SASS 441: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT II: ADULT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course builds on SASS 440 Human Development I (child and adolescent) by comparing the general themes of feeling (emotion), thinking (cognition), and acting (behavior) with adult emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development. Students will understand the differences and similarities between earlier (child and adolescent) and later (adult, including older adult) emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development by examining, across the life-span, the idea/concept of: (1) adult development as gains/losses, (2) adult development as plasticity and variation (i.e., development can take many forms and can change), (3) adult development as risks, conflicts, protective factors, and resilience, and (4) adult development as context (e.g., family, society, gender, culture, ethnicity, social class, discrimination, sexual orientation, and socio-historical [i.e., cohort] contexts).

This course adds new content and perspectives to Human Development I by beginning with the debates about the transition from adolescence to adulthood, what some scholars have called “late adolescence,” “emerging adulthood,” or “young adulthood” (ages 18-24), and ending with death. The course is not organized by assuming that a person’s chronological age is a predictor of developmental achievements -- for example, training and education (ages 18-24), work/career (ages 24-35), intimacy/marriage/domestic partnership (ages 24-35), family/parenting (ages 35-55), retirement (age 65-85), and death (age 85 +). Instead, it assumes that gains/losses, plasticity, resilience, and context matter throughout adult life, regardless of age or developmental task. Emphasis is placed on variation in developmental task challenges, conflict, and change, not prescriptive, normative, or linear progressions from one developmental task to another, leading up to, for example, the “good” or “perfect” death. Overall, the course is designed to provide students a model for thinking about and assessing adult life-span development so that an adult client’s dysfunction, disorder, disease, or problems (social and/or psychological) can be situated in the context of a person’s developmental achievements, conflicts, and strengths.
**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course is designed to help students meet the following objectives:

1. To understand the differences and similarities between child/adolescent and adult development (Think Critically, EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.1 and EPAS Content Area 4.3).

2. To understand and critically evaluate major theories and controversies regarding adult development (Think Critically, EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.1, and EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.7, use of theory, and EPAS Content Area 4.3);

3. To use developmental theory as a model for assessment of adult achievements, conflicts, and strengths (Apply Social Work Methods, EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.M6, and EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.7, use of theory, and EPAS Content Area 4.3);

4. To communicate effectively, either orally or in writing, by presenting an adult developmental assessment (Communicate Effectively, EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.10 and EPAS Content Areas 4.3 and 4.5);

5. To understand and identify how adult development is affected (positively and negatively) by contextual factors such as cohort, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, discrimination, socioeconomic status, and culture (Valuing a Diverse World, EPAS Foundation Program Objectives 3.0.3 and 3.0.4, and EPAS Content Areas 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3) (Values and Ethics, EPAS Foundation Program Objective 3.0.2 and EPAS Content Area 4.0).

**SUGGESTED COURSE OUTLINE AND SUGGESTED READINGS**

**TOPIC 1: Introduction**

In addition to reviewing the course objectives and assignments, we will discuss relevant demographic trends and changing views of adulthood.

**Readings:**


**TOPIC 2: Life-span developmental theory (concepts of gain/loss, plasticity, risks & resilience, & context)**

**Readings:**


**TOPIC 3: Psychodynamic theories: gains/loss**

**Readings:**

Viorst, J. (1998). *Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow.* New York: Fireside. Chapters 1-5.

**TOPIC 4: Psychosocial theories: plasticity**

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). *Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow.* New York: Fireside. Chapter 10

**TOPIC 5: Feminist theories: context**

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). *Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow.* New York: Fireside. Chapter 8, 12.

**TOPIC 6: Learning and social learning theories: plasticity**

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). *Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow.* New York: Fireside. Chapter 7

**TOPIC 7: Ecological systems theory and macro-level theories: context**

**Readings:**


**TOPIC 8: Family development theories: gain/loss, context**

This session will focus on theories of family development and critiques of their applicability to nontraditional families. Of the family life cycle stages, the class will focus in particular on becoming a parent.

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow. New York: Fireside. Chapter 15

**TOPIC 9: Health and health disparities: gain/loss, plasticity, context**

This session will discuss how adult development is shaped by health and ways in which social systems promote or deter maintaining or achieving health in adulthood. We will pay particular attention to health disparities by race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status.

**Readings:**


House, J. (2001). Understanding social factors and inequalities in health: 20th century progress and

**TOPIC 10: Coping and Adaptation: protective factors, development conflict, resilience**

This session will focus on coping and adaptation theories, such as resilience, spirituality, and ego psychology defense mechanisms.

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow. New York: Fireside. Chapter 14

**TOPIC 11: Theory Application to a Case Study: Family Violence**

This class will apply several theories to understand causes and consequences of family/partner violence. Both the perspective of the victim and the perpetrator of violence will be considered. Students will be asked to critically examine common beliefs about why victims remain in abusive relationships.

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow. New York: Fireside. Chapter 13

**TOPIC 12: Theory Application to a Case Study: Depression**

This class will apply three theories (psychodynamic theory, interpersonal theory, and cognitive theory) to understand causes and consequences of depression, using either the case of Claire, the woman described by Whybrow, or the case of William Styron.

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow. New York: Fireside. Chapter 16

**TOPIC 13: Diversity and Discrimination: context**

Issues related to diversity are woven throughout this course. However, this class will intensively discuss ways in which adult development is influenced by cohort, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and discrimination.

**Readings:**


**TOPIC 14: Work, Career, Job Satisfaction, Retirement, Productive Aging: plasticity, resilience, context**

This topic will explore the relationship adults have to work, retirement, and productive aging. How do we assess one’s emotional, cognitive and behavioral capacities to work, or not, and find satisfaction in our choices, or lack of choices.

**Readings:**


**TOPIC 15: Bereavement and Grief: gain/loss, risk and protective factors, resilience**

This class will examine common reactions to one’s own impending death and others’ death and loss, explanations for complicated (or abnormal) grief reactions, the role of spirituality, and implications of bereavement, grief, and loss for social work practice with adults.

**Readings:**


Viorst, J. (1998). *Necessary losses: The loves, illusions, dependencies, and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow*. New York: Fireside. Chapter 17, & 19