

**SYLLABUS: PSYCHOLOGY 37 (formerly 101B)**  
**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND AGING**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Brandeis University**  
**Fall Semester 2007**

Course Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:40-5:00pm  
Course Location: Lown 2

Professor Derek M. Isaacowitz  
Office: Brown 103  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 9-11am, and by appointment  
Office Phone: 6-3308  
Email: dmi@brandeis.edu

TA: Mary Jo Larcom  
Office: Volen 304  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm, and by appointment  
Office Phone: 6-3240  
Email: mjlarcom@brandeis.edu

Required Textbooks (on sale at the Campus Bookstore):

Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Adult Development and Aging: Biopsychosocial Perspectives (2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

M. Powell Lawton & Timothy A. Salthouse (Eds.), Essential Papers on the Psychology of Aging.

Who is old? What psychological processes change after an individual reaches her biological maturation, and which do not? This course focuses on changes and continuities in psychological development after adolescence. We will consider both theory and research concerning adult development and aging in the physical, cognitive, and socioemotional domains. We will also evaluate what it means to age unsuccessfully as well as how individuals may age successfully, from psychological perspectives. Thus, we will consider outcomes ranging from optimal aging, to average or usual aging, to diseased aging. The class will combine lectures and discussions with projects that students will present during course meetings.

## Course Schedule and Readings

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b> (Text = Whitbourne; Papers = Essential Papers)
9/5	Intro to class	
9/10	Life-span development: Theory	Text Ch. 1, Paper 5
9/12	Methods	Text Ch. 3, Paper 1
9/17	Stage Theories: Erikson, Levinson, Vaillant	Text pp. 27-33, 43-56, 241-248
9/19	Young Adulthood and work	Text Ch. 10
9/24 (9/26 is a Wed that is a Brandeis Thurs)	Marriage and Family I	Start Text Ch. 9
10/1	Marriage and Family II	Finish Text Ch. 9
10/3	Midlife I: Time of crisis	Text pp. 248-270
10/8	Midlife II: MIDMAC Studies	Paper 28
10/10	Menopause and HRT	
10/15	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
10/17	Biological Aging	Text pp. 33-43
10/22	Physical Aging and Health	Text Ch. 4, 5
10/24	Interview presentations	<b>Project #1 Due</b>
10/29	Cognitive Aging I	Text Ch. 6, 7
10/31	Cognitive Aging II	Papers 12, 13, 20, 34
11/5	Socioemotional Aging I	Papers 23, 24
11/7	Socioemotional Aging II	Papers 25, 30
11/12	Psychopathology in Old Age I: Depression and Anxiety	Text Ch. 11
11/14	Psychopathology in Old Age II: Dementia	Text Ch. 12, Paper 33
11/19(no class Wed 11/21)	FILM: Number Our Days, and Discussion	
11/26	Successful Aging I	Text Ch. 13, 14 Paper 27
11/28	Successful Aging II	
12/3	Representations of Aging Presentations	<b>Project #2 Due</b>
12/5	Wrap-Up, Lessons	

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attendance at class meetings, participation in discussions, presentation in class on one of the 2 written assignments, and at least one visit to the professor's office hours. Yes, this is mandatory. If you cannot make it to my office hours, schedule another time with me. But, one way or another, you need to meet with me individually at least once before the end of classes.
2. Completing reading before the class for which it has been assigned.
3. Midterm and final exams
4. Two written assignments, described below.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

### Project #1: Interview. **Due in class on October 24th**

In class, you will pick a decade out of a hat. You will be assigned to the 40s, 50s, 60s, or 70s. It will be your responsibility, for the first project, to conduct a brief interview with an individual currently in that decade of life. This person cannot be a relative of yours. In your interview, ask the individual about their current life, and what they see as the continuities and changes in the time since young adulthood. Make sure to ask about multiple domains of functioning: physical health, cognitive functioning, self and personality, emotion and affect, social relationships, work and leisure and activities. Also, when you have finished asking all the "topic" questions that you have prepared, give the interviewee a chance to add anything they feel might have been left out that would be important for you getting to really "understand" their current lives.

During the interview, you should take copious notes, or ask the interviewee if they would allow you to audiotape the interview to help you organize the interview for your write-up.

Then, write up a report of the interview in *5 or less double-spaced pages*. Your write-up should have two primary goals:

First, you should try to present a snapshot of the person's life, so that the reader feels as though they have met the individual.

Second, you should try to make links between particulars of the person's life and the concepts, themes, theories, and research we are discussing in the course. Obviously, you will be limited by the material we have covered up until that point, but do your best to connect the individual to bigger themes from the course. For example, does your interviewee's experience suggest stages of development, or do stages seem inappropriate in their case?

Project #2: Representation of old age in entertainment...is it accurate? **Due in class on December 3rd**

Choose a TV show or a movie in which older people play a prominent role. For example, *Golden Girls* or *Grumpy Old Men*. Watch it (at least 2 episodes if it is a TV show), and note how old age is represented. Then, in a written report of *up to 5 double-spaced pages*, discuss these representations, and how accurate they are based on what you have learned in this course about adulthood and old age. In your write-up, you should provide examples of how the show/movie represents older adults, and clearly examine whether or not these representations match up with research on the psychological lives of older individuals. Finally, give the show or movie an accuracy score, out of 100 possible points (100 points would mean entirely accurate).

## **EXAMS**

There will be an in-class midterm exam and a final exam during finals period. Both exams will be closed-book exams. Each exam will include short answer identifications and essays. There will not be any multiple-choice questions. The midterm exam will cover all material up to the exam; the final exam will focus on material presented after the midterm, but will expect you to know important topics from before the midterm (for example, you will still need to know methodology and important theories on the final, even though we will discuss them at the beginning of the semester).

## **GRADING**

Your final grade in the course will be made up of the following components:

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Project 1: 20%

Project 2: 20%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

After averaging the above grades, your final grade in the course will be determined based on the following distribution (based on percentage of points possible; +'s and -'s will be determined by splitting each range into thirds):

90 – 100%: A

80 – 89%: B

65 – 79%: C

50 – 64%: D

49% or below: E

## **FURTHER ADMINISTRATIVE STUFF**

### Make-Up Exams

The only acceptable reasons to miss an exam are: a personal emergency (death of a close family member, etc) or a documented physical illness (with a doctor's note). You will need to confer with the professor or a teaching assistant **BEFORE** the exam to discuss and schedule the make-up exam. No make-ups will be given for simply missing an exam. If you miss an exam without appropriate documentation, you will receive a score of "0" for that exam.

### Late work and Extensions

Written work submitted late will be penalized by lowering the grade one half-grade for each late day. If you have some extenuating circumstances that would make it impossible for you to hand in an assignment on time, please talk to the professor or a TA **BEFORE THE DUE DATE** to see if we can arrange a reasonable extension plan.

### Students with Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and if you wish to request a reasonable accommodation for this class, please see the professor immediately. Please keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

### Academic Honesty (brought to you by the SDJE)

Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person – be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner – without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student.

Violation of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of *Rights and Responsibilities*, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

### Special Notice for Graduate Students

Graduate students enrolled in this course will be expected to complete all the requirements enumerated in this syllabus. However, the instructor will grade all work by graduate students.