

ARP 596: ADULT TRANSITIONS: 21ST CENTURY THINKING TOOLS, SKILLS, COMPETENCIES

<p>Course Syllabus Fall, 2009</p>

Instructor
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Required Learning Materials

Barnes, S.F. (2009). *Applied critical thinking (ACT) handouts, readings, and exercises*. San Diego, CA.

ARP 596 Course Website: <http://interwork.sdsu.edu/courses/bve/arp596.fall09>

Recommended Texts

Elder, L., & Paul, R.W. (2002). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your professional and personal life*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Freedman, M. (1999). *Prime time: How baby boomers will revolutionize retirement and transform America*. New York: Public Affairs Books.

Roszak, T. (2001). *Longevity revolution; as boomers become elders*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books.

Course Overview

This course is about understanding the meaning of adulthood. It focuses on major life transitions all adults experience, along with a number of lifestyle challenges, some appearing for the first time in American society. These recent sociocultural challenges are redefining several concurrent generations, and they include:

- significantly longer life expectancy
- increased societal diversity (the “graying” and “browning” of America)
- global economics and market competition that promote the process of “creative destruction” and transformation of many traditional societal structures
- rapid advances in technology that impact what we know, how we know, and daily routines
- “now” access to technical knowledge for a broad and growing segment of the population
- redefinition of “family,” “marriage,” “retirement,” “workplace,” “lifelong learning,” and “meaning making”

Adulthood, as it has been broadly understood and characterized by both academia and the mass media, is in the midst of a paradigm shift, and it will never be the same. This course analyzes these dynamics from the perspective of practitioners with a “need to know” who work with adults—adult educators, social workers, rehabilitation counselors, HR specialists, gerontologists, and recreation professionals.

A second focus of the course is on the competencies and skill sets adults need to reinvent themselves and flourish in the 21st Century. How are these competencies and skills acquired? Are they universal? Are they dynamic and evolutionary? Can they be learned academically or must they be rooted in experiential learning? What happens to an adult (or client) who is not functioning with contemporary competencies and skills?

Third, and finally, the course addresses a theory of adult intervention that is both practical and broadly applicable to different settings and individuals. What level of guidance and support should practitioners offer to their adult students, clients, and consumers? What do they need to know about their own journeys across the lifespan?

The course blends traditional classroom instruction, on-line learning resources, and group and individual project-based work in support of professional competency, self-exploration, and transformational learning.

Learning Objectives

The following learning objectives have been established for this course. Each student who follows the course syllabus and completes all required course assignments will:

- 1) Understand both the history and contemporary iteration of adulthood in American society, and the specific social, political, and economic challenges posed by the latter;
- 2) View and appreciate adulthood as an open-ended process with distinguishable life stages;
- 3) Understand the concept of Essential Life Skills, and be capable of assessing adults in terms of core thinking skills, adaptation and planning skills, and adult competencies; and
- 4) Be able to relate recent adult research to a variety of practitioner settings and intervention strategies.

Learning Resources

The course learning objectives will be achieved through web-based assigned readings and other learning tools, in-class mini-lectures and discussion, group work, and field research activities.

Instructor Expectations for Course

As an elective course at an advance level of university study, students will be expected to draw upon and apply both their accumulated academic knowledge and practitioner skills to the seminar.

Course Grading Criteria

This is a self-graded course. However, the instructor recommends that students consider the following guidelines when evaluating their own performance. Final course grades should be based on five, weighted factors: reading and website visits, adult interviews, group work, site visits, and a comprehensive portfolio. The weightings are as follows:

**15% - READING AND WEB-SITE ASSIGNMENTS
(15 Points)**

Outside reading (required and recommended) and website links are assigned for each course week

**15% - GROUP WORK
(15 Points)**

Each student will be assigned to a group and in that capacity shares responsibility as a team member for evaluating and presenting assigned Case Studies to the seminar

**15% - SITE VISITS
(15 Points)**

Each student will be required to visit two community-based service agencies for adults

**40% - PORTFOLIO
(40 Points)**

Each student will build a personal portfolio throughout the course consisting of a Reflection Journal and other analytical exercises

[note: students taking the course for graduate credit will also be required to write a research paper.]

Total possible for course: 100 points

Grading Scale

(Subject to Downward Modification and Insertion of Plus and Minus)

A	180-200	D	120-139
B	160-179	F	119 and below
C	140-159		

Course Assignments in Detail

•Understanding Adult Transitions and Challenges, Generational Issues, and Essential Life Skills through the Literature

Outside reading (required and recommended) and links to both scholarly and topical websites are assigned for each course week; these are linked to lectures, group work, and individual exercises. A Reflection Journal entry should be made for each required reading/link.

•Adult Interviews

Three adults, preferably not previously acquainted with the student interviewer, will be interviewed and assessed using a standardized instrument provided by the instructor. Of interest is the relationship between Essential Life Skills and PDL (problems of daily living). One adult should be from each of the following age ranges: 45 - 55 yrs., 55 - 65 yrs, over 65 yrs. of age.

•Discussion and Group Work

Person Simulation Case Studies (PerSims) have been developed for the seminar to illustrate the relationship between Essential Life Skills and adult transitions and challenges. Students will be assigned to small groups for case analysis, evaluation, and seminar presentation purposes.

•Site Visits

During the second half of the seminar each student will be required to visit, as part of a group, two of the following:

- senior community center (Parks & Recreation facility)
- independent living center for adults with disabilities

- retirement community
- family service agency
- hospice center
- public aging and independence services program (e.g., adult day care program, senior options, employment training, intergenerational program, OASIS, RSVP)

All site visits will be pre-arranged by the instructor in terms of date/time. A Reflection Journal entry is required for each site visit.

•Portfolio

Each student will build a personal portfolio throughout the seminar consisting of a Reflection Journal, Lifeline of defining moments, answers to Essential Questions, personal Swiss Army Knife, and other analytical exercises.

Reflection Journal. Students will keep a journal that documents their personal and professional journey throughout the course. The primary purpose of this activity is to provide private space for reflecting on one's values and perspective as they relate to your professional specialty. You are encouraged to:

- examine your assumptions about adulthood, Essential Life Skills, and lifelong learning, and how your long-held beliefs may have shaped your perceptions of yourself and your professional work;
- assess your professional capacity against the paradigm shifts occurring in aging, retirement, and end-of-life issues;
- identify the functional areas in which would you like to make progress over the next several years in terms of improved professional understanding and practice;
- reflect on the societal impact of the graying and browning of America, and 78 million Baby Boomers who will live 1-3 decades longer than anyone expected.

The journal must contain a substantive entry for each assigned reading and web link visited, along with introspective musings, questions, ideas, and observations related to seminar lectures, in-class discussions, and site visits. The journal must be submitted at the end of the course with the rest of your portfolio.

WEEKLY LECTURE/DISCUSSION TOPICS/ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: Course Overview: Understanding Adulthood

- Course Introduction and Overview
- Histories of Adulthood: demographics, seasons and cycles, major transitions, literacies
- Grand Theories of Lifespan Development
- Historical Role and Rationale for Adult Interventions

WEEK 2: Adulthood as a Process: Major Transitions (Part I)

- Adulthood as a process, drivers of change, triggers and transitions theory
- Early transitions: adolescence to Adulthood, intimacy, marriage, family, work, lifestyle (identity development)

WEEKLY LECTURE/DISCUSSION TOPICS/ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 3: Adulthood as a Process: Major Transitions (Part II)

- Later life transitions: aging, retirement, disease, death/loss

WEEK 4: Understanding Adulthood through a Generational Lens

- Greatest Generation: Adulthood
- Silent Generation
- Baby Boom Generation: First Adulthood, Second Adulthood . . .
- Generation X
- Generation Y (Millennials)
- Index of Generational Issues

WEEK 5: Paradigm Shift: Aging, Retirement, End-of-Life

- New Aging Paradigm
- New Retirement Paradigm
- New American Dream
- Emerging End-of-Life Issues

WEEK 6: Major Challenges in Adulthood

- Major challenges: longevity, social context (aging/browning), multiple realities, paradigm shifts (retirement, aging, end-of-life), family matters, competing life forces, balancing act of adult life, life long learning, happiness, unexpected

WEEK 7: Essential Life Skills for the 21st Century

- Applied Critical Thinking
- Adult Competencies
- Meaning Making

WEEK 8: Core Skills: Applied Critical Thinking (ACT)

- Understanding and Valuing Information (Systematic Questioning)
- Problem Solving
- Risk Management
- Decision-Making
- Thinking Management

WEEK 9: Core Skills: Adult Competencies

- Basic Literacy
- Adult Literacy (adaptation, collaboration, planning, conflict resolution, Three R's)
- Health Literacy
- Communication (Electronic/Digital) Literacy
- Environmental Literacy
- Citizenship Literacy
- ^a Cultural Literacy (multiple realities)

WEEKLY LECTURE/DISCUSSION TOPICS/ASSIGNMENTS

Week 10: Core Skills: Meaning Making

- Critical Reflection
- Lifelong Learning – A New Model

Week 11: Re-Defining Adulthood for the 21st Century

- End state vs. process, socially constructed vs. user driven
- First Adulthood
- Second Adulthood
- Third Adulthood (Growing-On)

Week 12: Educator/Social Service Interventions: Why, When, How?

- Theory of Intervention
- A New Theory of Intervention/Adult Intervention Levels

Week 13: First Adulthood Scenarios and Interventions

- Balancing Act of Adult Life and Other Myths
- Stress
- When Time Management Is Not Enough
- Sandwich Issues
- Thinking that Holds Us back
- Overcoming GroupThink

Week 14: Second Adulthood Transition Issues and Strategies

- What's next? The Making a Dream List
- Second Adulthood Life Planning, Part 1
- Relationship Audits

Week 15: Second Adulthood Scenarios and Interventions

- Second Adulthood Life Planning, Part 2
- Swiss Army Knife Metaphor
- Finding Purpose/Making Meaning:

Week 16: Course Summary/Group Case Presentations/Wrap-up

A Selected Bibliography

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- Barnes, S.F. (2008). *Retirement—Are You Ready?* San Diego, CA: SDSU Interwork Institute.
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