Socioemotional Processes in Adulthood and Aging
PSY 789, Fall 2009

Meeting times: M 4:10 – 6:55
Room: Poe 724
Instructor: Dr. Daniel Grühn
Office: Poe 732 C
Phone: 919.515.0317
Email: dgruehn@ncsu.edu
Office hours: Monday 1:00PM – 3:00PM, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The focus of this course will be on social, emotional, and personality aspects of adult development. We will try to cover a broad spectrum of ideas, theories, and topics. We will talk about social interactions and about the different ways of looking at social interactions of older adults and how they change over the adult lifespan. What does it mean to be an older person in our society with respect to social relationships? We will talk about change and stability in personality characteristics and how a sense of self in later life is both related to and different from those aspects earlier in life. At the emotional level, we will look at different aspects of emotional functioning, including emotional understanding, emotional experience, and emotional reactivity, and how these aspects change with age. As an advanced graduate seminar, this course is discussion-based and relies on the active participation of all members.

READINGS: Socioemotional Processes in Adulthood and Aging is an advanced graduate seminar. This means that students will be expected to be self-directed both within and outside of class time. You will find that there is quite a lot of reading throughout the semester, and to achieve the goals in this course, you will need to read them carefully and critically. I encourage you to ask questions or raise issues in class based on the readings.

EVALUATION: The final grade will be based on various component of the course: class participation, service as discussion leader, one article-writing project, and one special project. Course components are weighted as follows:

- Class Participation _______ 50%
- Discussion Leader _______ 10%
- Article-Writing Project _______ 30%
- Special Project _______ 10%
- Total percentage _______ 100%

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend class regularly, complete and summarize assigned readings in advance of each class meeting (40%), and contribute scholarly insights to the discussion (10%). For each chapter/article, prepare a well-thought-out one-page (typed, font 12) statement that includes a commentary on salient points, integration with your own research interests, and questions or issues you will raise for discussion in class. For example, be prepared to discuss the theory, methods, applied implications of research, and future research directions for each topic. Hand in summaries weekly. Over the semester, hand in 40 statements.
Discussion Leader: On two occasions, you will serve as discussion leader for a chosen topic. The discussion leader has to prepare two additional readings: one chosen by the instructor and one selected by yourself. You can find the reading chosen by the instructor in the literature list. The reading that you choose has to be a recent publication, that is, from 2008 or 2009.

Prepare a set of questions to guide the reading and discussion of your topic. The questions should highlight the main issues with respect to theory, research methods, findings, and future research questions for your topic. Guiding questions should not be written at the lower levels of cognitive activity (recall, recognition) but rather at the upper levels (analysis, synthesis, comparison/contrast, evaluation, application). Questions can be given to the instructor in advance in order to receive feedback.

Read current journal articles on your topics to gain additional expertise in this area. Prepare an outline of the material you wish to cover and other learning aids as you see fit (e.g., Powerpoint, role play, video, case study, etc.). Lead the class discussion on the assigned readings, based on the questions you developed. Begin with some background information; for example, on the authors (education, current position, areas of research/publication) to provide a context for understanding their work. Be sure to cover theory development in the focal topics, research methods used and a critique of them, key findings, and challenges for future research. Employ whatever learning exercises or activities that you deem useful for enhancing comprehension and application of the material. Divide the time between your assigned areas appropriately. The two occasions will count 5% each for your final grade (10% in total).

Writing Project: Students will be required to write one essay during the semester, which will count 30% for your final grade. A description of the project is included at the end of this syllabus. The essay must be completed in order to pass the course. The due date is Monday, November 23, 2009. If the paper is turned in late, you will lose 2% per day for each day that it is late, including weekends. For example, if you hand in a paper two days late, you can get at maximum 26%. There are no exceptions to this rule, so plan ahead.

Special Project: The Special Project will be announced in class. The goal of the special project is to create a small research project by writing a joint paper on a topic and by creating a joint online study. Details are discussed in class. This part is worth 10% of your final grade.

GRADING: Overall course grades will be based on the total percentage of points achieved. So letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-99</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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Please note that there is no rounding up. For example, if a student achieved 92.8%, this is still an "A-"] and not an "A".
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VISTA: Materials made available through Vista will support this course. You can access the site by going to http://vista.ncsu.edu/ and logging on with your unity ID. Over the course of the semester, optional information (e.g., links, reports, organizations) will be provided on the course wiki page http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/PSY_789_Socioemotional_Development/ and/or on the instructors’ homepage, http://www4.ncsu.edu/~dgruehn/.

INCOMPLETE GRADES: An incomplete grade may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor as an interim grade for a course in which the student has: (1) completed a major portion of the course with a passing grade, (2) been unable to complete course requirements prior to the end of the term because of extenuating circumstances, and (3) obtained agreement from the instructor and arranged for resolution of the incomplete grade. Please note that an incomplete grade must not be used by NCSU policy as a substitute for an F when the student’s performance in the course is deserving of failing.

ATTENDANCE: Your contribution to class discussion is critical both for accomplishing your own course objectives as well as contributing to the development of others in the class. Active participation in discussions is encouraged. Attendance in this class is important. It will affect your grade directly since class participation is part of your final grade. It is your responsibility to get class notes and ask questions if you do miss class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students will adhere to the University’s Code of Student Conduct (http://www2.ncsu.edu/prr/student_services/student_conduct/POL445.00.1.htm). Consistent with the provisions of this Code, academic dishonesty is defined as cheating, plagiarism, and aiding and abetting others to cheat or plagiarize. In simple terms, it is expected that all work that you do for this course is yours. Students who are accused of violations of the Code will be referred to the Coordinator, Office of Student Conduct.

ACCOMODATIONS: Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, please register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information, see http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss. Please tell me immediately so that I can begin to make appropriate arrangements.

WRITING PROJECT

The task of this assignment is to write a summary and a critical evaluation of a research topic relevant to socio-emotional development in adulthood and old age. This project is designed to facilitate your ability to critically read and evaluate information as a researcher. For this assignment, you will (1) select a topic of interest, (2) select at least three research articles in this area, (3) write a summary and critical evaluation of this research, and (4) write a proposal for a new study. Please keep in mind that this has to be a topic relevant to the topic of this class. If you are not sure whether your topic fits, please ask the instructor beforehand.

Your paper should consist of three major parts: a summary of the research area, a critical evaluation/ discussion of this research area, and a specific proposal for a follow-up study.
Summary. The brief summary of your research topic should include – but is not limited to - the following question:
- What are the research questions in this area and why is this important?
- What are the methods used? How are critical constructs assessed?
- Which population is typically examined?
- What are the major findings in this area and how are they interpreted? (Focus on what you see as the most central findings, or the findings you would like to discuss further. It is not necessary to summarize every single finding.)

Discussion. In the discussion, strengths and weaknesses of this research area should be evaluated. Some questions are:
- What are strengths of certain studies?
- Where are problems for the internal and external validity? For example, are the assessment methods reliable and valid? Is the assessment of a construct meaningful?
- Are the typical interpretations in this area reasonable?
- Are there alternative explanations not yet addressed? Are there confounding variables that are not taken into account?

Follow-up study. In this section, a concrete idea for a follow-up study should be proposed. In principle, the question is: If this would be your field of research, how would you try to improve the study design? Can you think of ways the method might have been improved? What might be done next to test alternative explanations or to resolve ambiguities? What might be done to take the next step in this line of research?
In this section, the following points should be addressed (or at least partly):
- Your hypothesis or research question (Be sure to specify what your study would contribute to the field.)
- Your proposed research design (i.e., Will it be between- or within-subjects? What kind of measure do you use?)
- Your proposed sample size and composition
- The procedures to be employed
- Specific comparisons to be made to test your hypothesis

Evaluation. The paper will count 30% for your final grade. Points are awarded based on the quality of work associated with each section and not simply the inclusion of the indicated sections. The three sections – summary, critical evaluation, and follow-up study – should roughly contribute 20%, 40%, & 40% to the paper, respectively. Grammar and editing will also be considered in evaluation of the papers. Points will be assigned based on the general organization and readability of the project. Please review your paper carefully before handing it in. You will make marked improvements if you exchange your paper with other students who are willing to review your paper with honest criticism and constructive remarks.

Format. The project report should be at maximum 20 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, using one-inch margins all around and a 12-point font. It is perfectly fine to use less than 20 pages. To give you a reference, most published articles have an introduction (theoretical background) that is between 4 and 8 double-spaced pages. Please follow APA style. The only identification on the paper should be your student id number. No names, separate title pages, or
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cover sheets, please. Please submit one stapled hardcopy of your paper as well as a digital version by email. The paper is due on Monday, November 23, 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Extra</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 08/24</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 08/31</td>
<td>1 Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 09/07</td>
<td>LABOR DAY (no classes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 09/14</td>
<td>2 Social Networks &amp; Social Interactions</td>
<td>Special Project – Initial Findings 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 09/21</td>
<td>3 SST</td>
<td>Special Project – Initial Findings 2</td>
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<td>M 09/28</td>
<td>4 Personality</td>
<td>Special Project – Items 1</td>
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<td>M 10/05</td>
<td>5 Resiliency</td>
<td>Special Project – Items 2</td>
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<td>M 10/12</td>
<td>6 Social interactions</td>
<td>Special Project – Creating Surveys</td>
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<td>M 10/19</td>
<td>7 Self-Perception / Stereotyping</td>
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<td>M 10/26</td>
<td>8 Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 11/02</td>
<td>9 Well-Being</td>
<td>Follow-up Studies 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 11/09</td>
<td>10 Emotion I</td>
<td>Follow-up Studies 2</td>
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<td>M 11/16</td>
<td>11 Emotion II</td>
<td>Follow-up Studies 3</td>
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<td>M 11/23</td>
<td>12 Death and Dying</td>
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<td>M 11/30</td>
<td>13 Generativity &amp; Wisdom</td>
<td>Special Project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Theory


Optional:


2. Social Networks & Social Interactions I


Discussion Group Leader:
3. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST)

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional:

4. Personality

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional:
You can read the commentaries to Caspi and Roberts (2001) and Lewis (2001) as well as their replies documenting the scientific disputes in the development of personality.

5. Resiliency & Self
Labouvie-Vief, G., & Medler, M. (2002). Affect optimization and affect complexity: Modes and
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Discussion Group Leader:


6. Social Interactions II


Discussion Group Leader:


Optional:


7. Self-Perception / Stereotyping


Discussion Group Leader:

of aging predict mortality and change with approaching death: 16-year longitudinal results from the Berlin Aging study. *Psychology and Aging.*

8. Marriage

Discussion Group Leader:

9. Well-Being

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional:

10 Emotion I

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional:

11. Emotion II

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional:
12. Death and Dying

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional:

13. Generativity & Wisdom

Discussion Group Leader:

Optional: