SW 601 Adolescent Development and Behavior

Winter 2002

Mondays 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.  
Jan. 7 to April 15, 2002

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Course Description:

This course will examine the individual, interpersonal and contextual changes and behaviors that are part of normal adolescent development. Within the context of normal adolescent development, the course will focus on: (1) the epidemiology and etiology of adolescent problem behaviors; (2) the extent to which these behaviors vary across gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status; (3) the ways in which these behaviors relate to normal adolescent development; and (4) existing programs and policies designed to prevent, and, to a lesser extent treat problem behaviors.

Course Content:

The broad content of this course will focus upon the changes, contexts, and psychosocial development and problems of adolescence. The key changes that occur during adolescence are biological, cognitive, and social. The section of this course on biological changes will focus on the pubertal process and its physical, psychological, and social impact, as well as subgroup and generational differences in its onset and timing. The cognitive development portion of this course will examine the theoretical perspectives on adolescent thinking, and changes in adolescent thinking patterns and abilities that occur from pre-adolescence to late adolescence. Finally, this course will examine the social (e.g., economic, legal, political, and interpersonal) changes that occur as adolescents make the transition to adulthood.

The social contexts that are central to the development of most adolescents include family, peers, schools, work, and leisure environments. The family issues that this course will examine include different parenting styles and their impact on a variety of adolescent outcomes, the effects of changing family patterns on adolescent development, and reciprocal relationships between the family and adolescents. The peer-related issues that this course will address include the historical origins of adolescent peer groups, the nature and structure of peer groups, and the influence of peers on both pro-social and problem behavior. Course content on schools will focus on the varied purposes of schools, the ways in which their organization influences adolescents' learning, and their direct and indirect influence on adolescents' future life chances.
Employment issues that will be addressed include changes in the nature of adolescent employment, the long and short term costs and benefits of adolescent employment, and the meaning of work for young people who do not attend college. Content on adolescent leisure activity will examine its role in socializing adolescents for adulthood, its influence on adolescents' academic success and failure, and its economic importance.

The final section of this course will focus on adolescent psychosocial problem behaviors, such as alcohol, and other substance use, violence, suicide, eating disorder, precocious sex, and delinquency. Particular attention will be given to the epidemiology, etiology, trends and population distributions of these problems. Considerable attention will also be given to identification of the risk and protective factors for these problems and the policies and programs related to their prevention and treatment.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the biological, psychological, and social changes that characterize normal adolescence.
2. Identify and describe the primary interpersonal and contextual influences on adolescent behavior.
3. Identify and describe the ways in which the individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors common to adolescence intersect and relate to adolescent problem behaviors.
4. Identify what social workers and other professionals can do to promote adolescent health and well being and prevent and treat adolescent problem behaviors.
5. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to adolescent development and behavior

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:**

*Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed throughout this course. Racial, ethnic, gender, and social class differences in the timing, sequencing, nature, and outcome of adolescent developmental experiences will be central to every facet of this course.

*Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed through information and discussion on the ways in which social status mediates the experiences of adolescents and the ways in which various programs, practices, and policies help or hinder the successful development of all young people.

*Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be central to this course, particularly in the section that focuses on adolescent problem behaviors. General principles of program design, implementation, and evaluation will be presented and examples of successful programs and policies will be discussed.

*Behavioral and Social Science Research* will provide the substantive foundation for this course. Emphasis will be placed on the review, critique, and synthesis of the existing scientific
knowledge base as prerequisite to interventions that promote health and well being, and prevent or treat adolescent problems.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

Values and ethics will be addressed as they relate to working with young people. This course will emphasize the importance of understanding the range of normal adolescent development, working with disadvantaged populations, and sensitivity to the possibility of unintended negative consequences of interventions such as promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

**Recommended Journals:**

- Adolescence
- American Journal of Public Health
- American Psychologist
- Child and Youth Care Quarterly
- Child and Youth Services
- Child Development
- International Journal of Adolescence
- Journal of Adolescent Health
- Journal of Adolescent Health Care
- Journal of Adolescent Research
- Journal of Early Adolescence
- Merrill Palmer Quarterly

**Required Texts:**

- Feldman, S. Shirley and Elliot, Glen R. *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent*
- Steiner, Hans. *Treating Adolescents*
- Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*
- Pollack, William. *Real Boys*
- Owens, Robert E., *Queer Kids: The Challenges and Promise for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth*

(Also Recommended):

- Gibbs, Jewelle. Larke, Huang. *Children of Color: Psychological Interventions with Culturally Diverse Youth*
- Kaplan, Elaine Bell, *Not Our Kind of Girl*

Both the required and recommended texts are on reserve at the Social Work Library.

**TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE**

(All readings appear in the schedule on the date they will be discussed in class)
Jan. 7

*Introduction /Class Expectations
Developmental Tasks of Adolescents*

Jan. 14

Physical, Affective-Moral, Cognitive and Psychosocial Changes during Adolescence

**Readings:**
- F&E, Chs. 3,5
- Pipher, Ch. 1
- Pollack, Ch.1
- Steiner, Ch.1
- Owens, Ch. 1

Jan. 28

*Physical, Affective-Moral, Cognitive and Psychosocial Changes during Adolescence II*

**Readings:**
- F&E, Chs. 13,14
- Pollack, Chs. 7
- Pipher, Chs. 2,3

*Recommended:*
- Gibbs & Huang, Ch. 1
- Pollack, Ch. 4
- Kaplan, Introduction

Feb. 4

*Developmental Tasks of Families of Adolescents*

**Readings:**
- F&E, Ch 6&10
- Pipher, Ch 4,5,&6
- Pollack, Ch 5&6
- Owens, Ch. 10

**PAPER 1 DUE**

Feb. 11

*Psychosocial Factors and Stressors I*

- Poverty
- Sexual Orientation

**Readings:**
- Pollack, Chs. 9,14
- Owens, Chs. 2,3,4

*Recommended:*
- Gibbs and Huang, Ch. 2
- Kaplan, Ch. 1, 2
Presentation: David Martineau, an adjunct professor at the School of Social Work and Counselor at the Adolescent Division of the High/Scope Educational Research Group will present on working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered teens.

Feb. 18  
**Psychosocial Factors and Stressors 2**

- Trauma
- Ethnicity

**Readings:**  
Steiner, Ch. 9  
Owens, Ch. 6  
*Recommended:* Gibbs & Huang, Chs. 5,6  
Kaplan, Chs. 2,3

Presentation: Derrick Jackson from Ozone House will speak on the particular issues that face teens of color.

March 4  
**Peer Relationships, Leisure and Work**

**Readings:**  
F&E, Chs. 7,9  
Pollack, Ch. 8

March 11  
**Common Problems Manifest in Adolescence**

- Self-injurious behaviors  
- Suicidality  
- Eating Disorders

**Readings:**  
F&E, Ch. 16  
Pollack, 12  
Steiner, Ch. 6, 180-182  
Pipher, Ch. 9  
Owens, Ch. 8

March 18  
**Externalizing Behaviors I**

- Substance Abuse

**Readings:**  
Steiner, Ch 2 & 3  
Pipher, Ch 10  
Owens, Ch. 8
Paper 2 due

March 25  
*Teen Center Presentations*

*(Chris Wiltsee and high-school students from the Neutral Zone will present in class)*

April 1  
*Internalizing Behaviors and Divorce*

**Readings:**
- Steiner, Ch 4&5
- Pipher, Ch 8
- Pollack, Ch. 14, Review Ch. 12
- Owens, Ch. 9
  *Recommended:* Gibbs & Huang, Ch. 11

April 8  
*Schools and Achievement*

*Violence in Schools/Community*

**Readings:**
- Pollack, Ch 10,13
- Pipher, Ch 11
- F&E, 8,12
- Owens, Ch. 5

**Presentation:** Aaron Pollack, a history teacher at Pioneer High School, will speak about adolescents and the school experience

April 15  
*Externalizing Behaviors II: ADHD, Conduct/Oppositional Disorders*  
*Getting Launched: Challenges of Late Adolescence, Ideals and Ambitions*

**Readings:**
- Pipher, Ch 12,13 & 14
- Owen, Chs. 11, 12

*Recommended:* Gibbs & Huang, Ch. 12

Paper 3 due
Format of Course

General Overview

This course will approach adolescent behavior and development from the three following perspectives:

1. **The current research** – students will be asked to read about and consider the latest research about adolescence. Two of the texts, *At the Threshold* and *Treating Adolescents*, are research-oriented and provide extensive references to other (fairly current) research into adolescence.

2. **The experiential** - students will be asked to explore their professional and personal experiences in working/living/interacting with adolescents. The two other texts, *Reviving Ophelia* and *Real Boys*, incorporate many case histories and the authors’ experiences of the adolescents with whom they work.

3. **The personal** – students will be asked to reflect on their own adolescent development to facilitate deeper understanding of the issues. This personal exploration is meant to help students integrate their personal stories with their actual experience of adolescents and with the insights delineated in the research.

The Recommended Readings

There are several weeks when readings from the “recommended” texts are included in the syllabus. Feel free to read through the other chapters of these texts during the course of the semester. Both books are excellent and will add richness to your experience of the course. Since most of the chapters in the recommended texts do not fit specifically into the thematic weekly categories, I have decided to encourage you to read them in your own time and at your own pace.

Grades

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

- **10%** = participation and attendance at class sessions
- **15%** = Group presentation relating a film/video to the particular topic being covered in class and in the readings
- **15%** = Paper 1
- **30%** = Paper 2
- **30%** = Paper 3

Small Group Presentations

Each small group will be responsible for:

1. Identifying a fictional film or video which deals with the particular theme of the class.
2. Showing a 5-10 minute clip from the video which best demonstrates this theme.
3. Facilitating a discussion (using discussion questions) which relates the video to the in-class readings.

Each presentation should be no longer than 30 minutes. All group members will receive the same grade. During the 2nd class, you will be assigned a date for your presentation.

**Grades will be based upon the following**

- **33%**: did the video effectively demonstrate a theme about adolescence?
- **33%**: did the discussion questions enlighten particular points from the readings and the video?
- **33%**: did the facilitators effectively elicit input from the class during the discussion?
1%: did the facilitators bring food and did I like it?

The Papers

The grading for each individual paper is spelled out in detail in the next section.

ALL papers will be marked down by 5% for every day late. In order to be fair to all class members, this policy needs to be uniform. If you are unhappy with your feedback and/or grade on a paper, the paper may be rewritten and turned in no later than 1 week after it has been returned to you. The average of the two grades will then be your grade for the actual paper. The second paper should be turned in with the changes highlighted.

Paper #1 (personal perspective): Due on Sept. 22, No more than 5 typed pages, 15% of total grade

This paper should be a personal exploration of your own experiences as an adolescent. Since this is a personal paper, creativity is welcome. The paper should include sharing your experiences of both the different domains of adolescent development as well as the psychosocial issues with which you struggled. For a list of different domains and psychosocial issues, look at the “table of contents” in At the Threshold.

This paper will be assessed on the following criteria:
1. Content: Did the writer touch on both psychosocial issues and contexts of adolescence? Did the writer share openly about her/his own adolescence? Were there specific examples given? Did the writer translate the abstract to the concrete – 60%.
2. Organization: Did the writer establish some kind of structure to the paper? Did the structure allow for pertinent conclusions to be drawn – 30%
3. Form: Is the grammar correct? Are there typographical errors – 10%

Paper #2 (research-based perspective): Due on Nov. 10, no more than 8 typed pages, 30% of total grade

This paper will involve a review of recent research in a specific area of interest regarding adolescent behavior and development. At least 8 references published since 1990 should be used. The paper should address a central question, contain a review of relevant literature, and build a coherent argument toward a logical conclusion regarding this central question.

Should you wish to take a more creative approach to this research paper, you may try the following: Imagine that you are a reporter for the Ann Arbor News who has been asked to write an article focusing on a particular issue facing today’s teens. Your editor has asked you to research this particular issue and write a piece which will help parents to assist their daughters and sons in dealing with this issue. A well-written article will communicate research-based information to parents in a reader-friendly manner.

This paper will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. Content: Did the writer clearly meet the objectives of the assignment – is there a central question, is there a review of the relevant literature, is there a logical conclusion - 60% 
2. Organization: Is the paper logically organized? Is information presented in a systematic and readable manner - 30%
3. Form: Is the grammar correct? Are there typographical errors - 10%

Paper #3 (experiential perspective): Due on Dec. 8, no more than 8 typed pages, 30% of total grade

For this paper you are asked to:
1) identify a teen population with whom you are unfamiliar, what barriers there have been to you becoming familiar with this population, the stereotypical misunderstandings of this population, and 3-5 areas of concern
that the research-literature emphasizes for this population. Be sure to footnote any references you use when referring to the research.

2) interview at least one teen from this population (asking about his/her views of minority status, peers, school, work leisure, what motivates, frustrates, angers them. Who are their heroes, heroines?) preferably in a setting of the teen’s choosing – at school, Pinball Pete’s, a café, etc.

3) explore how your interviewee’s perceptions and experiences match up to (or contrast with) your understandings from the research.

This paper will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. Content: Did the writer include each of the paper’s required steps as listed above? Did the writer draw conclusions from comparing/contrasting her/his interviews with the findings in the research- 60%

2. Organization: Is the paper logically organized? Is information presented in a systematic and readable manner - 30%

3. Form: Is the grammar correct? Are there typographical errors - 10%