

SOC 575 – SOCIOLOGY OF THE LIFE COURSE AND AGING

Fall 2015

TR 2:30-3:45

Ingraham 223

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Introduction

Studies of the life course emerged in response to the sociological need to understand how social change intersects with the aging process. In this course, we will not only examine how social pathways unfold, but will also consider how they are a product of a particular place and time. Social forces create opportunities and constraints, but individuals use choice to create unique biographies. We will put an emphasis on:

- (1) how individuals construct their life course in the context of social structure,
- (2) the importance of context and how individuals experience context differently as they age,
- (3) how individuals experience events differently depending on their place in the life course, and
- (4) how lives are linked together through social relationships

Department learning objectives

Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed the course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:

- *Conduct Research and Analyze Data*
- *Critically Evaluate Published Research*
- *Communicate Skillfully*
- *Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes*

Required Readings

There is one assigned book:

Alexander, Karl, Doris Entwisle, and Linda Olson. *The Long Shadow: Family Background, Disadvantaged Urban Youth, and the Transition to Adulthood*. Russell Sage Foundation.

All additional assigned journal articles and book chapters are available to you on the Learn@UW page for the class. You can choose whether you want to read the assigned readings as PDFs on your computer, or print out the PDFs. Regardless of how you choose to access the readings, you are expected to have completed the readings prior to the start of class.

Course Requirements

Midterm Exam – October 27	30%
Life Course Interview and Paper – December 3 Interview Plan – November 6	25%
Final Exam – December 18	35%
Online discussion posts	5%
Class Participation	5%

Life Course Interview, Interview Plan and Paper

Over the course of the semester, you will not only learn the theoretical concepts associated with the life course, but will also gain an introduction to the methods that are used to understand these processes. In particular, you will receive training about how to collect a life history narrative. We will spend considerable time in class discussing interview techniques, preparing a survey instrument, and reviewing your interview experiences.

After we have discussed the life course interview in class, you will break into groups of five or six to brainstorm your **interview plan**. Although all class members must collect their interview as individuals, groups should work together to plan the interviews and to provide support for each other. More details about the course paper will be distributed at this training session. For this class, **attendance is mandatory (November 5)**. Individual interview plans must be submitted to the Dropbox on Learn@UW by 5 p.m. on **November 6**.

All interviews must be completed by **November 17**, the day that they will be discussed in class, although I encourage you to conduct your paper as soon as possible in order to maximize the time available to write your paper. On that day, **attendance is mandatory**, and the groups will reconvene. You will be expected to give a brief summary of your interview and progress on your paper to your fellow group members. These group discussions will be an opportunity for you to begin connecting your data to the key concepts that we have covered in class, and should serve as a foundation for your course paper. For your course paper, you will summarize your respondent's narrative and interpret it using the concepts covered by the course. All papers must be written individually, but even the best papers are strengthened by input from other group members. Your paper is due in class on **December 3** and must be **8-10 pages long, double spaced, 12-pt font**. Late penalty: 10 points per day late.

Absences on either **November 5 or 17** that have not been approved in advance will result in the subtraction of 5% from your final paper grade for each absence (absence from both classes will result in the loss of a full letter grade). You will also be at a significant disadvantage in the preparation of your life course interview and paper.

Online Discussion Posts and Class Participation

All students are expected to have read the assigned readings prior to class. Class sessions will be a combination of lecture and discussion and all students should be prepared to participate. In order to encourage critical thinking about the assigned readings and to stimulate classroom

discussions, all students are expected to post a comment or question about the readings on the Learn@UW discussion boards **by 9 p.m. the evening before class.**

In order to receive full credit for the online discussion posts, students must post a question or a comment for **at least 20 class sessions.** Comments are expected to show thought and critical engagement with the readings and with your classmates' comments. Good posts might include any of the following:

- Questions that seek clarification about concepts and issues mentioned in the reading
- Critiques of the assigned readings
- Evaluation of how the readings connect to concepts that we have previously discussed in class
- Observations about anything that you found interesting, surprising, or important in the readings
- Discussion about current events, readings from other classes, or other thoughts that *relate to the topics we are discussing in class*
- Comments on your classmates' posts

You are encouraged to comment on your classmates' posts and I hope that the discussion boards will begin conversations that we can continue in the classroom. I know that many students are shy about participating in class discussion and hope that the online discussion posts will serve as a way for these students to demonstrate their engagement with the readings and class materials.

In addition to the discussion posts, you are expected to participate in the classroom. Ask questions. Participate in discussion. Don't read the newspaper or text your friends. I realize that some students prefer to take class notes on the computer, but be aware that I can tell when you are surfing the internet and will subtract participation points unless I am certain that your attention is fully focused on the class lecture and discussion. Above all, you are expected to attend every class session, unless you notify me by email or voice mail prior to the start of class; unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. Students with good attendance who pay attention can expect to receive a B for in class participation. In order to receive a higher score, I expect students participate in and initiate class discussion by responding to my questions and the comments of your classmates, as well as asking questions related to the material we are covering.

Exams

Your knowledge of the readings and the material covered in lecture will be assessed by two exams. Each exam will be a combination of short and long essays. In order to do well on the exams, you must be able to correctly describe and critically assess the empirical evidence presented in the readings. The final exam will focus on material covered after the midterm, but will draw on all concepts that have been covered over the entire semester.

Accommodations

Please send the instructor an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments and/or exams without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the McBurney Center. Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor by the end of the second week of class. We try to reserve rooms and proctors by the third week in class, so we must know of all accommodations by then.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's web page for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>

Academic honesty

As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University's rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the Office of the Dean of Students at <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>

According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:

- seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- assists other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University's standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students website. If you have questions about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, please ask your instructor or one of the TAs.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights

The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (Pamela.oliver@wisc.edu).

Schedule of Classes

9/3 **Introduction**

Dale Dannefer. 2011. Age, the Life Course, and the Sociological Imagination: Prospects for Theory. Pp. 3-16.

9/8 **Age, Cohort, and Generation**

Alwin and McCannon. 2005. "Generations, Cohorts, and Social Change." In *Handbook of the Life Course*. Pp. 23-49

Hout and Fischer. 2002. "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations." *American Sociological Review*. 67: 165-190.

9/10 **Age Norms**

Rich Settersten. 1997. "The salience of age in the life course." *Human Development*. 40(5): 257-281.

Riley, Matilda White. 1987. On the Significance of Age in Sociology. *American Sociological Review*. 52: 1-14.

9/15-9/17 **Lives in Context**

9/15 *The Great Depression*

Glen Elder. 1975. *Children of the Great Depression*. Chapters 1 and 10

9/17 *Cohorts and Turning Points*

Marina Adler. 2002. "German unification as a turning point in East German women's life course: Biographical changes in work and family roles." *Sex Roles* 47:83-98.

9/22-9/29 **Agency and Individual Action**

9/22 *Agency*

Victor Gecas. 2003. Self-Agency and the Life Course. *Handbook of the Life Course*. Pp. 369-388.

Ann Mische. 2009. Projects and Possibilities: Researching Futures in Action. *Sociological Forum*. 24(3): 694-704.

9/24

Exercising Agency

John Clausen. 1991. "Adolescent competence and the shaping of the life course." *American Journal of Sociology* 96:805-842.

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks. 2005. "When the Future Decides: Uncertainty and Intentional Action in Contemporary Cameroon." *Current Anthropology*. 46(3): 363-385.

9/29

Expectations and Aspirations

Jerry Jacobs, David Karen, and Katherine McClelland. 1991. The dynamics of young men's career aspirations. *Sociological Forum*. 6(4): 609-639.

Karl Alexander, Robert Bozick and Doris Entwisle. 2008. Warming up, cooling out, or holding steady? Persistence and change in educational expectations after high school. *Sociology of Education*. 81(4): 371-396.

10/1-10/6

Cumulative (Dis)Advantage

10/1

Thomas DiPrete and Gregory Eirich. 2006. Cumulative Advantage as a Mechanism for Inequality. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 32: 271-297.

10/6

Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., Thomas D. Cook, Jacquelynne Eccles, Glen H. Elder, Jr. and Arnold Sameroff. 2002. *Managing to Make It: Urban Families and Adolescent Success*. Ch8 and 9. Pages 171-213.

10/9

Family Disadvantage

Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson. "Ch. 3: Family Disadvantage." Pp. 32-49.

Sara McLanahan and Christine Percheski. 2008. Family structure and the reproduction of inequalities. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 34: 257-276.

10/13

Education

Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson. "Ch. 4: Neighborhood and School." Pp. 50-74

Ensminger, Margaret E. and Anita L. Slusarcick. 1992. Paths to High School Graduation or Dropout: A Longitudinal Study of a First-Grade Cohort. *Sociology of Education*. 65(2): 95-113.

10/15-10/20

Socioeconomic Destinations

- 10/15 *Pathways from School to Work*
Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson. "Ch. 6: Socioeconomic Destinations." Pp. 91-120

James Rosenbaum, Stefanie DeLuca, Shazia Miller and Kevin Roy. 1999. Pathways into Work: Short and Long-Term Effects of Personal and Institutional Ties. *Sociology of Education*. 72(3): 179-196.
- 10/20 *Careers and Destinations*

Sherry Ortner. 2003. *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58*. Ch. 8 "Money".

Phyllis Moen. 2005. "Beyond the Career Mystique: 'Time In,' 'Time Out,' and 'Second Acts.'" *Sociological Forum*. 20(2): 189-208
- 10/22 **Intergenerational Transmission of Social Status**

Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson, "Ch. 7: Origins to Destinations Across Generations" and "Ch. 8: Stratification by Race and Gender." Pp. 121-172.
- 10/27 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- 10/29 **Wisconsin Longitudinal Survey**
Guest Speaker: Pam Herd

Reading TBA
- 11/3 **Life Course Research Methods**

John A. Clausen. 1998. "Life Reviews and Life Stories." In: *Methods of Life Course Research*. Eds. Janet Z. Giele and Glen H. Elder, Jr. pp. 189-212.

Janet Z. Giele. 2009. "Life Stories to Understand Diversity." In: *The Craft of Life Course Research*. Eds. Glen H. Elder, Jr. and Janet Z. Giele. Pp. 236-257.
- 11/5 **Training for Life Course Interviews – ATTENDANCE MANDATORY**
- 11/6 **INTERVIEW PLAN DUE**
Submit by 5 pm to Dropbox
- 11/10 **(De)Standardization of the Life Course**

Michael Shanahan. 2000. "Pathways to Adulthood in Changing Societies: Variability and Mechanisms in Life Course Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology*. Pp. 667-692.

11/12 **Subjective Ideas of Adulthood**

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. 2000. Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties. *American Psychologist*. 55: 469-480.

Michael Massoglia and Christopher Uggen. 2010. "Subjective Feelings of Adulthood and Desistance from Crime." *American Journal of Sociology*.

11/17 **Discuss Qualitative Interviews – MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**

11/19-12/1 **Families and the Life Course**

11/19 *Marriage and Relationships*

Sharon Sassler. 2010. Partnering Across the Life Course: Sex, Relationships and Mate Selection. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 72(3): 557-575.

Susan Brown, Jennifer Roebuck Bulanda, and Gary Lee. 2012. Transitions into and out of cohabitation in later life. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 74(4): 774-793.

11/24 *Timing of Childbearing*

Frank Furstenburg. 2007. "From Teenage Mother to Midlife Matriarch." In: *Destinies of the Disadvantaged: The Politics of Teen Childbearing*. Pp. 24-52.

Amalia Miller. 2011. The effects of motherhood timing on career path. *Journal of Population Economics*. 24(3): 1071-1100.

11/26 NO CLASS – Happy Thanksgiving!

12/1 *Consequences of Divorce*

Laura Tach and Alicia Eads. 2014. Trends in the economic consequences of union dissolution. *Cornell University Working Paper*

Lorenz et al. 2006. Divorce and women's health in midlife. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 47(2): 111-125.

12/3 PAPER DUE

12/3-12/8 **Health and the Life Course**

12/3 *Health Over the Life Course*

Yoav Ben-Shlomo and Diana Kuh. 2002. A life course approach to chronic disease epidemiology: conceptual models, empirical challenges and interdisciplinary perspectives. *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 285-293.

Alberto Palloni. 2006. Reproducing Inequalities: Luck, Wallets, and the Enduring Effects of Childhood Health. *Demography*. 43(4): 587-615.

12/8 *Health and Socioeconomic Status*

Jennifer Frytack, Carolyn Harley and Michael Finch. 2003. Socioeconomic Status and Health over the Life Course: Capital as a Unifying Concept. Pp. 623-643. In *Handbook of the Life Course*.

Kim and Durden. 2007. Socio-economic status and age trajectories of health. *Social Science and Medicine*. 65(12): 2489-2502.

12/10 **Retirement**

Phyllis Moen. 2003. Midlife: Retirement. In *Handbook of the Life Course*. Pp.

Chenoa Flippen and Marta Tienda. 2000. Pathways to Retirement: Patterns of Labor Force Participation and Labor Market Exit Among the Pre-Retirement Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex. *Journal of Gerontology*. 55b(1): S14-S27.

12/15 **Inequality at older ages**

K.J. Ajrouch, T.C. Antonucci, and M.R. Janevic. 2001. Social networks among blacks and whites: The interaction between race and age. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*. 56B: S112-S118.

Stephen Crystal and Keith Waehrer. 1996. Later-life Economic Inequality in Longitudinal Perspective. *The Journals of Gerontology*. 51B(6): S307-S318

12/18 **FINAL EXAM**
5:05-7:05 p.m.
Location TBD