# Psychology 130b

**Lifespan Developmental Psychology: Early and Middle Adulthood**

**January 13, 2014**

**Final Version**

**Mondays: 2 to 4:50 p.m.**

**Room: Brown 115**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professor Margie E. Lachman</th>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td>Office: Brown 102</td>
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<td>Office Hours: Thursdays 11 to 12 and by appointment</td>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Jan 20</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Jan. 27</td>
<td>Early Adulthood</td>
<td>Arnett, 2004, Ch 1 &amp; 2; Settersten –Introduction Henig 2010 Clark Poll</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Feb 3</td>
<td>Middle Age</td>
<td>Lachman, 2004 Cohen,2013 Perez-Pena, 2014 Clark Parents Poll</td>
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*No Classes- Monday, February 17 to Friday, February 21- Midterm Recess*
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Feb. 24</td>
<td>Well-Being and the Happiness Curve</td>
<td>Ullola, 2013; The Economist, 2010; Stone et al., 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Mar. 3</td>
<td>Challenging and Changing Myths, Misconceptions and Stereotypes about Adulthood</td>
<td>Papers and Presentations Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Mar 17</td>
<td>Personality and The Sense of Control</td>
<td>Hill et al., 2013; Lachman, 2006; Turiano et al, 2013</td>
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<td>Submit Topic Choices for Final Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Mar. 24</td>
<td>Cognitive Functioning, Memory, and Decision Making</td>
<td>Agarwal et al., 2007; Singh-Manoux et al., 2012; Strauch, 2010, Ch 4 &amp; 9; Salthouse, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. Mar. 30</td>
<td>Stress, Coping, and Life Events</td>
<td>Almeida, 2005; Almeida et al, 2005; Haase et al., 2013</td>
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<td>Mon. April 7</td>
<td>Health and Social Support</td>
<td>Aldwin et al., 2006; Thoits, 2013; Umberson et al., 2010</td>
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<td>April 14</td>
<td>Life Transitions and Adaptation</td>
<td>Furstenberg et al, 2003; Waldinger &amp; Schulz, 2010; Whitbourne, 2010</td>
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<td>No Classes- Tues. April 15 to Tues. April 22-Spring Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. April 28</td>
<td>Research on Early and Middle Adulthood: Advancing Knowledge and Optimizing Development</td>
<td>Papers and Presentations Due</td>
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Note: All assigned readings are available on LATTE.
Course Objectives and Outcomes:

This course covers the latest theory and research on adult development. The early and middle years of adulthood will be considered within a lifespan developmental context. Variations in development as a function of gender, cohort (e.g., GenX, GenY/Millennials, Babyboomers), culture, ethnicity, and social class will be explored. An interdisciplinary, integrative perspective will be presented by considering the interplay of physical, psychological, and social aspects of adult development. In addition to reading and synthesizing the scholarly literature, students will explore the cultural images and experiences of young and middle-aged adult lives. Class projects support an experiential approach to learning. This includes: (a) a critique and reformulation of cultural images, generational views, misconceptions and myths as manifested in the media, (b) awareness and critique of new research findings as presented to the public in the media, (c) a state of the art review and integration of research findings, and (d) recommendations for important next steps for research and application to practice and policies to improve the health and well being of those in early and middle adulthood, including disadvantaged populations. For those who are interested, a large national data set on early and middle adulthood will be available for first-hand experience with empirical research including problem formulation, hypothesis-testing, data analysis and interpretation. This course will be taught as an interactive advanced seminar. Course prerequisites are: Psych 1, Psych 51, Psych 52, and either Psych 31, 33, 36 or 37. This course meets the advanced seminar requirement and the advanced research intensive requirement for the Psychology major.

In this course, students will acquire knowledge about lifespan developmental theory and the biopsychosocial aspects of adult development. This information will be obtained
through course readings, discussion, and assigned projects. Students will learn to critically evaluate research reports and to develop ideas and apply methods for generation of new knowledge. The course also will emphasize the application of knowledge to promoting optimal development during the adult years. Special attention will be devoted to understanding the diversity and disparities in development, including a focus on disadvantaged populations and the plight of those in less than optimal conditions. Thus, students may acquire a sensitivity and awareness about the range of possible pathways of adult development, with an eye towards creating solutions and strategies for positive change.

Specific Learning Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge about lifespan developmental theory and its application to the biopsychosocial aspects of adult development.
2. Show understanding of the key findings from the research literature on early and middle adulthood.
3. Critically evaluate research findings about adulthood as portrayed in the scientific literature and the popular media, and derive questions and ideas for generation of new knowledge.
4. Consider the applied implications of research results for improving human development and creating solutions and strategies for positive change.
5. Acknowledge the diversity and social disparities in adult development.
6. Review the research literature on a specific topic and design an empirical study.
7. Write research reports in a clear and succinct manner using APA publication style.
8. Present research findings orally to communicate main ideas and to stimulate discussion.
9. Develop and use collaborative and cooperative skills working in teams. (Projects are conducted in small groups of two or three collaborators, as is often the case in research.)

**Assigned Readings** (available on LATTE):


Perez-Pena, R. (2014, January 12). I may be 50 but don’t call me a boomer. *NY Times.*


Course Requirements:

Grades in this advanced seminar will be based on active class participation and completion of 3 projects. The grades for each component will be weighted and averaged, and the final grade will be based on the class distribution out of 100 points. All work must be turned in on time, or grades will be lowered for each day overdue. Please inform me in advance of any extenuating circumstances so we can agree on an alternative arrangement. Class attendance is required (please notify me in advance, by email or phone message, if you must miss a class). **All cell phones, mobile and handheld devices, and computers should be turned off and put away during class.** Use of personal computers or the internet is not permitted during class time, unless it is approved by the instructor for classroom presentations, assignments, or other mutually agreed upon uses. I would like to meet with all students outside of class at least once during the semester. **Please schedule an appointment or attend one of my office hours.**

1. **Required readings, discussion points, and active participation in seminar discussions** (20% of grade) Class sessions will be interactive with informed discussion and debate of ideas based on the assigned readings and supplementary materials. All students are expected to have read the assigned reading materials in advance of class and to contribute to the discussion. Write down and bring a printed copy of one or more thought-provoking and stimulating points, reactions, insights, or questions of interest to you, for each of the assigned readings for every class session, except during class presentation days. These can be brief bullet points, meant to facilitate your contribution to the class discussion. Indicate from which readings the comments or questions are derived. These will be collected at the end of each class and logged in for
credit. Each session two or three students will be asked to lead the discussion, using their questions as a starting point. Students should sign up to lead one class session during our first class meeting.

2. **Research in the Media- Presentation and Critique (20% of grade)** The goals are (a) to keep abreast of the latest research in adult development, (b) to evaluate how the media reports on science, (c) to compare the media perspective with the journal research report, and (d) to develop analytical and critical skills in reviewing scientific research as presented to the lay public. Select a newspaper article, published within the past 6 months, that reports the results of a research study related to some aspect of the class (i.e., psychological, social, and/or biological/health factors in early or middle adulthood). Also find and read the original journal article that the newspaper cites. **Submit a 1 to 2-page, double-spaced, typewritten summary and critique of the article.** Include the newspaper article and the reference citation and the abstract for the original journal article. In your report: (a) Summarize at least 3 important points from the article, (b) compare the journal article and newspaper account- is there anything left out or misleading in the newspaper article; (c) discuss the point(s) you find most interesting, (d) argue against or challenge a particular issue, and (d) raise one or more questions for future study. These summaries can be used to guide the oral presentation and stimulate class discussion, and should be turned in to the instructor at the end of the class session. Provide a weblink to the article in advance of class for posting on the class latte site. The presentation should be brief- no more than 10 minutes- including class discussion time. Powerpoint may be used but is not required. Sign up for presentation dates on the first day of class. Some possible sources to
search for articles: http://www.futurity.org/; www.eurekaalert.org.;
www.esciencenews.com

3. **Challenging Views, Myths, Misconceptions and Stereotypes about Adulthood: Multimedia Presentation and Written Project.** (30% of grade) For this project students will explore the images of young or middle-aged adults, or specific generations (e.g., baby boomers, Gen X, Gen Y) as portrayed in the popular media and the culture at large. A key aspect of this project is to identify myths, inaccuracies or stereotypes and to present an alternative view or to revise a “script” of the adult years. First, identify and document the misconceptions, myths, stereotypes, or overgeneralizations. You may use literature, movies, television, commercials, advertisements, newspapers or magazine articles, or websites to identify the images and cultural views. Second, present alternative views or evidence to challenge the misconceptions, with documentation based on multiple sources. This could entail revising an advertisement or commercial, rewriting a character’s lines, or presenting a new image of midlife in a commercial. You can use the same medium to present the counter viewpoints. For example, if you use a commercial to portray an image, you can develop a new version of the commercial with an alternative view. Or if you present misconceptions or a one-sided view from a magazine article, you can rewrite the article to reflect a more balanced or accurate view. Broad questions to consider are: How are early or middle adulthood or particular generations portrayed in the United States or abroad? What are the positive and negatives views, and which are more prevalent? Other more specific questions can also be addressed, such as: Are there variations in images of the adult experience by region, culture, gender, and/or cohort? Has the portrayal of young
or middle-aged adults in the media changed over time? Students should support their analysis and reformulation with information from the class readings, discussions, and other resources of your choosing. Document all sources using APA reference format.

**Students should work in pairs for this project.** Each group will present the project orally (10 minutes per group) in class on March 3 using visual aids (e.g., Powerpoint, video). Each student should also write their own 2 to 3-page double-spaced typed summary of the main points and conclusions, also due on March 3. Include at least 3 references to support your points. A separate paper, individually written, should be turned in by each student. Although students work together on the presentation, the paper should reflect each student’s own perspective and views on the topic.

4. **Research Report on Early and Middle Adulthood: Advancing Knowledge and Optimizing Development** (30% of grade). This project involves reading, integrating and critiquing the latest research on adulthood in a particular topic area, and formulating and proposing directions and steps for the future. Choose one of the following three options. **Work in pairs for this project.**

Option A: Develop a proposal to address an unanswered research question derived from reading the research literature on a topic of your choice related to the course. State your research question clearly. Review the literature on this topic and develop a rationale and set of hypotheses. State what is known, what is not known, and any controversies. Indicate what further work should be done to advance the field. Propose a study to take the field to the next step. Indicate your hypotheses and the methods you
would use to test them, including participants, measures, design, procedures, and analysis plan. This should be written in APA style with the following sections: Abstract, Introduction (including review of literature, rationale, and hypotheses), Proposed Methods and Data Analysis, Summary, and References.

Option B: Develop a product, an app, or an intervention program to address an issue facing young and/or middle-aged adults, and design a research study to evaluate it. Describe the product or program in detail. Provide a rationale for why the product is needed based on the research literature and course materials. Write a proposal describing the research design for an evaluation study. This study can test the efficacy or usefulness of the product/program and/or investigate the outcomes of using the product/program. Indicate your hypotheses and the methods you would use to test them, including participants, measures, design, procedures, and analysis plan. This should be written in APA style with the following sections: Abstract, Introduction (including review of literature, rationale, and hypotheses), Proposed Methods and Data Analysis, Summary, and References.

Option C: For students who are interested in doing an empirical research project using actual data.

Use the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) dataset available at the University of Michigan ICPSR to explore a research question. Students can check the University of Wisconsin MIDUS website to identify other studies already done using the data. The goal is to extend previous findings by asking a new question on the same topic or on a related issue, or examining change using the longitudinal data for studies previously
done with a cross-sectional design. Data, questionnaires, documentation about measures and the sample, and links to ICPSR and MIDUS websites may be found on the class LATTE site. You should use SPSS or the ICPSR website analysis program using the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI/XML) to analyze your data. Provide a review and summary of the previous literature and your rationale for the study. The writeup should be written in APA style with the following sections: Abstract, Introduction (including literature review, rationale, and hypotheses), Methods (Participants, Measures, Design and Procedures), Data Analysis, Results, Discussion, References, and Tables/Figures.

For all options:

**Two or more alternative research questions and a brief description of the planned focus for the project should be submitted no later than March 17 for feedback and approval by the instructor.**

The report should be written in APA format. The complete paper including abstract should be no more than 10 typewritten pages, double-spaced (pages for References, Tables, Figures, and Appendices are not included in the page count). **The paper is due on April 28 and brief group presentations will be made in class on that day.** Students should work in pairs for this project. Each group will present the project orally (10 minutes per group). A separate paper, individually written, should be turned in by each student. Although students work together on the presentation, the paper should reflect each student’s own perspective and views on the topic.
Disabilities

*If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.*

Academic Integrity

*Academic integrity is central to the mission and values of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Students are expected to be honest in all academic work and to do their own work. In some cases, portions of the assignments call for collaborative effort. For these situations, please pay careful attention to instructions about which parts involve group work and which aspects require independent work. Also be sure to document carefully all sources used (including materials gathered from the web) with appropriate reference citations for all presented and written work. You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see section 4 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook distributed annually and posted on the Student Life website). Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and/or the assignment, and could result in suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask me for clarification.*
Resources: Bibliography of Books, Monographs, and Articles on Early and Middle Adulthood


http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/publications/publication%20index.htm


http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/publications/publication%20index.htm


http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/publications/publication%20index.htm


NY: John Wiley and Sons.


Settersten, R. A., Jr. (March 2006). Becoming Adult: Meanings and Markers for Young Americans. 
http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/publications/publication%20index.htm


University of Chicago Press.

Strauch, B. (2010). The secret life of the grown-up brain: The surprising talents of the 


perspectives on midlife. (Chapters by Avis, Skaff, Willis & Schaie). Mahwah, NJ: 
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

CA: Sage.

Willis, S. L., & Reid, J. D. (1999). Life in the middle: Psychological and social development in 

development: Stability and change. European Journal of Aging, 7, 131-134. doi: 
10.1007/s10433-010-0162-4

Additional resources, links, and papers are available on the LATTE class site.