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Fall 2025
Wesleyan University

Life-Span Development

EDHD 655; SCIE655; SOCS 655
Syllabus subject to minor changes

Course Description

This course provides an overview of developmental issues across the life span. One theme involves how we are all similar at different ages – what does it mean to be a 1-year-old, a 7-year-old, or a 42-year-old? And how do we change over time, what are the common human developmental trajectories that we travel during our lifetimes? Another major theme is how, despite our commonalities, we differ from one another beginning even in infancy. For example, some infants sleep through the night and are easy to soothe, while others are irritable and fussy almost from birth. A 3rd theme is whether these individual differences really matter in the long run. Does the fussy baby become an even-tempered toddler; does the aggressive preschooler just grow out of it? In more general terms, is development relatively continuous or discontinuous for most of us? Finally, we will discuss how gender, culture, class, and race/ethnicity influence all of these developmental themes.

Course Objectives/Goals

Upon completion of this class, students will be able to:

- Describe the major life stages and the developmental issues characteristic of these stages
- Distinguish emerging individual differences from precursors to psychopathology
- Have an appreciation for developmental continuities and discontinuities
- Describe some of the ways that gender, race & ethnicity, social class, and culture influence and direct the broad developmental trajectories described above

Course Processes

Class sessions will typically include a lecture during the first part of the class, followed by group discussions. In addition to lectures and class discussions, we will also see several developmentally relevant movies and participate in some informal class experiments.

Course Requirements

- 1) An obvious one with only 13 sessions - consistent attendance & timely reading of assignments. Please let me know in advance if you have an anticipated conflict, and please email me if something unexpected happens.
- 2) Starting the 2nd week of classes - a weekly handwritten reaction paper (a maximum of 1 page) due at the beginning of each class session. The paper should summarize any major reactions, questions, or commentaries you have regarding the readings for the week. More details will be provided at the first class meeting. These papers are graded pass/fail.

3) A 50 minute in-class midterm (week 7) covering the major themes of the first 6 weeks of class. Details about the nature of the exam will be presented in the introductory lecture.

4) A brief oral summary (15 minutes) on a theme related to the term paper. More details will be provided in class.

5) The major written requirement is a 10 to 12-page term paper on a topic relevant to Life-Span Psychology. The paper is due one week after the end of the last class and should be mailed to me at 335 Ridge Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. Please, no email attachments will be accepted. On-going feedback will be provided regarding possible topics, guidelines on how to write Psychology papers, how to use available library resources at Wesleyan, etc.

Grading Policy

The weekly reaction papers (graded pass/fail) will count for 10% of your total class grade, the midterm for 25%, the oral class presentation for 20%, and the final paper for 45%. You may get preliminary feedback on a draft of your final paper (in this case submitted by email) if you send it to me prior to the last class meeting session. Feedback will be limited to general aspects of your paper, including appropriate writing style, basic clarity, and depth/sophistication. The feedback phase is NOT required and is not graded. Oral reports will count for 20% of your grade and will be evaluated on clarity and informational content.

Required Text

The 11th edition of Santrock's *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development* (2023). Boston: McGraw Hill. If possible, please complete the reading for the first week (Santrock, Chapter 1 in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill) prior to attending the first class. Other readings are included in Moodle or whatever online equivalent Wesleyan is currently using.

Readings

Week 1 Class Overview- Readings, Assignments, & Major Themes – Sept. 9th

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 1 in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Hamedani, M., Markus, H., Hetey, R., & Eberhardt, J. (2024). We built this culture (se we can change it). *American Psychologist*, 79(3), 384-402.

Movie “Short”– *7-Up*

Week 2 Attachment Across the Life Span - Sept. 16th

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 10, “Emotional Development and Attachment.” Read the Attachment section (pp. 321-343) in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Ainsworth, M, & Bowlby, J. (1991). An ethological approach to personality development. *American Psychologist*, 46, 333-341.

Doyle, C., & Cicchetti, D. (2017). From the cradle to the grave: The effect of adverse caregiving environments on attachment and relationships through the lifespan. *Clinical Psychology: Science and*

Practice, 24(2), 203-217.

Week 3 Cognitive Development - Sept. 23rd

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapters 6, “Cognitive Developmental Approaches” and 7 “Information-Processing” in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Week 4 Emotions, Temperament, and Emotional Development - Sept. 30th

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 10, “Emotional Development and Attachment.” Read the Emotional Development section in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Oatley, K., Keltner, D., & Jenkins, J. (2014). Chapter 8, “Development of Emotions In Childhood,” in *Understanding Emotions (3rd ed.)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Movie – *Face-to-Face*

Week 5 Emotions – From Individual Differences to Psychopathology – Oct. 7th

Oatley, K., Keltner, D., & Jenkins, J. (2014). Chapter 12, “Emotion-Based Disorders in Childhood,” in *Understanding Emotions (3rd ed.)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Cole, P., Michel, M., & Teti, L. (1994). The development of emotion regulation and dysregulation: A clinical perspective. In N. Fox (Ed.), *The development of emotion regulation: Biological and behavioral considerations* (pp. 73-100). *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 59* (2-3, Serial No. 240).

Morris, A., Criss, M., Silk, J., & Houlberg, B. (2017). The impact of parenting on emotion regulation during childhood and adolescence. *Child Development Perspectives, 11(4)*, 233-238.

Rimm-Kaufman, S., Soland, J., Kuhfeld, M. (2025). Social and emotional competency development from fourth to 12th grade; Relations to parental education and culture. *American Psychologist, 80(3)*, 359-374.

In-class experiment on Emotion Knowledge Week 6

Week 6 The Self, Identity, and Personality – Oct. 14th

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 11, “The Self, Identity, and Personality” in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Wertz, J., Moffitt, T., Blangis, F., Ambler, A., et al. (2025). Parenting in childhood predicts personality in early adulthood: A longitudinal twin-differences study. *American Psychologist*, online publication.

Roberts, B., Mroczek, D. (2008). Personality trait change in adulthood. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 17(1)*, 31-35.

Movie - First half of *28-Up*

Semester Break – NO CLASS OCTOBER 21st**Week 7 Economic Trends and Life-Span Development Midterm Exam – Oct. 28th**

Last, B., Triplett, N., McGinty, E., Waller, C., et al. (2024). The social determinants of resilience: A conceptual framework to integrate psychological and policy research. *American Psychologist*, 79(8), 1049-1062.

Duncan, G., & Murnane, R. (2011). Introduction: The American dream, then and now. In G. Duncan, G., & R. Murnane (Eds.). *Whither opportunity: Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances* (pp. 3-23). New York & Chicago: Russell Sage & Spencer Foundations.

Arsenio, W. (2015). Education, class, and the divergence of children's life opportunities. *Human Development*, 58(3), 208-214.

Norton, M. & Ariely, D. (2011). Consensus on building a better America- one wealth quintile at a time. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6, 9-12.

Arsenio, W., & Willems, C. (2017). Adolescents' conceptions of national wealth distribution: Connections with perceived societal fairness and academic plans. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(3), 463-474.

Movie – Second half of *28-Up*

Week 8 Parent-Child Interactions and the Family – Nov. 4th

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 14, "Families, Relationships, & Parenting," in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Davis-Kean, P., Tighe, L., & Waters, N. (2021). The role of parent educational attainment in parenting and children's development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(2), 186-192.

Gershoff, E., et al. (2018). The strength of the causal evidence against physical punishment and its implications for parents, psychologist, and policy makers. *American Psychologist*, 73(5), 626-638.

Movie- First half of *56-Up*

Week 9 Social Relations – Peers & Friends – Nov. 11th

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 15, "Peers and the Sociocultural World," in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Wentzel, K. & Asher, S. (1995). The academic lives of neglected, rejected, popular, and controversial children. *Child Development*, 66, 754-763.

Rodkin, P., Espelage, D., & Hanish, L. (2015). A relational framework for understanding bullying. *American Psychologist*, 70, 311-321.

Arsenio, W., Cooperman, S., Lover, A. (2000). Affective predictors of preschoolers' aggression and peer status: Direct and indirect effects. *Development Psychology*, 36(4), 338-348.

Movie- Second half of *56-Up*

Week 10 Social Relations – School, Work, & Achievement – Nov. 18th _

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 16, “School, Work, & Achievement,” in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Gumora, G., & Arsenio, W. (2002). Emotionality, emotion regulation, and school performance in middle school children. *Journal of School Psychology, 40*, 395-413.

Good, C, Aronson, J., & Inzlicht, M. (2004). Improving adolescents’ standardized test performance: An intervention to reduce the effects of stereotype threat. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 24*, 645-662.

Schmader, T. (2010). Stereotype threat deconstructed. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 19(1)*, 14-18.

Week 11 Risk & Resilience: Developmental Psychopathology – Nov. 25th _

Werner, E. (1989, April). Children of the garden island. *Scientific American*, 106-111.

Masten, A., & Coatsworth, J. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist, 53*, 205-220.

Evans, G., & Kim, K. (2012). Childhood poverty and young adults’ allostatic load: The mediating role of childhood cumulative risk exposure. *Psychological Science, 23(9)*, 979-983.

Tough, P. (2011, March 21). The poverty clinic: Can a stressful childhood make you a sick adult? *The New Yorker, 21*, 25-32.

Week 12 Late Adulthood: Aging, Living, & Dying – 1/3 of Class Presentations – Dec. 2nd

Santrock, J. (2023). Chapter 17, “Death, Dying, & Grieving,” in *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Diamond, J. (2012). *The world until yesterday: What we can learn from traditional societies*. Chapter 6, The treatment of old people: Cherish, abandon, or kill? (pp. 210-242). New York: Viking.

Vaillant, G. (2002). *Aging Well*, Chapters 1 & 7. Little & Brown: New York.

Week 13 Remaining 2/3 of Class Presentations - Dec. 9th

MAKE-UP DATE (if needed) – Dec. 16th