristics that will lead to professional development.

See the Conference Board of Canada's *Employability Skills*, including those seen above, but especially the ability to work with others.

5) To take ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world.

How do we do that? One way would be to bring current issues into the lectures/ discussions during the semester and look at them through this lens.

The grade will be a composite of marks in five areas. First, there will be a personal paper on self-concept of yourself across the lifespan, with a link to the principles of development. Second, there will be a short essay assessment of the issues explored by one of the visiting speakers. Third, members of each group will be evaluated for two oral presentations. Fourth, there will be two reaction papers to any two oral presentations (not your group's). Fifth, instead of an exam the final assignment is a 15 plus-page, opinion-based scholarly essay. Values of these assignments will be discussed and agreed upon in the first class meeting (see page 4 for outline) and then sent by email and placed on moodle.

Course Format in Detail

- A) Lectures: The format of this section will be straightforward, with interactive lectures by Dr. Mather. The first lecture topics will be on principles of development (page 5) but later there will be a variety, partly dependent on what the groups choose for oral presentation. We could look at important current issues concerning women (course goal #5), there will be a couple of visitors and topic that the class might want to hear about.
- B) To give the class some personal meaning, you will be asked to generate your possible self-concept for four stages in your lifespan (see page 6), this part is due October 6th. Dr. Mather will be presenting Principles of Lifespan Development (see page 5) for several lectures in September. Once you have these four self-concept entries, you will discuss them, reflecting and using at least three of the Principles. There will be a day (November 10th) to work within your group and discuss how this might unfold, though each self-concept paper is individual. This combined 8-page (not including references) paper will be written in APA format and will be due November 22nd. (Course goal #4)

C) Presentations

Even though the topic looks relatively narrow, the coverage of women's passage through the life course will reveal many issues that deserve coverage in more depth. Both the choice of these issues and their presentation will be the responsibility of members of the class, with Dr. Mather's assistance. On September 11th the class will be put into groups of five and will generate a list of topics. The class as a whole will brainstorm issues in women's lifespan development that would be good material for presentation. On September 13th, the class will meet to plan the presentation sequence and groups will request topics. I will be at a conference in Sweden, and Aaron Chubb from the Student Success Centre will organize two classes. On September 15th, the class will receive training in oral presentation. Each group should expect to meet with Dr. Mather at least once about each presentation, and each group will present once between October 11th and 18th and once between November 1st and 8th (course goals #3 & #4).

Presentation topics are not completely unrestricted. The choice of topics should fit the course areas, but there will be a tendency to choose familiar issues from early in the lifespan and it will have to be resisted. Any format which gets its message across to the class will be appropriate, though we don't need more formal lectures.

Group projects are often viewed skeptically by students because effort input may be uneven. To allow for this, after the first presentation group the members will be asked to give productive evaluation (not graded or negative) to all members about their contribution. Then, at the end of the semester (December 6th), every group member will evaluate the relative contribution of each, including him/herself, from a low of 80% to a high of 120%, averaging 100%. These will be averaged across all group members, and the presentation grade will be adjusted for each class member. This can make a big difference if your group got 40/50 and you were evaluated at 120% by all, you could end up with 48. Remember, too, that potential employers want to know that you are comfortable and competent working in groups.

To practice *Critical Thinking* (course goal #2) you will evaluate TWO presentations, one from each repetition, by any group except your own. Evaluate the IDEAS presented, or the ideas behind the presentation, or the approach/perspective/point of view that the presenters expressed, NOT the presentation style or format of the presentation. Refer to at least two sources of scholarly information. 3-4 pages of text with APA format, title page and references will be sufficient. They are due October 20th and November 20th.

D) Speaker Assessment:

During the semester, five women will visit the class to talk about themselves; what they emphasize in their life, what background led them to their present situation, where they see themselves going. Each woman represents some theme about women's lives and so each has interesting ideas, goals and values. They will have one class each to visit and talk, with time for questions. Choose one of the women and write a paper about the situation, life path and influences that she represents. This is a scholarly paper and should have a minimum of 8 academic references (12 is a better

number) from journals, books and book chapters (web-based journals are still journals). It is to be written in APA format with Title Page, Abstract and References. - keep it to around 12 pages total (course goal #3). It can be written any time in the semester (if one presenter inspires you) but all are due by October 23rd. (Course goal #3).

E) Opinion-Based Essay

Both to give you a chance to demonstrate your learning and to give you an opportunity to investigate a topic in depth, a 15 page paper will be the final assignment of the semester. You may choose any topic we covered (or one we didn't have time to, if connected to the course topic); if in doubt, check with Dr. Mather. An outline is due December 1st and it will be returned with comments December 4th. You should not choose a topic that your group presented. The paper should be a minimum of 15 text pages, typed, and should have a minimum of ten scholarly references. Web citations should only be one or two (this does not include journal articles found via the Web). While APA Format should be followed, this is not to be a paper solely of facts. By this time you should feel strongly about something you learned about in class. Tackle a social issue, recommend a practical solution, take on a theory or give evidence to support an opinion (all course goals). Make your approach, opinion or perspective clear in the paper. This is due on the day the exam would have been given if there had been an exam, December 13th, by 4:00 p.m. (Try for Course goal #5).

Grading Scheme:

Assignment	Section	Due date	Weighting
Self-concept paper	Concepts	October 6th	
	Processes	November 22	
Speaker paper		October 23	
Presentation 1		October 11-18	
Presentation 2 –		November 1-8	
Pres'n feedback	Paper 1	October 20	
	Paper 2	November 20	
Final paper	Outline	December 1	
	Paper	December 13	

Principles of Development across the Lifespan

- 1) Gains and Losses
- 2) Nature and Nurture
- 3) Continuity and Discontinuity
- 4) Long Term Effects
- 5) Generational Effects
- 6) Averages and Variations
- 7) Social Roles and Expectations

PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES OF LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT

Self-concept, or beliefs about oneself, is a major part of our psychological functioning, but it is emphasized mostly in research in childhood and adolescence. It changes across the lifespan, and is different across different cultures. Dr Mather will lecture in September about the different processes that act across the lifespan, and they are presented in the Course Outline, page 6. To really make a connection with these ideas, you will write a page each about your self-concept NOW, then at ages 40, 60, and 80 (the average lifespan for Canadian women). Think of the basic question as "Who am I/will be?" The answer should be both domain-general and domain-specific. It would be domain-specific to talk about what you are good at, and see Gardner's (1983) nine types of intelligence, perhaps musical ability, athleticism or social sensitivity. Some parts of your self-concept will be defined by domain: gender/sexual/cultural or national identity. Others will be more general: social roles (which will change very much across the years), happiness, self-esteem. This part of the assignment is more a thoughtful than information-presenting one, and these four pages are due to Dr Mather on October 6th. Use data from Statistics Canada or from any lifespan development text to see what people of this age in our country are doing. Then, having done this, look at what you have written and discuss your theoretical development with relation to at least **three** of the principles, for at least four pages more. For this paper you can discuss with your group on November 10th. You can use the experiences of the speakers to the class or of people you know-but only two, and cite as (personal communication). Use at least five scholarly sources to emphasize what you find and what you believe. This will also give you the opportunity to think about how the roles of women will change across the 60 years that you are including. Critical thinking will be needed here, creativity is useful.

There are not a lot of good sources to discuss the changes in self-concept across the lifespan of humans, especially of women. Here are some:

Diehl, M. & Hay, E. L. (2011). Self-concept differentiation and self-concept clarity across adulthood: association with age and psychological well-being. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 73, 125-152.

Lacey, H. P., Kierstad, T. A. & Morey, D. (2012). De-biasing the age-happiness bias: Memory search and cultural expectations in happiness judgments across the lifespan. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 13, 647- 658.

Robins, R. W. & Trezesniewski, K. H. (2005). Self-esteem development across the lifespan. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 158-162.

Steger, M. F., Oishi, S. & Kashdan, T. B. (2009). Meaning in life across the lifespan: Levels and correlates of meaning in life from emerging adulthood to older adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4, 43-52.

Weinert, S., Artelt, C., Prenzel, M., Senkbeil, M., Ehmke, T. & Carstensen, C. H. (2011). Development of competencies across the life span. *Zeitschrift Erziehungswiss*, 14, 67-86.

Schedule 3000		All assignments are due by 4:00 pm
September	6	Intro: weightings
	8	Intro: topics
	11	Groups: oral topics
*	13	Groups: topic choices
*	15	Group presentation training
	18	Principles
	20	Speaker
	22	Speaker
	25	Principles
	27	Speaker
	29	Speaker
October	2	Principles/Demographics
	4	Speaker
	6	Self-concept I due
	11	Oral Presentation 1a
	13	Oral Presentation 1b
	16	Oral Presentation 1c
	18	Oral Presentation 1d
	20	Oral presentation feedback due
	23	Speaker paper due
	25	Lecture/discussion
	27	Lecture/discussion
	30	Lecture/discussion
November	1	Oral presentation 1b
	3	Oral presentation 2b
	6	Oral presentation 3b
	8	Oral presentation 4b
*	10	Work on self concept
	20	Oral presentation feedback due
	22	Self concept paper due
	24	Lecture/discussion
	27	Lecture/discussion
	29	Lecture/discussion
December	1	Lecture/discussion and Final paper outline due
	4	Lecture/discussion
	6	Group self evaluation
	13	Final paper due