Looking Back on Growing Up (CAMHS-UA.144)
NYU CAMS Department

Instructor:
K. Ron-Li Liaw, MD
NYU Child Study Center
646-754-4877
Ron-Li.Liaw@nyumc.org

(office hours by appointment)

Teaching Assistant:
George Carpenter and Lindsey Howard
lbogutas@gmail.com

Course Overview:
This course provides an overview of child development with the goal of understanding the complexity of human growth, adaptation, and responses to adversity. To this aim, we will trace a variety of overlapping trajectories, including the development of cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and moral capacities. We will examine the strengths and limitations of a variety of developmental theories and place them within their historical context. Special emphasis will be placed upon understanding the dynamic interplay between biology and environment. Throughout the course, we will explore the important roles that families, peer groups, gender, sexuality, and culture play in shaping development throughout the lifecycle. The course will be comprised of two interactive lectures per week based upon introductory readings on child development. Students will also be assigned one film to view at home each week to illustrate the myriad of ways in which human beings evolve and adapt through life’s transitions and challenges.
Course Aims:
1) To deconstruct the process of growing up across multiple developmental trajectories and capacities.
2) To critically examine the strengths and limitations of existing developmental theories.
3) To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between one’s biology and environment.
4) To explore the myriad of ways that human beings grow and adapt throughout the lifecycle.

Textbook:


Readings will also be comprised of primary sources drawn from the developmental literature. Additional readings will be made available by the instructor. Please check NYU Classes for the most up-to-date schedule and reading assignments throughout the semester.

Films:

Each week a film will be assigned for home viewing. All films are on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center in the Bobst Library. Many of the films are available on Netflix and Amazon. Beginning on September 3rd, films will be screened at the Cantor Film Center (36 E. 8th Street) every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Examinations and Grades:

Course grades will be comprised of the following components:

- Midterm examination (20%) –
- Final examination (30%) –
- In-Class Participation (10%) – attendance and contribution to class discussions and related activities.
- Weekly response papers (40%) – 1 page, single-spaced reflections (assigned weekly, do 10 out of the 13) on the assigned readings and films. For each reflection, choose 3 developmental concepts presented in the readings and show how
they are illustrated in the film. Papers will be due by **11:59 p.m.** on the day that we have in-class film discussions (**Thursday**, leading into Friday).

**Date:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1, Part 1 (Jan 28 &amp; 30)</th>
<th><strong>Course Topic</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Introduction:</strong> This class will present an overview of the overlapping developmental trajectories unfolding throughout the life cycle. Students will be introduced to children’s emerging perceptual, language, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and moral capacities. The sequence of developmental theories and constructs presented will unfold according to their salience during different stages of the life cycle with the exception of the more psychoanalytically-oriented theories and social-cultural constructs, which will be presented in the second half of the course given their complexity and, in some cases, controversiality.</td>
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**Week 1, Part 2**

**The Big Picture:** This class will introduce students to the current themes and dilemmas within the field of child development. These themes include the origins of human behavior (biology & environment), the patterns of developmental change over time (continuity & discontinuity), and the forces that affect change (individual characteristics & contextual influences) across the life cycle. This class will also review basic principles of brain development, neurobiological structures and functioning.

**Reading:**
Arnett & Maynard, Pages 1-28

**Film:**
“Babies” (d. Thomas Balmes, 2010, France)

**Week 2**

**Genes x Environment Interactions:** These classes will provide students with an introduction to genetics and gene-environment interactions. We will discuss both Mendelian patterns of inheritance and the complex, multi-determined, multi-factorial patterns of inheritance seen in the development of temperament, personality, and psychiatric conditions.
**Reading:**
Arnett & Maynard, Pages 47-60
"The Interplay of Nature, Nurture, and Developmental Influences: The Challenge Ahead for Mental Health" by Michael Rutter, MD, FRS.

**Film:**
"What’s Eating Gilbert Grape” (d. Lasse Hallstrom, 1993, USA)

Week 3  **Pregnancy, Birth, and the First Year:** These classes will explore biological and socio-cultural influences during pregnancy, the birthing process, and dramatic growth during the first year of life, including key milestones in physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Dr. Lucy Hutner, Dr. Sameena Groves, and Dr. Sarah Trosper from the NYU Child Study Center Early Childhood Program will be guest lecturing this week.

**Reading:** Arnett & Maynard,
CH 2, Pages 61-82
CH 3
CH 4

**Film:**
"Juno” (d. Jason Reitman, 2007, USA)

Week 4  **Toddlerhood & Attachment:** Are these the years of the “terrible” or “terrific” twos? During this week, we will examine this period of expansive development across multiple realms with a special focus on attachment. We will examine the evolution, nature, and quality of attachments throughout the life cycle. We will also explore the origins of empathy and the birth of the self. Dr. Rebecca Weis, director of the Early Childhood Development Service at Bellevue Hospital, will guest lecture this week.

**Reading:**
Arnett & Maynard, CH 5

**Film:**
"Matilda” (d. Danny DeVito, 1996, USA)

Week 5  **Risk and Resilience:** These classes will explore the role of factors that aid in establishing risk and resilience in child development and their sustained impact on individual developmental trajectories during times of adversity and stress. We will review the work of Stephen Suomi, Michael Rutter, and Suniya Luthar to provide a deeper
understanding of the underlying processes at work in successful responses to life’s transitions and challenges.

**Reading:**

**Film:**
“The Beast of the Southern Wild” (d. Benh Zeitlin, 2012, USA)

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**Week 6  Cognitive Development:** Through the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, these classes will address how we make sense of the world and learn to think outside of ourselves. We will discuss how our understanding of cognitive maturity has changed drastically in recent years as we have learned more about the role of experience and have applied neuroimaging tools to observe brain maturation. Dr. Anthony Charuvastra, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the NYU Child Study Center, will guest lecture this week.

**Reading:**
Crain, Chapter 6 & 10

**Film:**
“The Squid and the Whale” (d. Noah Baumbach, 2005, USA) -- available as streaming video through Bobst

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**Week 7  Emotional Development & Midterm Exam:** In these classes, we will explore the evolutionary, neurobiological, psychological, and sociocultural influences in the development, awareness, and regulation of emotions through the lifecycle.
Week 9  **Drive Theory & Defense Mechanisms:** These classes will introduce students to Sigmund Freud’s Drive Theory and ideas about the structure of the mind. We will also study Anna Freud’s work elucidating the wide-range of defense mechanisms, which are unconscious psychological processes employed to help us maintain stability in the face of life’s stresses.

**Reading:**
TBD to be posted on NYU Classes prior to this week.

**Film:**
“Thumbsucker” (d. Mike Mills, 2005, USA)

Week 10  **Development through the Lifecycle:** These classes will provide an introduction to life span theories of development highlighting the unique contributions of Erik Erikson and his 8 stages of life. We will also explore George Valliant’s work on the Grant Study, which followed 268 promising undergraduates through four decades of their lives.

**Reading:**
"What Makes Us Happy" from the *Atlantic Monthly* (2009)

**Film:**
“On Golden Pond” (d. Mark Rydell, 1981, USA)

Week 11  **Adolescence & Peer Relations:** Adolescence is a time of dynamic growth and development as children transition towards adulthood. We will explore why during this physically healthiest period of the lifespan, there is a dramatic rise in morbidity and mortality. These classes will examine biological, psychological, and social changes during puberty which may lead to risk-taking behaviors. We will also discuss the natural evolution of peer relationships across the life cycle and their role in shaping adolescent identity.

**Reading:**
Arnett & Maynard, CH 8

**Film:**
“Raising Victor Vargas” (d. Peter Sollett, 2002, USA)

Week 12  **Young Adulthood & Intimacy:** In these classes, we will examine Erikson’s stage of young adulthood and the dialectic between intimacy vs. isolation in more
detail. We will explore the questions of 1) How does the identity established during adolescence affect expression of intimacy during young adulthood and 2) How does one find the right balance between one’s own identity needs and those of significant others or as Freud said, how “love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness.” Dr. Megan Poe, Dr. Raviv Berlin, Dr. Fran Francesco, and Dr. Jennifer Sweet will guest lecture this week.

**Readings:**
Arnett & Maynard, Pages 412-418

**Film:**
“The Spectacular Now” (d. James Ponsoldt, 2013, USA)

Week 13 **Family Systems:** The family is both the earliest and the most sustained source of social contact for the child and thus one of the most powerful influences in development. These classes will explore what a family is and variations seen in family composition, organization, and functioning. These classes will also provide an introduction to Salvador Minuchin’s structural family therapy and Murray Bowen’s systems theory of the family. Andrew Roffman, Assistant Director of the Family Studies Program at the NYU Child Study Center, will guest lecture.

**Reading:**
Arnett & Maynard, Pages 448-455

**Film:**
“The Kids Are All Right” (d. Lisa Cholodenko, 2010, USA)

Week 14 **Gender & Sexuality & BAKE OFF:** These classes will review current theories and debates regarding the development of gender and sexual identity. We will begin with an exploration of the definitions of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and identity. We will then explore gender differences throughout development and the role of biological, cognitive, and environmental factors in influencing the development gender and sexual identity.
Reading:

Film:
“Tomboy” (d. Céline Sciamma, 2011, France)

*BAKE OFF – Thursday -- May 1, 2014*

Week 15 Cultural Influences & Wrap-up: These classes will explore the role of culture in understanding differences and commonalities in child development across various cultural groups. These classes will explore definitions of culture and the variations seen in expectations, values, norms, family structure, peer relationships, and gender roles across different cultural groups. In these final classes, we will also discuss how the many developmental theories and concepts learned provide multiple lenses through which to understand human beings’ growth, adaptation, and responses to adversity throughout the life cycle. Special guests to be announced in class for this week.

Reading:
"Development as Transformation of Participation in Cultural Activities" in Cultural Nature of Human Development by Barbara Rogoff.

Film:
“Orange is the New Black” (creator Jenji Kohan, 2013, USA)

Week 16