The study of normal adolescent development presents a number of interesting conceptual problems that this seminar hopes to engage over the course of this semester. Traditional psychoanalytic accounts hold the promise of a subjectively informed account of the psychological issues surrounding the individuation of the person and corresponding achievement of adulthood. However, there has been in the psychoanalytic tradition a bias towards a view of adolescence as a repetition or recapitulation of earlier developmental periods. We will examine this perspective and seek a more balanced view with an emphasis on what is unique about this complex time in life. The course will argue that adolescence is an essential developmental period in which a necessary moral transformation is engaged.

As a means to a fuller appreciation of adolescence, psychoanalytically informed accounts will be juxtaposed with interactional studies and reviews of empirical work providing multiple perspectives on this period in an effort to balance the individual and the normative approaches. Finally, the concept of late or delayed adolescence will be critiqued and the recent concept of emerging adulthood will be examined with a view to understanding the transition to adult life.

Goals

1. To appreciate the complex interaction between the psychological, socio-cultural, historical and biological influences in human development
2. To appreciate the role that adult reactions play in shaping our understanding of adolescence
3. To acquire an understanding of psychodynamic theories of adolescence
4. To develop an appreciation of the value of empirical social science contributions to the study of adolescence
5. To develop a perspective on the transition from adolescence to adult life in the concept of emerging adulthood

Assignments

1. Due November 10th. An interview with an adolescent(s) or parent(s) of an adolescent concerning their experience of this time of life. This is NOT a clinical interview. An alternative to the interview would be an observational account in which you position yourself in an adolescent group (school hallway; concert; etc.) and record your thoughts about what you experience. A written summary of your impression (5 pages maximum). Be prepared to discuss your interview or observation in class. NOTE: Please file a modified IRB form for your interview and submit to the IRB. See www.icsw.edu/IRB Manual
2. Due January 19th. Select a passage or episode from The Virgin Suicides and write an interpretation drawing upon course discussion and readings (5 pages maximum). Be prepared to discuss in class.

Grades

1. Class participation - approximately 50%
2. Interview or observation - approximately 25%
3. Interpretation - approximately 25%

Texts


Course Outline & Readings

September 15th: Perspectives on development at adolescence and beyond


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September 29th: The context of development - Historical, social and cultural perspectives on adolescence


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October 13th: Theoretical views of adolescent development


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October 27th: Special topic: Mean girls


Tavris, C. (2002, July 5) Are girls really as mean as books say they are? *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* pp. B7-
November 10th: A new body and a new mind - Psychosocial reactions to puberty and adolescent sexuality


December 8th: A new body and a new mind - Psychosocial reactions to puberty and adolescent sexuality


January 5th: The ecologies of adolescent experience - Family, friends and school


January 19th: The voyage out – Emerging adulthood
