

PSYCHOLOGY 3120 - PSYCHOLOGY OF AGING

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Fall, 1996

TTH 1:40 - 2:55

Room E790

Text: Adult Development and Aging (2nd Ed.), Schulz & Ewen

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the changes that occur in our behaviour in the adult years. This course builds upon the understanding of the developmental process gained in Psychology 3110. The developmental perspective explores the adult years in two broad contexts: the first half of the course taught by Dr. Mather emphasizes the Experimental Psychology approach and the second half taught by Dr. Arms explores the Social Psychology of aging. The course is designed to enhance your understanding of various topics central to adult development and to encourage you to apply your learning in everyday life situations. Six general topic areas (Methodology; Physiology; Learning, memory and cognition; Personality/Interpersonal relationships; Work and stress; Psychopathology and death) will be discussed during the semester. As shown in the class schedule on the following page, each topic will be covered in a two week (four class) cycle. In the first class of each of the six cycles, the foundations of the area will be presented in lecture format by the professor. In the second class, student groups will review and evaluate an assigned research paper and integrate it with relevant information in the textbook. In the third class, in the context of a Royal Commission on Aging, student groups will present information and positions on topical, age-related issues. The fourth class in each cycle will be devoted to a practical project which requires application of theoretical work to real-life situations.

GRADING IN THE COURSE

Your grade will be based 30% on the six research paper assignments, 20% on the Royal Commission presentations and 50% on the six practical projects. In order to promote discussion of theory and to enhance sharing of practical information, much of your work throughout the semester will be completed in preassigned small groups. It is understood that each member does not contribute equally to the work of any group. There must be a way to fairly factor in your contribution into your final grade. This will be achieved by two methods. The first is through your presence during group work in the classroom. You will only receive a grade for the paper evaluations if you are in class for the discussion. If you were not able to attend class for that period due to health problems or some other reasonable excuse, you may bring a note to the next class and your mark will be averaged without taking that class into consideration. The second measure of your contribution is through evaluation of input of each member, including yourself, to the group's productivity. If everyone contributed equally in your estimation, each group member would be rated at 100%. If you perceive an unequal contribution, ratings may range from a low of 75% to a high of 125%. These two measures (sign-in and group evaluation) should permit you to receive equitable credit for the relative contributions you have made to the total group effort. To balance group work with individual effort, 20% of your grade will be allocated to your performance in oral presentation during the mock Royal Commission class meetings. The final grade ranges are as follows:

92 and above = A+
88-91.5 = A
85-87.5 = A-
82-84.5 = B+
78-81.5 = B
75-77.5 = B-
72-74.5 = C+

63-71.5 = C
60-62.5 = C-
57-59.5 = D+
53-56.5 = D
50-52.5 = D-
Below 49.5 = F

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. WORK DONE IN SMALL GROUPS

Throughout the semester you will be working in preassigned small groups on the six research paper analyses and the six practical projects. The small group format is followed to encourage discussion of course material and to enhance the sharing of practical information. Remember, the group can learn more together than each of you separately, but you must make it work. This type of group experience may be new to you so we have included some Tips for Improving the Effectiveness of Groups below.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUPS

Before you begin discussions, take a few minutes to organize your group. First, each person should write down every group members' name and phone number. You must decide whether you want a leader and, if so, who that person will be. Also, you must develop a mechanism to ensure that someone is taking notes during your in-class discussions and that a legible copy of your research paper evaluation is submitted at the end of each designated class. The practical projects will involve some meetings outside of class time as well as extra reading to adequately complete the assignments. Someone must take responsibility for organizing the project paper and typing the final copy. These are YOUR decisions; make them NOW before you start the assignments and things get hectic. During your group's discussions, each member should share responsibility for monitoring oneself on the following group process guidelines:

- Do NOT interrupt. Interruption effectively removes the right to speak from another person. It is a form of domination.
- Monitor the length of time you speak and the amount you contribute. Although all your contributions to the group are important, they should not be at the expense of others in the group who are willing to participate. Consuming an overabundance of the action reinforces the silence of other group members.
- Monitor the number of times you speak. Recent contributors should wait and check if others, who have not had opportunities to participate would like to do or say something.
- Stick to the topic. Although it is common for new ideas and topics to emerge in the context of a group discussion, these topics should be saved for a future time; you must remember to get on with the work.
- Be reliable. Your other group members are counting on you to carry out the tasks assigned to you.
- Communicate. Keep in touch about shared assignments. This may involve extra time and effort outside of class time.

A. PAPER EVALUATIONS (30% of final grade) One research paper will be evaluated during each of the six designated classes. The evaluations involve three aspects: a summary of what the paper said, a

critical evaluation of what the paper accomplished, and linkage to and importance of the paper to the relevant topic area. In order to complete this in-class exercise, each group will hand in a written summary (about three pages) of the group's conclusions at the end of the class. Each of these reports will be worth 5% of your final grade. The report will be marked on a six point scale with 1/3 of the marks assigned to each of the three parts of the report. When the report is handed in, each group member must sign their name at the bottom of the last page to receive credit for participation in this in-class activity. Questions to Ask When Evaluating a Research Paper and A Practical and Simplistic Guide to Statistical Analyses are included below.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN EVALUATING A RESEARCH PAPER

- Problem:
 - What is the problem?
 - What is its theoretical basis?
 - What are its context, assumptions, hypotheses?
 - What variables are tested - why?
- Design:
 - What is the design; is it appropriate?
 - Is it the best, well presented and efficient?
 - Are their statistical methods preplanned, appropriate?
 - How are variables manipulated - are criteria set for contrast?
- Sampling:
 - Who are the subjects - why?
 - Is n large enough?
 - Sampling method? or evaluation, care, replacement of animals.
 - Who were the controls?
 - Placebo?
 - Double blind?
 - Any extras needed?
- Measurement:
 - Normative references, accurate collection, objective analyses, cross-observer reliability, calibration of instruments, reliable or valid?
 - Could someone else repeat it given these?!!!
- Data:
 - Clear and appropriate and reliable analyses?
- Results:
 - Can you verify the author's statements?
 - Tables and graphs clear - essentials described?
 - Results appropriate, predictive, explanatory?
- Conclusions:
 - Are they supported by the data?
 - Are limitations, unexpected results, reservations or artifacts discussed?
 - Are the results reflected onto other research; do they offer important suggestions for future practice or theory?

B. PRACTICAL PROJECTS (50% of final grade) At the end of each two-week cycle, the fourth class will be set aside for small group work on a practical project that will use the theoretical information you

have learned in the previous three classes. These projects focus upon individual problems of aging and their solutions. Descriptions of the six projects are given below. Each project will be worth 8.3% of your final grade and will receive a maximum of ten marks. The projects may ask you to use various reporting techniques and will require you to do some work outside of class. Nevertheless, it is important that you be in class for this work period, so 1/10 of your mark on each project will be earned through class attendance. The project will be handed in at the next class period (the class always falls on a Thursday, so you have until the next Tuesday to complete the work).

PRACTICAL PROJECT TOPICS

- 1. Risk Counseling: September 19
 - Estrogen replacement therapy (ERT) is now routinely recommended for women after 50 years of age who are entering menopause. Like all drug regimens, however, it has its risks (higher rate of breast and uterine cancer), its benefits (lower risk of stroke and hip fracture) and problems (side effects, adherence). Assessment of risk is difficult for individual women to make, and counseling them in this choice is also difficult. The Regional Health Board considers this type of counseling to be too specialized to be in the hands of individual doctors and has asked Social Services to provide some advisory information. Your boss in Social Services has asked you to specify, not the advice itself, but the outline of the kinds of information needed to make a decision, the level of decision-making capabilities and risk assessment abilities we can expect of middle-aged women, the role of physicians in this process and the ethical concerns that must be addressed when such advice is proffered. You will write this as a memo to your boss, including a couple of general references if you feel they will be useful to her and a short (all in one page) outline of the information that will be provided; it should not be over five pages as memos obey the KISS (keep it simple, stupid) rule.

- 2. Physical Capacity and Housing: October 3
 - Your grandparents, both aged 72, have lived for much of their lives in a two-story, full-basement, three bedroom house in south Lethbridge. Dearly as they love the house, it is getting a bit beyond them: it's not that they are ill but it and its yard are a lot of work. So they have decided to look for an alternative in housing. Your mother and a local real estate agent are taking them around to see some of the possibilities. But your mother remembers that you are taking a class on Human Aging and decides that they could use your expertise, too. Grandfather is a bit hard of hearing and you don't want to end up shouting at him in the back of the real estate agent's car, so you decide to prepare a five-page report on what the problems are and what they should be looking for. This is your assignment--prepare a paper, presuming that you will give a copy to each of the three people concerned before you start looking. Note that this assignment is not to be written in the scholarly tone that you would generally use for a university paper. You want these normal people to read and understand it, so it must be straightforward and clear, maybe even interesting. If you use references, put them on a 6th page; the five pages should be aimed not at me but at these hypothetical relatives.

- 3. Enhancing Memory: October 17
 - You have reached the ripe old age of 84 with only a minor touch of arthritis. Your spouse died five years ago. You have been coping well in your two-bedroom apartment, seeing your family quite regularly and maintaining an active membership in the Senior Center. You have a daughter in Calgary and a son in Coalhurst, each with their own family, and a son who never married lives in New York. One of your grandchildren is attending the U. of L. and is living in the dorms. She comes to visit you often. In the last six months or so, you've noticed that your memory, which you've prided yourself on, is not as good as it was.

During your six-month checkup, you mention this to your doctor who gives you some extra tests. He finds that you are in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. He points out to you that the older you are when you get it, the more slowly the disease will progress. He doesn't foresee any major problems with your memory for another five years. But you realize that you ARE becoming more forgetful. So, since you can still think and plan clearly, you decide to plan tricks, strategies and techniques to help you deal with this forgetfulness. These strategies can be intellectual, practical and social (recruitment of assistance from others), but you do not want to depend too much on other people. Your presentation will outline the strategies that you plan to use to cope with your declining memory, but as you work on it, you can see that it could be useful for your friends, too. For this presentation, you may use any format you judge to be effective (e.g., poster, diary, video, etc).

- 4. Successful Marriage: October 31
 - You and your spouse are in your mid-forties and your eldest offspring will be married in the near future. You are concerned about the high rate of divorce in Canadian marriages and you feel that it is your parental responsibility to give the engaged couple some advice on how to have a happy and lasting marriage. Your five page paper should be written as a letter to the couple which contains the advice you would give to increase their chances for a successful marriage.

- 5. Retirement Planning: November 14
 - Retirement has become an integral part of Canadian society and represents a stage of life most will experience. Some people will spend a quarter or more of their adult lives in retirement. You are the coordinator of an adult education program for AGT. You have been given the job of developing a pre-retirement workshop to better prepare middle-aged employees to embark on a successful retirement. Your group is an advisory committee struck for the purpose of providing input into the development of this program. You are preparing a workshop proposal to be submitted to AGT's Director of Personnel. Describe the information you would present in your workshop with a rationale to explain why it should be included.

- 6. Death and Dying: November 28
 - The very last paragraph in your text states: "The process of dying is extremely important and need not be entirely negative. There are various ways of dying, and the patient and family who rise to the challenge can make something positive out of an otherwise calamitous event. Because of the increased prevalence of chronic terminal illnesses, this is a challenge that awaits many of us in the future."
 - Discuss the variables that your group feels are important aspects of meeting the challenge of dying well.

II. WORK DONE INDIVIDUALLY

ROYAL COMMISSION ON AGING IN CANADA (20% of final grade)

In the third class of each of the six cycles, the class will convene as if a Royal Commission is meeting. A Royal Commission is convened to gather information on a problem area from a broad perspective across different groups in Canadian society. It conducts formal hearings to which representatives of groups as well as individuals are invited to make presentations. These short informed opinions will be presented around selected topics relevant to aging as described on pages 12 and 13. The Commissioners will hear them and the audience will add comments when appropriate. At the end of the semester, the Commission will present to the class a set of final reports of written and verbal

recommendations. It is suggested that Commissioners get an idea of format by looking over the sample Royal Commission Report (on reserve in library).

Student Roles: Every student will be required to make some report. There will be six Commissioners who will be given the opportunity to volunteer in the first class. They will appoint a Chair of the Commission. The Commission will hear briefs from the class members, evaluate the findings and present recommendations to the class at the end of the semester. Class members will be divided into six groups (approximately five per group). Each member of a given group will present on one of the topics on its designated day.

Presentations: Each presenter from the group must choose a subject and a point of view relevant to the day's topic area. They may choose to represent their own view or to be seen as representing a specific group such as the Alzheimer Society, Housewife's Association, Small Business Consortium, etc. The second will be encouraged, but presenters then must then fairly express the opinions of the group they represent. The group of presenters will meet with the professor at least once to plan the brief and to assure wide representation of the issues. A presenter will state his or her point of view and evidence in no more than ten minutes. Presentations are expected to be done in a thoughtful manner; written references will be appreciated but presenters should use material from Schulz and Ewen as a foundation when possible. Handouts, demonstrations and overheads may be used. Following each presentation, the Commissioners may ask questions. After the presentation of the entire brief, class members may ask questions and state their opinions on the topic at hand. They must state their name, since this is a formal proceeding, and the professor will note such participation and take it into consideration when assigning the final grade. If you have a question and the Commission runs out of time, you may submit it in writing. At the end of this class, each presenter will submit to the Commission and the professor a one-page summary of his or her presentation.

Each of the six Commissioners will be responsible for one topic area and will present an overview and recommendations in the final Commission report. The Chair of the Commission, with the assistance and advice of the professor, will be in charge of the classroom during these proceedings. He or she will call presenters, maintain discipline and field questions.

Summary: At the end of the semester, the Commission will present its findings to the class and the professors (they will meet with the professors to plan this). This will take the same form as a real-life Royal Commission Report although not as lengthy. The Commission will make recommendations on the specific topic areas and perhaps more generally. The Report will be presented verbally in no more than 45 minutes and in a written summary of no more than twelve pages. The class will act as an audience comprised of individual citizens, members of the media, and representatives of special interest groups. They may question the Commission members about any aspect of the report or its recommendations (in other words, get their own back!). The marks for this component of the course will be based on the professors' assessment of each class member's formal presentation and informal participation.

IV. FAMILY STRUCTURE: October 29

- As a social institution, the family reflects broad-scale changes that have transformed society as a whole. Trends include increasing numbers of never-marrieds, reduced family size, two working parents, single parent families, blended families, dissolution of the extended family and increasing life expectancy. This leaves us with a picture of families struggling with changes that are without historical precedent and whose implications are not completely clear. Adjustment to these changes can often be difficult and stressful. Discuss the changing nature and role of the family and suggest strategies that might be effective in enhancing societal adjustment to these changes.

V. OLD AGE: November 12

- With our increased longevity, there will be many more healthy individuals in the post-retirement

age range. The issue of the increasing proportion of older people in the North American population typically pits the old against the young. The Science Council of Canada states that an elderly population of between 15% and 18% presents a significant social burden. "Statistics Canada reports that old age creates problems that are the nation's concern." These sources predict that the elderly will have a high level of dependency and that the young will have to support them. Can we afford to warehouse the elderly into uselessness? Should we build retirement homes and communities or do older individuals benefit from living in the broader community? If we can't afford to pay everyone a pension, should some kind of unpaid work be required such as helping other seniors or contributing to child care before healthy seniors receive their pensions? How do we assure both affordable and equitable medical care for the elderly? Describe the potential positive and negative consequences of the increasing proportion of elderly in the Canadian population. Suggest strategies that might be developed to ensure that there will be a minimum of conflict between the old and young.

VI. AGE-RELATED STEREOTYPES: November 26

- Older adults are often thought to be incompetent, decrepit and asexual. These myths of aging lead to negative stereotypes which may result in ageism, a form of discrimination against older adults simply because of their age. Ageism comes in many forms. It may be as blatant as believing old people are senile and incapable of making decisions about their lives. Or it may be as subtle as dismissing an older person's physical complaints with the statement, "What do you expect for someone your age?" Ageism is deeply engrained in our society and often constricts the alternatives available to the elderly in all aspects of living. But the elderly are not the only age which suffers from stereotyping. Age-related stereotyping is applied to all age groups with varying social consequences. Discuss the factors that contribute to the development and perpetuation of age-related stereotypes. Suggest strategies that might be useful in decreasing the influence of these misattributions.

PSYCHOLOGY 3120 CLASS SCHEDULE

Dr. Mather teaches first half of the course:

- September 5: Organizational Session (Royal Commission group on Demographics meet with Dr. Mather)
- September 10: Lecture-Methodology Read Chapters 1 & 2
- September 12: Paper: Stewart et al.
- September 17: Royal Commission [Demographics and the Work Force]
- September 19: Practical project: Risk counseling (Royal Commission group on Driving meet with Dr. Mather)
- September 24: Lecture-Physiology Read Chapters 3 & 4
- September 26: Paper: Czaja et al.
- October 1: Royal Commission [Driving]
- October 3: Practical project: Physical capacity and housing (Royal Commission group on Health Maintenance meet with Dr. Mather)
- October 8: Lecture-Learning, memory and cognition
- October 10: Paper: Kemper Read Chapters 5 (360-369) & 6
- October 15: Royal Commission [Health Maintenance]
- October 17: Practical project: Enhancing memory

Dr. Arms begins second half of course: (Royal Commission group on Family Structure meet with Dr. Arms)

- October 22: Lecture-Personality/Interpersonal relationships

- October 24: Paper: Solomon & Marx Read Chapters 7 & 8
 - October 29: Royal Commission [Family Structure]
 - October 31: Practical project: Successful marriage (Royal Commission group on Old Age meet with Dr. Arms)
 - November 5: Lecture-Work and stress
 - November 7: Paper: Koenig et al. Read Chapters 9 & 10
 - November 12: Royal Commission [Old Age]
 - November 14: Practical project: Retirement planning (Royal Commission group on Age-related Stereotypes meet with Dr. Arms)
 - November 19: Lecture-Psychopathology and death
 - November 21: Paper: Hanser & Thompson Read Chapters 11 (ex- cluding pp. 360-370) & 12
 - November 26: Royal Commission [Age-related Stereotypes]
 - November 28 : Practical project: Death and Dying
 - December 3: Royal Commission Final Report
 - December 5: Class summation and evaluation
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