The study of the life course with the increasing recognition of adulthood and aging as dynamic developmental phases promises to enrich our understanding of lives through time. While the role of the past in human development has often dominated the clinical imagination, the fact of ongoing maturational processes, the complex range of psychosocial experience, and the certainty of existential challenges inevitably shapes the meanings given to life narratives. This course seeks to enhance our recognition of the transformations of adulthood and, thus, our understanding of the life course.

GOALS

1. To appreciate the complex interaction between psychological, socio-cultural, historical, and biological influences over the life course.
2. To develop an understanding of life course theory and its clinical relevance.
3. To integrate psychoanalytic and social science perspectives on adulthood and aging.
4. To further develop skills in critical thinking and analysis by the practice of group discussion.

EVALUATION

Grades will be based on: 50% class participation & 50% written assignment

CLASS PARTICIPATION

In relation to the course goals, the best opportunity for learning will come from actively participating in class discussion. Group members will rely on each other to have read all assignments and be prepared to exchange ideas, questions and critical understanding of the material. Each week students will write a 1-2 page response paper commenting on the assigned reading, relating it to clinical work or personal experience, and raising questions or comments. Response papers will be submitted to the instructor. The weight of the participation grade reflects the importance of attending class. If you must be absent, notify me in advance.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

There will be a 7-10 page paper due the last day of class. Students will view Starting Out In The Evening with Frank Langella and base their paper on this movie (students will need to rent or purchase this DVD). This assignment is an
opportunity to explore a theme related to adult development. Students may reflect on course readings, clinical material, and/or personal experience. Further discussion of this assignment will take place in class.

COURSE OUTLINE
Please read articles prior to first class. No response papers are necessary.

Class 1: Perspectives on the life course


Class 2: Tasks of adult life


Class 3: Partnering, parenthood, work and the landscape of adult life


Class 4: Is there a mid-life crisis?


Class 5: More perspectives on mid-life

Class 6: Perspectives on late adulthood  


Class 7: More Perspectives on late adulthood  


Class 8: Death and dying  

Presentation of final assignments by class

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