

FALL 2006

Dr. Lois West

Office: DM 340—hours Mon/Wed: 8:30-9:30 am

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SYLLABUS for SYP 3750:

Sociology of the Life Course

Description: Sociologists term the different stages of life the “life course.” This class introduces you to the study of these stages from birth to death within social, cultural, and historical contexts from a sociological perspective. Stages can be analyzed as social and historical processes that define individuals and groups differently over time and place, and change over individual lifetimes and histories. We will also consider the impact of the sociological labeling of generational cohorts on social change in the life course.

Required Readings: The following texts can be purchased at the university bookstore, local book stores or on-line:

John Clausen, *The Life Course: A Sociological Perspective*, Prentice Hall 1986.

Meredith Small, *Our Babies, Ourselves*, Anchor Books 1998.

Patricia and Peter Adler, *Peer Power*, Rutgers University Press 1998.

Lillian Rubin, *Families on the Fault Line*, Harper 1995.

Jack Kamerman, *Death in the Midst of Life*, Prentice Hall 1988

Requirements: Successful completion of the following assignments done on time (assignments turned in late will not be accepted; no make-ups):

1. In class oral presentations of the required readings (2 worth 5 points each, 10 points total) NOTE: This assignment requires regular attendance to the course since the assigned reading date may not be the date of presentation!
2. Essay midterm exam (3 questions worth ten points each, 30 points)
3. A qualitative methods research project (30 points)—interviews with transcripts or life history
4. Essay final exam (3 questions worth ten points each, 30 points)

Final points add up to 100 possible (10+30+30+30=100)

NOTE: I do not accept emailed assignments. You must turn in a hard copy in class or in my box in the sociology department on the due date.

Course Outline

8/28: Introduction to the sociology of the life course.

Required Reading (henceforth RR): John Clausen, *The Life Course*, Chapter 1.

8/30: Theories and themes: Life stages and generations.

RR: Clausen, Chapter 2.

9/4—Labor Day--No Class

9/6-9/20: Infancy and early childhood

RR: Clausen, Chapter 3, Small. Our Babies Ourselves ALL.

9/25: Youth

RR: Clausen, Chapters 4-5. 2/1: Your research project topic DUE.

Recommended reading: Paula S. Fass and Mary Ann Mason, *Childhood in America* (NYU Press 2000) ; Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (Vintage 1962)

9/27-10/16: Peer Power

RR: Adlers, Peer Power ALL.

Recommended: Patricia Hersh, *A Tribe Apart* (Ballantine 1998); Barrie Thorne, *Gender Play*

10/18: Lecture on youth recreation: Dr. West's research on a role-playing theme park.

10/23: MIDTERM EXAM

10/25: Adulthood: Work and Occupation

RR: Clausen Chapter 6. Your research project topic/bibliography DUE.

10/30-11/13: Adulthood: Marriage/Relationships, Family

RR: Clausen Chapter 7; Rubin, *Families on the Fault Line* ALL.

Recommended: Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History* (Viking 2005) and her previous books on family: *The Way We Never Were*; *The Way We Really Are*.

11/15-11/27: Aging and Death. Lecture and Video

RR: Clausen Chapters 8 and 9; Kamerman, *Death in the Midst of Life* ALL.

11/29: Generations and Cohorts: late 20th century labeling—the Greatest Generation (see Tom Brokaw) to the Baby Boomers to GenX to Millennials.

Recommended: Great Depression children—John Clausen, *American Lives* (1993); Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Generations, 13th Gen, Millennials Rising*; Lancaster and Stillman *When Generations Collide* (traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation Xers, millennials 2002)

12/4-12/6: Your research presentations DUE.

12/11: FINAL EXAM (30 points)

