

Case Western Reserve University  
Department of Sociology  
SOC 361/ 461  
THE LIFE COURSE  
Spring 2008  
2-18-08

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**Office Hours:** See BlackBoard (Instructor Info)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The aim of this course is to scrutinize major sociological approaches to the study of the human life course. Several distinct, albeit related, classes of phenomena have been studied in the life course area: individual outcomes; population-level patterns, and symbolic outcomes. This course will review critically the basic questions, the basic assumptions, and exemplars of work dealing with each of these types of life-course phenomena. We will pay particular attention to the kinds of explanations proposed for these phenomena, and the role of theory in shaping our practical as well as intellectual understanding of these phenomena. Theoretical approaches reviewed will include age stratification, the life course approach, life-span psychology, and constructivist and critical approaches to the life course, which will explore the role of institutional structures and micro-social processes in shaping and defining the life course. Each student will engage in an exploratory research project, conducting life history interviews with at least two people.

**REQUIRED BOOKS:**

**Berger, Peter & Thomas Luckmann** (1967). *The social construction of reality*. New York: Anchor.  
**Bing, Leon** (1991). *Do or die*. New York: Harper Perennial.  
**Holstein, James and Jaber Gubrium** (2000). *Constructing the life course*. Dix Hills, NY: General Hall.  
**Kanter, Rosabeth** (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic.  
**Schor, Juliet** (2004). *Born to buy: The commercialized child and the new consumer culture*. New York: Scribner.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

**Chudacoff, Howard** (1989). *How old are you? Age consciousness in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton.  
**Mead, Margaret** (1963). *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*.

**REQUIRED ARTICLES:** Will be posted on BlackBoard (in the following BB)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Life history interviews: The life history project requires interviewing two respondents of approximately the same age, and then prepare a report that links your interview findings to one or more social science concepts presented in the course, or possibly in other coursework. It is recommended that respondents be age 30 or older, and of the same gender. The report will be presented in class and submitted as a finished paper. (25 points)
2. A class presentation (10 minutes) of your life history interviews. Presentations will take place during the last two weeks of class. (15 points)
3. A take-home essay mid-term exam (due week of February 29). (25 points)
4. A final paper on a topic of your own choosing, to be defined in consultation with the instructor. For graduate students, this paper must provide a critical discussion of theory and methods of at least three research articles. Due date TBA (finals week). (35 points)  
\*Undergrad students can achieve 100p max

**Graduate Students Only:**

5. In addition to the above requirements, each graduate student will choose one reading or set of readings the syllabus to provide the basis for a class presentation (10-20 minutes). Grad students must sign up for the material they will present by the 4<sup>th</sup> week of class. This presentation should not be a summary of the material. Rather, the material should be used as a point of departure for *your* reactions. These reactions may include criticisms, linkages to concepts or readings previously discussed in class (or in other classes), what you liked or found compelling about the material, theoretical or methodological considerations, etc. As part of this presentation, please be prepared to pose thoughtful questions to the class and to encourage class discussion. (20 points)

**CALENDAR:**

**January 14 Age, Period, Cohort: Strategies of Empirical Analysis**

**Holstein, & Gubrium**, Ch. 1 (BB- H & G readings are only posted in first week; please check bookstore or books)

**Riley, Johnson, & Foner (1972)** (BB)

**Dannefer, D. & Uhlenberg, P. (1999)**. Paths of the life course: A typology. Ch. 17, pp. 306-326 in V.L. Bengtson and K.W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of Theories of Aging*. New York: Springer.

**Dannefer et al. (2005)**. On the shoulders of a giant: The legacy of Matilda White Riley for Gerontology. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Science and Social Sciences*, 60, S296-S304 (BB)

*Also Recommended:*

**Riley, M.W. (1973)**. Aging and Cohort Succession: Interpretations and Misinterpretations. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(1), 35-49 (BB)

**January 21 No class: University Holiday**

**January 28 The Dominant Approach: Explaining Individual Outcomes through Personhood**

**Elder, G.H., & Liker, J.K. (1982)**. Hard Times in Women's Lives: Historical Influences across Forty Years. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 88(2), 241-269. (BB)

**George, L.K. (1993)**. Sociological Perspectives on Life Transitions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19: 353-373. (BB)

**Clausen, J.A. (1993).** American Lives: Looking back at the Children of the Great Depression. New York: The Free Press (Macmillan, Inc.). Ch. 1 (BB)

*Also Recommended:*

**McDonald, S., & Elder, G.H. (2006).** When does social capital matter? Non-searching for jobs across the life course. *Social Forces*, 85(1), 521-549 (BB)

**February 4 First Principles: Human Requisites of Development and their Social Concomitants**

**Berger, Peter & Thomas Luckmann. (1967).** *The social construction of reality*. New York: Anchor. pp. 46-67

**Dannefer, D. (1999).** Neoteny, Naturalization and Other Constituents of Human Development. In Ryff, C. D. & Marshall, V. W. (Eds.), *The self and society in aging processes*. New York: Springer.

**Mead, Margaret (1963).** *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies*. "The Tchambuli" (BB)

**Rosenbaum, J.E. (1975).** The Stratification of Socialization Processes. *American Sociological Review*, 40 (Feb), 48-54. (BB)

**Holstein and Gubrium, Ch. 2**

**Phillipson, C. (2007).** Migration and health care for older people: Developing a global perspective. In W.S. Schaie and P. Uhlenberg. *Social structures: Demographic changes and the well-being of older persons* (pp.158-169). New York: Springer (BB)

*Also recommended:*

**Gubrium, J.F., & Holstein, J.A. (2000).** *Institutional selves: Troubled identities in a postmodern world*. New York: Oxford University Press. (excerpts-BB)

**February 11 Individual Outcomes Revisited: The Structure of Action and the Action of Structure**

**Rosenbaum, J.E. (1978).** The Structure of Opportunity in School. *Social Forces* 57(1), 236-256.

**PRESENTED BY: JACQUELIN ARENDT**

**Holstein & Gubrium, Chs. 4-5**

**Arber, S., & McKinlay, J. (2006).** Patient characteristics and inequalities in doctors' diagnostic and management strategies relating to CHD. *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 62(1). 103-105.

**Dannefer, D., & Uhlenberg, P. (1999)** Paths of the life course: A typology. Ch. 17, pp. 306-326 in V.L. Bengtson and K.W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of Theories of Aging*. New York: Springer (BB)

*Also recommended:*

**Baars et al. (2006).** Introduction: Critical perspectives in social gerontology. In J. Baars, D. Dannefer, C. Phillipson, & A. Walker (Eds.), *Aging, globalization, and inequality. The new critical gerontology* (pp. 103-120). New York: Baywood Publishing (BB)

**February 18 From Theory to Practice: Applying Alternative Interpretations of Lived Experience And Introduction to Life History Interviews**

**Thomas, W.H. (1996).** *Life worth living: How someone you love can still enjoy life in a nursing home: The Eden Alternative in action*. Acton, MA Vanderwyk & Burnham, Chs. 1-3.

**PRESENTED BY: SCOTT ADAMS**

**Bing, Leon (1991).** *Do or die*. New York: Harper Perennial. Chs. 1-3

**Schor, Juliet (2004).** *Born to buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. New York: Scribner. Chs TBA

**Hochschild, A.R. (2004).** The commodity frontier. In J. Alexander C. Alexander et al. (Eds.), *Self, social structures and beliefs: Explorations in Sociology* (pp.38-55). California: University of California Press (BB)

**February 25 The Life-course Patterns of a Population: Personological & Sociological Approaches**

**Modell, J. (1989).** *Into one's Own: From Youth to Adulthood in the United States, 1920-1975*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (selected reading) (BB)

- Dannefer, D. (2003).** Cumulative advantage/disadvantage and the life course: Cross-fertilizing age and social science theory. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 58B(6), S327-S337 (BB)
- Crystal, S., & Waehrer, K. (1996).** Later-life economic inequality in longitudinal perspective. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 51B(6), S307-S318 (BB)

**PRESENTED BY: ALISON CARLSON**

- Crystal, S. (2006).** Dynamics of late life inequality: Modeling the interplay of health disparities, economic resources, and public policies. In J. Baars, D. Dannefer, C. Phillipson, & A. Walker (Eds.), *Aging, globalization, and inequality. The new critical gerontology* (pp. 205-213). New York: Baywood Publishing (BB)

**March 3 Age Norms and Ideologies of the Life Course**

- Chudacoff, Howard (1989).** *How old are you? Age consciousness in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton. Chs. 2, 4 (BB)

**PRESENTED BY: TERRANCE RICHARDSON**

- Hochschild, A.R. (1975).** Disengagement Theory: A Critique and Proposal. *American Sociological Review*, 40 (Oct.), 553-569.
- Kett, J.F. (1979).** *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books (BB)
- Billari, F., & Liefbroer, A. (2007).** Should I stay or should I go: The impact of age norms leaving home. *Demography*, 44, 181-198 (BB)
- Lorber, J. (2007).** Believing is seeing. Biology as ideology. In B. A. Arrighi *Understanding Inequality: The Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, & Gender* (pp. 156/157) Rowman and Littlefield: San Diego. (brief excerpt-BB)

**March 10 Spring Break**

**March 17 Theory and Ideology of the Life Course**

- Gutmann, D.L. (1987).** *Reclaimed powers: Towards a new psychology of men and Women in Later life*. New York: Basic Books. Chs. 4, 7 (BB)
- Levinson, D.J. (1996).** *The seasons of a woman's life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Ch. 2
- Belsky, J., Steinberg, L., & Draper, P. (1991).** Childhood Experience, Interpersonal Development, and Reproductive Strategy: An Evolutionary Theory of Socialization. *Child Development*, 62, 647-670 (BB)

**PRESENTED BY: MELINDA LAROCO**

*Also recommended:*

- Lorber, J. (2007).** Believing is seeing. Biology as ideology. In B. A. Arrighi *Understanding Inequality: The Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, & Gender* (pp. 156/157) Rowman and Littlefield: San Diego. 153-170 (BB)
- Weinberg, D. (2008).** The philosophical foundations of constructionist research. In J.A. Holstein & J.F. Gubrium (Eds.) *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (pp.13-39) (BB)
- Holstein, J.A., & Gubrium, J.F. (2007)..** Constructionist perspectives on the life course. *Sociology Compass*, 1, 1-18 (BB)

**March 24 Life Course Theory and Applications, Childhood and Adolescence**

- Dornbusch, S.M.** *Norms for Thinness among Adolescent Females*. (paper delivered at annual meeting of ASA, 1986). (BB)
- Kozol, J. (1991).** *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (1996).** The Household Economy and the Commercial Exploitation of Children's Work: The Case of Kerala. In B. Schlemmer (Ed.), *The Exploited Child*. London/New York: Zed Books (BB)

**PRESENTED BY: EMILY FLEISHER**

**Sampson, R.J., & Wilson, W. (2005).** Toward a theory of race, crime, and urban inequality. In S.L. Gabbidon and H.T. Greene *Race Crime and Justice*. 177-188, Florence (KY): Rutledge (BB)

**March 31 Life Course Theory, Childhood and Adolescence (cont.)**

**Burton, L. M. (1994).** Intergenerational legacies and intimate relationships: Perspectives on adolescent mothers and fathers. *ISSPR Bulletin*, 10(2) (BB)

**Dannefer, D. (1981).** Neither Socialization nor Recruitment: The Avocational Careers of Old-Car Enthusiasts. *Social Forces*, 60(2), 395-413 (BB)

**Bing, Leon. (1991).** *Do or die*. New York: Harper Perennial. Chs. 4-6

**PRESENTED BY: HILLARY MELCHORS**

**Schor, Juliet. (2004).** *Born to buy: The commercialized child and the new consumer culture*. New York: Scribner. (finish book)

**Sampson, R.J., & Laub, J.H. (2005).** When prediction fails: From crime prone boys to heterogeneity in adulthood. *The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 602(1), 73-79 (BB)

**April 7 Life Course Theory and ‘Adulthood’**

**Furstenberg, F.F., Rumbaut, R.G., & Settersten, R.A., Jr. (2005).** On the Frontier of Adulthood: Emerging Themes and New Directions. In Settersten, R.A., Jr., Rumbaut, R.G., and Furstenberg, F.F. (Eds.), *On the Frontier of Adulthood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (BB)

**Kanter, Rosabeth. (1977).** *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic. Chs. 3, 4, 6  
**Chudacoff, Ch. 6**

**Kohli, M. (2007).** The Institutionalization of the life course: Looking back to look ahead. *Research in Human Development*, 4(3-4), 253-271 (BB)

**April 14 Life Course Theory and Later Life**

**Thomas, W.H. (1996)** (review) (BB)

**Achenbaum, A. (1978).** *Old age in the new land: The American experience since 1790*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Ch. 1

**Riley, M.W., & Riley, J.W. Jr. (2001[1994]).** Structural Lag: Past and Future. In Riley, M.W., Foner, A., & Kahn, R. *Age and Structural Lag: Society's Failure to Provide Meaningful Opportunities in Work, Family, and Leisure*. New York: Wiley-Interscience (BB)

**Dannefer, D., Stein, P., & Gelein, J.** (unpublished manuscript). Macrotemporal and microtemporal (BB)  
Linkages in Life Course Institutionalization: The Constitution of the Resident Career in Long-term Care.

**PRESENTED BY: GEORGE KYPRIOTAKIS**

**Hagestad, G.O., & Vaughn, R.A. (2007).** Pathways of childlessness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(10), 1338-1361 (BB)

**PRESENTED BY: BARBARA BOVEINGTON-MOLTER**

**April 21 Life Course Theory, Late Modernity and Ideology**

**Turner, R.H. (1976).** The real self: From institution to impulse. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 81(5), 989-1016. (BB)

**Wexler, P. (1977).** Comment on Ralph Turner's 'The Real Self: From Institution to Impulse.' *The American Journal of Sociology*, 83(1), 178-186. (BB)

**O’Rand, A. (2007).** The future of the life course: Late modernity and life course risks. In J.T. Mortimer and M.J. Shanahan *Handbook of the life course* (pp.693-701). New York: Springer (BB)

*Also recommended:*

**Dannefer, D. (2007).** Towards a global geography of the life course. In J.T. Mortimer and M.J. Shanahan  
*Handbook of the life course* (pp.647-659). New York: Springer (BB)

**Life History Interviews: Begin Student Presentations**

**April 28 Life History Interviews: Student Presentations**