

**PP 405: ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**  
**WINTER 2009**  
**MONDAYS 3:00-5:40**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Adulthood no longer begins when adolescence ends. A lengthy period before adulthood, often spanning the twenties and even extending into the thirties, is now devoted to further education, job exploration, experimentation in romantic relationships, and personal development. Pathways into and through adulthood have become much less linear and predictable, and these changes carry tremendous social and cultural significance, especially as institutions and policies aimed at supporting young adults have not kept pace with these changes. The “transition to adulthood” takes place in an economic landscape characterized by a widening gap between rich and poor. Cohabitation and prolonged residence with parents characterizes the life choice of many young adults. The “premature” transition of adolescent parenthood characterizes others’. How are young people’s family experiences related to the paths they take in early adulthood? How do teenage childbearers navigate the “transition to adulthood?” What role does employment play in youth’s subsequent development? Who are the winners and losers at this critical life transition? What role can public policy play? This seminar will explore these and other related questions through readings and discussion of empirical research drawn primarily from developmental psychology, sociology, demography, and economics. On several occasions throughout the quarter, we will have guest speakers during the second half of the class.

**READINGS**

Each week you will be required to complete several readings from original empirical articles and/or books. You should be able to retrieve all of the journal articles through the library’s electronic collections or via websites that I will direct you to. The required books are available in paperback.

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, edited by Richard Settersten, Frank Furstenberg, and Ruben Rumbaut (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 (paperback published April, 2008)

*Not Our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the Myth of Black Teenage Motherhood* by Elaine Bell Kaplan. University of California Press (1997).

*Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps* by Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1994).

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Each week, we will discuss the readings, seminar style. To facilitate discussion, all participants must prepare a weekly memo on the readings (described further below) as well as three thought questions for the discussion based on the readings and any other relevant material. Each student will also serve as a discussion leader once throughout the quarter beginning in Week 4. Discussion leaders should draw on the assigned readings for that week as well as outside material if you choose (consult with me first).

One-third of your final grade will be based on the quality and timeliness of your weekly memos, your performance as a discussion leader, and the quality of your contributions in class. One third of your grade will be based on a take-home essay exam (Assigned February 16); the remaining third will be based on the paper/class presentation (also described below).

### **Weekly Memos, Thought Questions, Exam, and Paper Details**

**MEMOS:** Your weekly memo should be e-mailed **to me and to everyone in the course** by Sunday evening at 7:00 pm. It should be approximately 3 single-spaced pages long and cover the following:

(a) *What is the single most important empirical claim/s in each reading (or collection of readings)?* This should not be a summary of the readings. Instead it is your judgment of which findings have the greatest significance and why. Aim to tie the readings together in this section of the memo. If you do not feel any significant contribution is made, say why.

(b) *Do you see any reason to doubt the validity of any of the claims made in the readings?* If so, briefly give your reasons. For example, do you take issue with any of the studies' hypotheses, data quality/analysis, or interpretations? Do the readings arrive at conflicting conclusions and does this cast doubt on any one of them? If yes, why do you think this is so?

(c) *In what way do you think the findings from the readings bear on public policy?*

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:** Generate three thought questions for the class to discuss, and be prepared to facilitate the discussion of your questions. On days when we have a guest speaker, be prepared to pose at least one of your questions directly to him or her.

**PAPER/PRESENTATION:** During **weeks 6 and 7**, seminar members will present a review of the current state of theory and research on a topic relevant to adolescent development and the transition to adulthood. The topic can be similar to or different from the ones discussed in class. Your proposed topic must be submitted to me for approval by January 26<sup>th</sup> (via e-mail). The assignment involves three parts: (a) writing a concise review and evaluation of the current work in this area (approx. 4-5 single-spaced pages); (b) designing a research project that will move our understanding of the topic area forward in a substantial way (approximately 3-4 single-spaced pages); and (c) making a brief presentation (using power point) to the class on your review and research proposal (approx. 20 minutes). A "critical articles" bibliography should also be distributed to the entire class at the time of the presentation. Students will be expected to discuss with the instructor in advance to clarify the topic in more detail, get assistance in choosing material to review and, if necessary, to clarify questions on designing the research project. Presentations will occur during **weeks 6 and 7**. Reserve your day via e-mail; I will divide the presentations up evenly over the 2 days we have available.

**EXAM.** A take-home essay exam will be given out on February 16 and must be returned by February 23 before class. Students will answer 4-5 thought questions based on the material presented in the first 2/3 of the class.

## WEEK 1: January 5

### INTRODUCTION: DEFINING AND CONSTRUCTING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 1: On the Frontier of Adulthood: Emerging Themes and New Directions

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 7

Subjective Age Identity and the Transition to Adulthood: When Do Adolescents Become Adults?

Sassler, S., Ciambone, D., & Benway, G. (2008). Are they really Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls? The negotiation of adulthood upon returning to the parental home. *Sociological Forum*, 23, (4), 670-698.

*Becoming Adult: Meanings and Markers for Young Americans* (2006, March). Richard A. Settersten, Jr. Available on-line at: <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/resources/aspirations.html>

## WEEK 2: January 12

### ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN URBAN AND RURAL CONTEXTS

**Guest Speaker: Maria Kefalas**, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology; Director, Institute for Violence Research and Prevention, Saint Joseph's University: "Hollowing Out the Middle: How Young People Became the Rural Heartland's Declining Resource."

Download the speaker's background readings here:

<<http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/Centers/chppp/workshops.asp>>

Chapter 1: Carr and Kefalas, *The Stayers*

Chapter 2: Carr and Kefalas, *The Achievers*

Also read the introduction: *Straight from the Heartland: Coming of Age in Ellis, Iowa* (2006, September). Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas. Available on-line at: <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/resources/aspirations.html>

*Subjective Perceptions of Adulthood among Urban Youth: Are Demographic Transitions Still Relevant?* (2003). Janel Benson and Frank Furstenberg, Jr. Available on-line at:

<http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/resources/aspirations.html>

Crosnoe, R. Mistry, R., & Elder, G. (2002). Economic disadvantage, family dynamics, and adolescent enrollment in higher education. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 690-702.

Elder, G. H., Eccles, J., Ardelt, M., & Lord, S. (1995). Inner city parents under economic pressure: Perspectives on the strategies of parenting. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 771-784.

**Week 3: January 19: No class meeting (MLK day)**

**WEEK 4: JANUARY 26**  
**SKILLS, EDUCATION, AND ATTAINMENT**

**Guest Speaker: Jacob Vigdor**, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Economics, Terry Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University: “Scaling the Digital Divide: Home Computer Technology and Student Achievement.”

Download and read the speaker’s paper here:

<<http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/Centers/chppp/workshops.asp>>

Astone, N., Schoen, R., Ensminger, M., & Rothert, K. (2000). School re-entry in early adulthood: The case of inner-city African Americans. *Sociology of Education*, 73, 133-154.

*Blurring the Boundary: Changes in the Transition from College Participation to Adulthood*. Maria D. Fitzpatrick and Sarah E. Turner. (2006, May). Available on-line at:  
<http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/resources/growup.html>

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 9  
Off to a Good Start? Postsecondary Education and Early Adult Life

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 11  
Is It Getting Harder to Get Ahead? Economic Attainment in Early Adulthood for Two Cohorts

**WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 2**  
**RELATIONSHIP FORMATION AND EARLY CHILDBEARING**

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 4  
Historical Roots of Family Diversity: Marital and Childbearing Trajectories of American Women

*Not Our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the Myth of Black Teenage Motherhood*

Oxford, M. et al (2005). Life course heterogeneity in the transition from adolescence to adulthood among adolescent mothers. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15, 479-504.

**WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 9**  
**TIME USE AND TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT**

**Guest Speakers: Chloe Hutchinson Gibbs and Matthew Steinberg**, Doctoral Candidates, Harris School of Public Policy, The University of Chicago, “Adolescent Time Use: Exploring the Role of Out-of-School Time in Schooling and Labor Market Outcomes.”

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 5  
Historical Trends in the Patterns of Time Use among Young Adults in Developed Countries

Osgood, W. & Flanagan, C. (2008, December). Exploring the changing meaning of work for American high school seniors from 1976 to 2005. Available at:  
<http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/publications/publication%20index.htm>

Entwisle, D., Alexander, K., & Olson, L. (2000). Early work histories of urban youth. *American Sociological Review*, 65, 279-297.

**Week 7: February 16 (Take Home Exam Questions Distributed)**

**THE ROLE OF RACE, GENDER, SOCIAL CLASS, AND ETHNICITY IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 2

The Transition to Adulthood during the Twentieth Century: Race, Nativity, and Gender

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 14

The Ever-Winding Path: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Transition to Adulthood

Furstenberg, F. (2008). The intersections of social class and the transition to adulthood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 119, 1-10.

Staff, J. & Mortimer, J. (2008). Social class background and the school-to-work transition. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 119, 55-69.

Feliciano, C. & Rumbaut, R. (2005). Gendered paths: Educational and occupational expectations and outcomes among adult children of immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28 (6), 1087-1118.

Pattillo- McCoy, M. (2000). Negotiating adolescence in a black middle class neighborhood. In Sheldon Danziger & Ann Lin (Eds). *Coping with Poverty: the Social Contexts of Neighborhood, Work, and Family in the African American Community* (pp. 77-101). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (to be distributed to the class via e-mail).

**Week 8: February 23 (Take Home Exam Due)**

**PARENTAL AND FAMILY STRUCTURE INFLUENCES**

**Guest Speaker: Rachel Dunifon**, Associate Professor, Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University: "Parenting in Vain?: Stepfather Influences on early Transitions to Parenthood."

Download and read the speaker's paper here:

<<http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/Centers/chppp/workshops.asp>>

*Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps.* (Chapter 1: Why we care about single parenthood; Chapter 3: Which outcomes are most affected; Chapter 6: The role of parenting).

DeLeire, T. & Kalil, A. (2002). Good things come in 3's: Multigenerational coresidence and adolescent adjustment. *Demography*, 39, 393-413.

Swartz, T. (2008). Family capital and the invisible transfer of privilege: Intergenerational support and social class in early adulthood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 119, 11-24.

**Week 9: March 2:**  
**PUBLIC POLICY AND INTERVENTIONS**

**Guest Speaker: E. Michael Foster**, Professor of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill: “Do Transition Services Improve the Transition to Adulthood for Youth Aging out of Special Education?” Download and read the speaker’s paper here:

<<http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/Centers/chppp/workshops.asp>>

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 15

The Transition to Adulthood for Youth Leaving Public Systems: Challenges to Policies and Research

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 16

Social Policy and the Transition to Adulthood: Toward Stronger Institutions and Individual Capacities

Kemple, J. (2008, June). Career Academies: Impacts on Students’ Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment . New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Available at: <http://www.mdr.org/publications/482/full.pdf>

Quint, J., Bos, H., & Polit, D. (1997). New Chance: Final report on a comprehensive program for young mothers in poverty and their children (Executive summary). New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Available at: <http://www.mdr.org/publications/145/execsum.html>

Matus-Grossman et al. (2002). Opening Doors: Students’ Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College (Executive Summary): New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Available at: <http://www.mdr.org/publications/260/execsum.pdf>

**Week 10: March 9**  
**PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**

**Guest Speaker: Thomas McDade**, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University: “The Ecology of Everyday Life: An Integrative Anthropological Approach to Health Disparities Research.” Download and read the speaker’s paper here:

<<http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/Centers/chppp/workshops.asp>>

*On the Frontiers of Adulthood*, Chapter 13

Early Adult Transitions and Their Relation to Well-Being and Substance Use

Park, MJ et al (2006). The health status of young adults in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 39*, 3, 305-317.

Hayford, S. & Furstenberg, F. (2008). Delayed Adulthood, Delayed Desistance? Trends in the Age Distribution of Problem Behaviors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 2*, 285-304.

Schulenberg, J., Sameroff, A., & Cicchetti, D. (2004). The transition to adulthood as a critical juncture in the course of psychopathology and mental health. *Development and Psychopathology, 16*, 799-806.