

**Syllabus for SOCI 324 100: Sociology of the Life Course**

<b>Department/Program:</b>	Sociology
<b>Year:</b>	2015-2016
<b>Course Title:</b>	SOCI 324 100 “Sociology of the Life Course”
<b>Course Schedule:</b>	Tues/Thur 3.30-5.00pm
<b>Location(s):</b>	ANSO 207
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**Course Description (from calendar):** Individuals and families through the life course. Life course sociology is largely defined by its attempts to bring together three concepts central to the discipline: individuals, social context, and time. Drawing together some common themes (see Elder, 1994), life course sociology insists that lives are linked together, they take place within historical time, individuals experience and are marked by time, and they compare their passage through time with one another. We’ll explore these concepts and themes, and also work toward developing a sense of the contingency and structure characterizing the unfolding of lives. In the process, we’ll think through the institutional production of inequality across the life course.

**Expectations:** We’ll expect regular attendance, active engagement, keeping up with readings and coursework. You can expect a course designed to encourage your engagement, and (relatively) timely feedback on your work. You’ll be expected to learn about: 1) a set of basic concepts useful for analyzing how lives unfold through time; 2) the basic probabilities corresponding to events occurring within the life course; 3) the variation in events occurring for different people; 4) how to assemble diverse, yet relatively reasonable causal accounts tying events together.

**Format of Course:** Interactive Lectures & Group Reading Discussions (mostly Tuesdays) mixed with more interactive exercises, including life course construction (mostly Thursdays). A large portion of the class will involve small group discussion and work of some form or another.

**Required Reading:**

Annette Lareau. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life, Second Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The readings in this class will include the book above (available for purchase at the UBC book store) as well as both academic articles (especially from Statistics Canada, the journal Contexts

and a variety of other scholarly sources) and a selection of personal memoirs. Excepting for Lareau’s book, readings will be made available on the web.

**Course Assignments, Due Dates, and Grading:**

Test:	final ( <i>TBA - finals week</i> )	(20%)
	Pop Quizzes	(8%)
Papers:	Generations data collection ( <i>Oct 6</i> )	(2%)
	Generations Narrative paper ( <i>Oct 27</i> )	(10%)
	Transition development paper ( <i>Nov 26</i> )	(20%)
Group:	Discussion leadership (x3)	(12%)
	Group work – transitions (x 3)	(21%)
	Participation (incl. attendance, peer eval.)	(7%)
Total		(100%)

**General Grading Policies:** Please note that my grading reflects an evaluation of your engagement with and understanding of the course materials. It does not reflect an assessment of what I think of you as a person. In general, the grading policies will follow those outlined in the UBC Calendar.

Percentage (%)	Grade	Percentage (%)	Grade	Percentage (%)	Grade
90-100	A+	76-79.9	B+	64-67.9	C+
85-89.9	A	72-75.9	B	60-63.9	C
80-84.9	A-	68-71.9	B-	55-59.9	C-

50-54.9 = D, and a score lower than 50% is considered failing.

**Tests:** The final will evaluate your engagement with and understanding of the course materials. Class readings, class lectures, and class discussions (including research question presentations – see below) will all be covered in the final. The final exam will be comprehensive, covering the entire range of the course. **Pop quizzes** will be regularly administered throughout the course, addressing knowledge from the readings expected to be completed by the date of the quiz.

**Papers:** Students will be responsible for data collection across generations leading to the writing of two papers for the course.

*Data collection* will involve reaching back across generations to collect data about the life transitions (and timing of those transitions) for people roughly the student’s age, the student’s parent’s age, and the student’s grandparent’s age. Data collected may be from the student, their parents, and grandparents, or from other people the student is able to speak to. Students will get credit (2% of grade) for collecting the data itself in spreadsheet form and providing it to their group secretary – see below. Data will be due October 6th.

*Paper One* (approximately 1500-2000 words) will be based on analysis of how the data collected by the student, in the context of other data collected by the class, matches the narratives students heard about from their interviewees concerning their reflections on their life transitions. What

explains divergence in transitions and timing? How are these reflected, or not reflected, in narratives understandings about lives? In interviewees' reflections upon expectations? Paper One will be due November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

*Paper Two* (approximately 2500-3000 words) will involve an in-depth exploration of one transition, chosen by the student. The paper may be built from transitions described as part of group work within class, but need not be limited to this work. The paper should focus on laying out the process involving the transition, and identifying one potential causal contributor or consequence of the transition. Is there data to evaluate the cause or consequence? If so, what does it say? If not, how might it be developed? The paper should involve a literature review, including at least three academic citations. Students will have the opportunity to workshop their papers (Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>), one week before the due date (December 3<sup>rd</sup>).

**Group Work:** Students will be divided into teams of no less than seven people per team. Teams will be responsible for regular discussion of readings for no less than nine classes. One member of each team will be elected secretary.

*Discussion Leadership:* Each team member will lead discussion, shared with another team member, for three (3) of those classes (except the secretary, who only needs to lead discussion *once*). Discussion leaders will prepare a short summary of the readings for the day, ending with a set of questions raised by the readings for other group members to answer. After discussion, discussion leaders will be expected to divide up, with each member writing *either* a **majority report** and a **minority report**. In no more than two pages, the majority reporter will summarize the reading, summarize the discussion, and reflect upon what might be learned. The minority reporter will be provided with the majority report, and in no more than two pages, develop a critique, including arguments about what is missing from the majority report and what else might be learned from the reading and discussion. Discussion leaders will turn in their majority/minority reports together one week after discussion, and each will be worth 5% of their class marks.

*Team Transition Report:* Each class team will be responsible, as a group, for writing up and presenting three (3) transition reports. These will be spread out across life course workshop days. On the first life course workshop day, each class member will be entrusted with two babies, selected at random from Vancouver's census data. Working within their groups, class members will age their babies through each subsequent life course workshop day, creating artificial lives. At the beginning of each life course workshop day, a subset of class teams will **briefly present** their reports (<5 minutes) upon the risks corresponding to particular events likely to occur during the day's aging period. In addition to the presentation, a **written version of their reports** (< 4 pages, excluding references) will be provided to each class team. The content of the report will summarize: **1)** a best guess at the basic probability of the event occurring during the time period at hand (with sources appropriately cited), **2)** a discussion of the heterogeneity in risks (with sources cited), and **3)** a discussion of uncertainty and critique of sources. After teams have listened to all reports for the day, they will discuss and work out appropriate modifiers for the base risks of events occurring for each artificial life belonging to their team members. After discussing and agreeing upon appropriate modifiers to basic risks, ideally drawn from broader literature as well as the well thought-out experiences of team

members, dice will be rolled to see what happens to each life. Team members will keep track of what's happened to their own artificial lives, developing narratives accounting for events. At the end of the class, team members will be asked to write up brief obituaries for their artificial lives. On an ongoing basis, group secretaries will record outcomes for all artificial lives within each group.

*Participation:* Due to the heavily interactive nature of the class, participation in group discussions and life course exercises is especially important. Missing groupwork days will count against participation marks. In addition, team members will have the opportunity & obligation to evaluate one another's contributions: as team members contributing to transition reports; as discussion leaders; and as generally knowledgeable and helpful contributors to discussion. As a result, it's important to note that peer evaluations may modify not only participation marks, but other group-work marks as well. It's also important to note that we (the course instructor and TA) will frequently drop in on group meetings, and will develop independent observations of participation to complement peer evaluations. If, for some reason, group dynamics make group work difficult for any team member, please feel free to discuss the problem with us.

**Plagiarism:** Do not plagiarize. Plagiarism cases will be passed on to the Dean of Liberal Arts. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask or consult the following: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,54,111,959>

DATE	day	TOPIC	DUE / Activity	READINGS
WEEK 1	8 Tu	*****		Imagine Day
Sept.	10 Th	Intro		
WEEK 2	15 Tu	Concepts		Dominus, 2015
	17 Th	Time / Norms & Structures		Treas, 2009; Townsend, 2002
WEEK 3	22 Tu	Time / Experience		Hall 2007; <b>Lareau 1-2</b>
	24 Th	Time / History	Team Assignments	Satrapa, 2007; Otie & Kunwu, 2012
WEEK 4	29 Tu	Chance/Prediction	Risk Examples	McFalls 2007; Milan 2006
Oct	1 Th	Social Reproduction	Birth	Solomon, 2012
WEEK 5	6 Tu	Attachment	<b>Generations Data Due</b>	Hays 1998; Clawson & Gerstel 2002
	8 Th	...	Age 0-5	.---
WEEK 6	13 Tu	Home & School		<b>Lareau 3-7</b>
	15 Th	...	Age 5-12	.---
WEEK 7	20 Tu	Home & School		<b>Lareau 8-12</b>
	22 Th	...	Age 12-18	.---
WEEK 8	27 Tu	Relationships	<b>Generations Paper Due</b>	Schalet 2000, TBA
	29 Th	...	Age 18-22	.---
WEEK 9	3 Tu	Work-School		<b>Lareau 13-15</b>
Nov	5 Th	...	Age 22-30	.---
WEK 10	10 Tu	Settling Down		Reading TBA
	12 Th	<b>7-up Break</b>		
WEK 11	17 Tu	...	Age 30-55	.---
	19 Th	Disruptions		Reading TBA
WEK 12	24 Tu	...	Age 55+	.---
	26 Th	<b>Paper Workshop</b>	<b>Transition Dev Paper Draft</b>	
WEK 13	1 Tu	Later Life		Reading TBA
Dec	3 Th	Review	<b>Transition Dev Paper Due</b>	